Native Peoples and Wilderness:
A Study on Exclusionary Practices in Canada


Primary Sources: Treaty No. 1, Treaty No. 3, Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 10

Class Discussion/Analytical Questions

1) Binnema and Niemi state that the founding members of the wilderness movement assumed that wilderness could be modified and occupied. What were the primary motivations for creating Banff National Park? Where did people fit into this ideal?

2) Describe the Canadian Pacific Railway’s effect on the environment. What consequences did this have for Aboriginal groups like the Stoney?

3) Why did officials manage Banff and other national parks in the interests of sportsmen? How were sportsmen able to influence the enforcing of laws limiting Aboriginal access to wilderness areas? Think about the reasons white sportsmen gave for disparaging Aboriginal peoples in constructing your answer.

4) Binnema and Niemi explain that the central goal of Banff National Park was conservationist, rather than preservationist. What are the differences between these two ideas? What implications arise from using a conservationist approach to wildlife management?

5) To what extent were conservationists and sportsmen effective, in and of themselves, in limiting Aboriginal subsistence hunting? To what extent did government officials simply use conservationists and sportsmen to further their ultimate goal of “civilizing and assimilating” Aboriginal peoples?

Activities

1. Wilderness Area Presentations

Have the class as a whole create a list of national parks, and nature preserves. Once you have a substantial list, remind the class that Binnema and Niemi wrote about the removal of indigenous peoples being “an old and international phenomenon that continues to this day.” Then break the
class into small groups and have them research several sites. Explain that each group has four tasks to complete:

**Tasks**

1. Research the history of your site in order to find out which native group(s) lived there.
2. Find out if the native group(s) still live within the area.
   a. If they no longer inhabit the park or preserve, find out the history behind their removal. Was it peaceful? Forceful? Were any treaties or concessions involved in the process?
   b. If they still inhabit the site, see if you can find out how they were able to maintain their presence when so many other native groups were unable to.
3. Put your findings into a presentation using PowToon, Prezi, or Haiku Deck.
4. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.

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**2. Analyzing Canada’s Numbered Treaties**

Between 1871 and 1899, the Canadian government signed eleven treaties with various Aboriginal groups that allowed Canadians to develop the land and resources throughout various parts of Western Canada. In exchange for ceding the right to vast tracts of land, various Aboriginal groups gained reserve lands, various goods, annual payments, and various federal promises. Many of the treaties follow similar patterns or have nearly identical language. The four here offer examples of the main types of treaties Canada’s federal government signed with various First Nations peoples. Break the class into four groups, assigning each group a different Numbered Treaty. Explain that each group has five tasks to complete.

**Tasks**

1. Read and discuss your Numbered Treaty.
2. List the Canadian government’s gains (Aboriginal losses) and the Aboriginal gains (Canadian government obligations) laid out in your Numbered Treaty.
3. Evaluate the losses and gains from the perspective of the various Aboriginal groups. Remember to pay particular attention to environmental factors within these treaties.
4. Research the area of land being discussed in your Numbered Treaty. Use Google maps to show the lands lost by the tribes. Be sure to include the Indian Reserve granted by the Canadian federal government.
5. Teach the class your findings from the Numbered Treaty, beginning with showing the Google map(s) your group created. Be sure to explain who benefitted, how they benefitted, and your analysis of the treaty’s fairness.