**Environmental Racism in B.C.**

**Landfills & Air Quality**

In this lesson, we will be looking at the impacts of laws and bylaws relating to garbage disposal and the environmental impacts of these sites (typically in the form of air and land quality). These laws and bylaws have come under scrutiny in recent years for their blatantly disproportionate response in regard to their impacts on Crown land versus Indigenous land; to the point where even the UN’s representative made note of it in 2020. **Suggested Grade Range: High School (Grades 9-12). For Earlier grades, consider providing resources yourself instead of having students search for their own; incorporate more in-class or group discussion rather than posting online.**

***Created By Cody Peters***

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| To begin with, give this video [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=415jL_Zi6CQ) a watch. While it is not centered on B.C. specifically, the important segments focus on Canada as a whole, and the call to action and the issues brought forth are entirely applicable to British Columbia. The video was posted in 2022 by CBC National, and it tackles the widespread issues of air quality for minority communities and other environmental impacts on these communities due to their proximity to heavy industry and waste disposal.**Consider: the implications of living near heavy industry zones, like the ones depicted in the beginning of the video.*** **Would you feel safe living in such close proximity to one of these sites, or near a landfill?**
* **Can you think of any neighborhood in B.C. that you know of that is near one of these sites?**
* **What are some alternatives to having these places near marginalized communities?**
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| While one can begin to feel helplessly involved in the systems that are already constructed around us, there is still reason and hope to be found in developing a critical understanding of these systems. We have to realize our place within these systems before we can make the effort to change them; this skill is called developing a critical pedagogy, or “learning to read the world and one’s position in it - to become fully aware of social, political, and economic realities” (Cachelin, 2022, p. 494). Once one understands their place within the system, then we can work towards bettering it. Give this webpage [here](https://davidsuzuki.org/action/help-end-environmental-racism/) a look, and consider what the petition is trying to do for your own community. Think about the questions below in relation to the *Critical Approaches to Community Engaged Pedagogies* section (pages 496-498) of Adrienne Cachelin & Emily Nicolosi’s article “Investigating Critical Community Engaged Pedagogies for Transformative Environmental Justice Education” which can be found [here](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/13504622.2022.2034751?needAccess=true&role=button).**Consider:*** **What are some topics from the petition that interest you?**
* **Do you think that this petition is a good way to try and change a system that has environmentally racist practices for the better?**
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| Garbage disposal and storage is a difficult task to undertake, especially in an environmentally-sensitive manner that also acknowledges environmental racism and its practices. Unfortunately, B.C. has problematic laws and bylaws relating to garbage disposal that highlight how our systems reinforce environmental racism without us ever noticing. In their article on environmental racism in Canada, Dr. Elaine MacDonald notes that “in B.C., UN special rapporteur on the environment and human rights David Boyd notes that the maximum penalties for dumping garbage or waste on Crown Land ranges from $2,000 to $1,000,000. Meanwhile, the maximum penalty for dumping garbage or waste on ‘Indian Reserves’ is only $100” (MacDonald, 2020, p. 1). While innocuous, this law reinforces the environmental racism notion that First Nations land is less valuable, or requires less protection than land owned by the government, and as such the penalties for causing the same amount of damage to either location is drastically less severe when it comes to protecting land reserved by the government for Indigenous communities. As mentioned even [here](https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1640350964188/1640351002909), on the Government of Canada’s Evaluation of the First Nations Solid Waste Management Initiative page, “in some cases, municipal representatives have exhibited openly racist attitudes” (Gov. of Canada, 2021), illustrating that racial issues are still impactful on initiatives meant to facilitate appropriate waste management for marginalized communities.**Activity: Based on the video from the beginning of this lesson, the document linked above in this section, as well as the excerpt in the *Explain* section, brainstorm some potential negative effects on the environment and community health that may be caused by B.C.’s laws or bylaws when it comes to landfills, garbage disposal, and waste processing, or some of the difficulties outlined in the Solid Waste Initiative (which can be found** [**here**](https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1640350964188/1640351002909)**) for Indigenous communities when facing waste disposal policy. Write down some of your ideas** [**here**](https://padlet.com/codepeters/landfills-air-quality-hft0y0ajcuvn80iq)**, and make sure to link the article, webpage, or resource that sparked your ideas (this can be any one of the resources found here, or another that you have come across on your own).** |

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| Based on the readings and videos you have looked at thus far, do you have any concerns about waste disposal policy in B.C.? Do you have any questions or concerns for the community that you live in, or for a community that you know of? Can you think of any communities that may be feeling the effects of these policies right now? If you cannot think of any, try using the internet or your library to find some examples of related issues that may be rooted in environmental racism in areas near you. |

|  | **Share** |
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| Take some time and think about what you and your classmates have written about thus far. Was there any one post, article, or topic covered that really stood out to you?**Activity: Take a minute to compose some thoughts that you have on the topic of waste disposal, air quality, and heavy industry in B.C.** **and consider them within the framework of the Adrienne Cachelin & Emily Nicolosi readings. Share your thoughts** [**here**](https://flip.com/ecd17d05) **with your classmates through a short (1.5 minute) recording of your thoughts.**.  |

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| Look back through the activities you and your classmates have completed throughout this section. Take a few minutes to read through your classmates' posts and watch some of their video responses. **Activity: Reflecting on what you and your classmates have discussed throughout this section, go back and comment on at least 2 of your classmates posts or videos. Reflect on how what they said resonated with you, or how what you talked about in your post or video relates to theirs. For the posts, use this link** [**here**](https://padlet.com/codepeters/landfills-air-quality-hft0y0ajcuvn80iq)**, and for the videos, use this link** [**here**](https://flip.com/ecd17d05)**. Make sure to keep things respectful!**.  |

| **images** | **Extend** |
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| To access the resources below, check with your institution’s library catalog or use Google Scholar to check availability.**References:**Macdonald, Elaine. Sept. 1, 2020. Environmental Racism In Canada: What Is It, What Are The Impacts, And What Can We Do About It?. Ecojustice. <https://ecojustice.ca/news/environmental-racism-in-canada/> CBC National Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=415jL_Zi6CQ> David Suzuki Foundation Petition: <https://davidsuzuki.org/action/help-end-environmental-racism/> Government of Canada’s Evaluation of the First Nations Solid Waste Management Initiative: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1640350964188/1640351002909> Cachelin, A., & Nicolosi, E. (2022). Investigating critical community engaged pedagogies for transformative environmental justice education. *Environmental Education Research, 28*(4), 491-507. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2034751> |