

Decoding Carbon

#DECODINGCARBON

Activity: Climate Policy and Indigenous Relations



Learning Outcomes

By the end of this activity learners will:

- Understand policy in the context of Indigenous relations.
- Be able to think critically about engagement when designing policies.
- Learn about Indigenous youth engagement and empowerment in shaping a low carbon future.
- Learn about the medicine wheel, a foundational framework used by many Indigenous nations to recognize balance, interconnectedness, and wholeness of well-being.

Curriculum Connections

Alberta

- Grade 10 Science
- Grade 10 Social Studies
- Grade 11 Social Studies

British Columbia

- Grade 10 Science
- Grade 10 Environmental Science
- Grade 11 Environmental Science
- Grade 12 Environmental Science

Ontario

- Grade 10 Science
- Grade 12 Canada & World Studies

Length of Activity

2 – 2.5 hours

Materials List

- Topic Backgrounder

- Marking Rubric
- Internet Enabled Device
- Power to the People - Episode 1: available on APTN Lumi. Educators may subscribe for a free 5-day trial to access the streaming service and play the episode. No credit card required. <https://aptnlumi.ca/>
- Two large sheets of chart-paper and markers.

Activity: Step 1

Teacher(s) will introduce the topic, using the backgrounder as guidance. **(10 minutes)**

Activity: Step 2

Teachers will play the video “Power to the People”. **(25 minutes)**

Activity: Step 3

Teacher will introduce Medicine Wheel using the backgrounder as a guidance. **(5 minutes)**

Activity: Step 4

In groups or individually, complete the following activities:

1. Medicine Wheel - how energy projects are interconnected with our communities and ways of life. (50 minutes)
 - a. Students are separated into groups of 4-5 students. Each group receives two large pieces of chart-paper.

- b. Students are asked to draw as large of a circle on the paper as possible on both sheets, then divide each circle into 4 quadrants, effectively making 2 medicine wheels.
- c. Two project scenarios are to be considered, which are introduced to the students. One Medicine wheel will be associated with one project.
 - i. An oil sand facility is constructed in your community, much like the one featured in the film.
 - ii. A solar project is to be built in your community, much like the one featured in the film.
- d. Using the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, write or sketch how each project relates to each quadrant, noting the following guiding questions. Be sure to specify how it impacts the area around you, your family, and community:

A. North (white) - spiritual

- e. Using the framework of the stewardship of the land, describe how the land changes based on this project? Consider wildlife, aquatic life, air quality, water quality, CO₂ emissions, etc.

B. East (yellow) - physical

- a. How does this project affect your physical health? Can people get sick from the project? How? How does the project affect the health of the ecosystem? How does the project affect agriculture, and access to food?

C. South (red) - mental

- a. Describing how this will affect your community's prosperity and growth? Can you benefit from it? Consider long term (seven generations ahead). Can the resource still be extracted forever? If not, is this a good investment even if there are returns? Why?

D. West (black) - emotional/social

- a. How will this project keep people together? How will it ensure equality?

Will only certain people be allowed to work/benefit at the site?

- b. The groups each nominates a speaker to briefly present to the class their first medicine wheel. (5 minutes)
- c. The groups each nominate a speaker to briefly present their second medicine wheel to the class. (5 minutes)

1. Collectively create a list (on a single sheet of chart paper), using the lessons learned in the Medicine Wheel activity, of how to include Indigenous nations in clean energy policies. This shall be your classroom's Indigenous Empowerment Charter, which will always ensure your policies have included Indigenous Peoples. Examples can be:
 - a. Indigenous Nations shall always be consulted with when new projects are being developed.
 - b. The impacts on life on land and life below water shall be always considered when designing policies.
 - c. Policies shall always include aspects of education and employment opportunities to ensure everyone is empowered with skills to build a clean energy future.
 - d. Traditional and sacred Indigenous lands shall always be protected and conserved in any new policy and project development.
2. Be sure the wording of the charter is careful to maintain balance and not overstep the ability of Indigenous nations to also make decisions and lead their own policies. Avoid discussions from students who may suggest 'what Indigenous peoples should do'.
3. In the spirit of collaboration, relationship-building, and exposure to real life policy development, it is highly recommended for students and educators to approach local Indigenous community leaders, elders, or scholars, of whom can review the Charter, advise on any changes, and approve it.