

Human Impacts on the Environment – Fire on the Land

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: Grades 6-8
Suggested Duration: Three – Five Class Periods

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 3, Benchmark 8.3 Students will analyze diverse land use and explain the historical and contemporary effects of this use on the environment