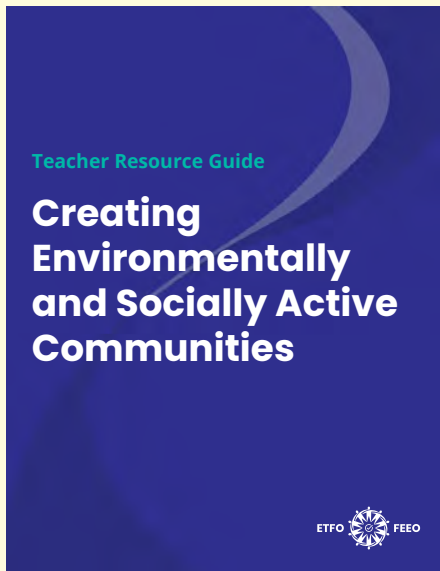


GRADE 7: THE 5 Ws OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

Climate change is a consequence of a colonial and capitalist system which has exploited people and the environment. The two struggles are inseparable. Many in the Global North may not be fully internalizing the impacts of the climate breakdown in this moment, however droughts, desertification and food insecurity as a result of climate change are happening now and disproportionately so to Black, Indigenous and people of colour. This resource invites students and educators to explore climate justice in intersectional ways

Find the full series at members.etfo.ca.

BIG IDEAS

- Laws and regulations for industrial waste disposal differ around the globe.
- People from different social and economic groups, geographic locations, and cultural groups are impacted by environmental factors.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Human activity disproportionately affects the health of some groups of people. This includes people who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour, and the economically marginalized.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Grade 7 Geography

- Natural events and human activities that change Earth's physical features can have social, political, environmental, and economic consequences.
- Resource development is affected by social, political, economic, and geographic factors.
- There is a relationship between Earth's physical features and the distribution of natural resources and how people use these resources to meet their needs and wants.

Grade 8 Geography

- Quality of life and economic development around the world are influenced by various factors.
- Issues related to inequalities in global development and quality of life can have social, environmental, political, and/or economic implications.
- We can use measurable indicators to help us understand spatial patterns of wealth and development around the world.

Grade 7 Science

- Human activities have the potential to alter the environment. Humans must be aware of these impacts and try to control them.

Grade 7/8 Oral Communications

- Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes.

Grade 7/8 Reading

- Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning.

Grade 7/8 Writing

- Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.
- Draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience.
- Use editing, proofreading, publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively.

Grade 7/8 Media Literacy

- Create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.

Grade 7/8 Visual Art

- **Creating and presenting** – apply the creative process to produce artwork in a variety of traditional two- and three-dimensional forms, as well as multimedia artwork, which communicate feelings, ideas, and understanding using elements, principles, and techniques of visual arts as well as current media technologies.



"HUMAN ACTIVITY DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS THE HEALTH OF SOME GROUPS OF PEOPLE. THIS INCLUDES PEOPLE WHO ARE BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOUR, AND THE ECONOMICALLY MARGINALIZED."

CURRICULUM

OVERVIEW

Intermediate students are better able to consider the social inequities they see in the world around them. By learning about the impacts of industrial activities on people living in communities around the world, students will analyze these impacts using an equity lens. To build their understanding of allyship, students will be encouraged to offer advocacy as a way to support the work that the people impacted are doing on their own behalf.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For students: Students should be familiar with the following concepts:

- Advocacy
- Self-advocacy
- Allyship

For educators: It is essential that educators are familiar with the concept of environmental racism (a.k.a. environmental justice) prior to teaching this lesson.

Communities that experience intersectionality of environmental health effects, socio-economic challenges, and racialized discrimination are disproportionately impacted by environmental issues resulting from human activity, including resource extraction, production of goods, and the activities required to do these.

In preparation for this lesson, it is recommended that you familiarize yourself with the resources Tracking the battles for environmental justice: here are the world's top 10 and the Environmental Justice Atlas, which are the research tools for this lesson.

Supplemental resources for professional learning: These additional resources provide a North American context for some important issues that have led to advocacy and action:

- There's Something In The Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous & Black Communities by Ingrid R. G. Waldron examines the legacy of environmental racism and its health impacts in Canada, and the grassroots resistance activities against pollution by Indigenous and Black communities in Nova Scotia. The book is available from Fernwood Publishing and the documentary of the same name, based on Waldron's book, is currently available on Netflix.

Other stories of communities impacted by environmental racism include:

- Remember Africville, a short film available from the National Film Board
- Shelby Gilson's article for the Pulitzer Centre's project to amplify voices of the people of Grassy Narrows First Nation, who seek justice for widespread mercury poisoning in their community
- From the New School, an overview of environmental racism related to waste incineration in the U.S.

MATERIALS

Article: Tracking the battles for environmental justice: here are the world's top 10
Online map: Environmental Justice Atlas - Global Atlas of Environmental Justice
Computer and interactive whiteboard
Chart paper or whiteboard for notes

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why do some groups of people experience the health impacts of industrial activity more than others?
- What are the barriers that contribute to this?
- Do laws provide protection for people? Or do they make it easier for industries to operate without concern for humans?

LESSON PLAN FRAMEWORK

CONNECT

- Connect with students and their interests and experiences
- Connect students with each other
- Connect students with community (experts, resources)

Steps:

1. Connecting industrial activity to environmental impacts on people:

Walk around the classroom with a recycling bin and ask if students have anything that can go into recycling right now. Where does our recycling go after we toss it in the "blue box" and put it out for a truck? After it gets to the plant, then what? Use this question to shift the discussion to waste. What about trash, where does that go? Where are waste sites located? Who runs the landfill? What happens if the landfill gets "full" and there's no more space left; where

does the trash go then? What are some other ways that trash is disposed of? Take special note of any questions that may be left unanswered.

2. What are the industrial processes that are tied to making the things we need/want?

- Generate a list of industrial activities: this can include extraction/ harvesting of natural resources and any processing needed to get raw materials that we use in other industries; plants or processes used in production, packaging, and the ways we move materials and products from place to place. (Examples: forestry, paper making, mining, oil fields, fracking; nuclear plants, hydro-electric dams, coal-fired power plants; heavy equipment, trucking, rail, shipping, oil refineries; production of goods, agriculture, farming, animal production and processing.)
- What kind of resources do these industries need to operate? (Buildings & infrastructure, energy, water, raw materials, human workers.)
- Where are these activities happening? What kind of waste results from harvesting raw materials and resources, transporting them to where they are used, and making the products they are used for? List types of waste, brainstorming ways to categorize (e.g., biodegradable, waste that affects ecosystems, recyclable, non-recyclable, air pollution).
- What kind of waste impacts humans the most, and in what ways? Invite students to share any news reports or stories they have heard, identifying:
 - Who is affected by the waste and processes students identified?
 - What (if any) protections are in place for the workers/community (i.e., laws)?
 - Does everyone have the same protection, or are some people more vulnerable? Why, or why not?

EXPLORE AND EMPOWER

- Explore a variety of resources available to you
- Empower students to make meaning of the big idea

Steps:

1. Using the article Tracking the battles for environmental justice: here are the world's top 10, introduce students to the social conflicts around environmental issues that result from industrial activities and waste. Use the Environmental Justice Atlas to select one site to explore using Who/What/Where/Why/When prompts.

Ask students to consider:

- How can you share this information with others to educate them that things like this are happening?
- What advocacy/self-advocacy work are people doing to solve this problem?
- What is happening and who is doing it? How would people who aren't affected (allies) help to amplify the voices of people who are affected?
- Students will examine one of the issues on the Environmental Justice Atlas, answering Who/What/Where/Why/When from two perspectives: those who caused the impact or waste, and those who are affected by it. Challenge students to consider why it is harder for some groups of people to access these systems.

ACT AND ADVOCATE

- Create experiences in which students have engagement and agency
- Take action in your local community

Steps:

1. **Create a written report, a presentation using a platform such as Prezi, or a slideshow.**
 - Students use their own words (no 'copy and paste' work).
 - Provide reference information for the internet sources they use to get information.
2. **Use the 5 Ws to research and analyze an issue highlighted in the Environmental Justice Atlas.**
 - Who is involved?
 - What is the issue? What are the health and environmental impacts?
 - Where is this happening?
 - When was/is this happening?
 - Why are some groups of people impacted more than others?

- **Compare & contrast:** Look at neighbouring areas (e.g., neighbourhoods, cities, regions, etc.). Why would certain areas be impacted more than others? What are the similarities and differences between areas that are impacted and areas that are not? Are there differences in the social, education, or economic resources that the people in these communities have?
- **Analyze:** What are the different perspectives on this issue? What is being done by the affected community(ies) to change this situation or problem? Are there allies who are already supporting the work that this community is doing? What might be the challenges for this community?
- **Act/share:** What can we do to advocate for people experiencing the injustice? Brainstorm some possible ways to help the community doing the work. Remember to honour the community voices you've learned about.

REFLECT AND SHARE

- Reflect on the big idea
- Reflect on learning that has occurred
- Share learning with others

Steps:

1. **Sharing the learning:** Provide time for students to share their products with classmates.
2. **Facilitated reflection: Community circle discussion**
 - **My feelings:** Unpack students' feelings about environmental racism – how do they feel about these situations?
 - **Self-advocacy:** What work is being done by the people who are impacted to address the injustice?
 - **Allyship:** As an ally, how can I amplify the voices of the communities impacted?
 - Create a space for students to share their responses. Use a bulletin board or chart paper with headings "My feelings," "Self-advocacy," "Allyship." Use sticky notes or index cards to write down a response for each of the three points; students will post their response under each.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

(Publications, websites, videos, downloads, etc.)

Websites:

- Environmental Justice Atlas
- Our Canada Project. A space to share with all Canadians the work you are doing, big or small, individually or collectively, to make Canada a better place.

Teaching Resources:

- Teaching about Allyship: Navigating the Conflict Zone and Becoming an Ally

News Articles:

- *New York Times*, "Your zip code and your life expectancy"
- *The Atlantic*, "Trump's EPA concludes environmental racism is real"
- Medium: Minority students are getting choked out by air pollution in Utah
- Grist: Fracking waste more likely to be located in poor communities and neighborhoods of Colour
- AP News: AP finds climate change risk for 327 toxic Superfund sites
- Google stories: Is it possible to save a rainforest by listening to it?
- CityLab: The Toxic Effects of Electronic Waste in Accra, Ghana
- The Hill: Black people are dying from corona virus—air pollution is one of the main culprits
- *New York Times*, "In the shadows of America's smokestack, virus is one more deadly risk"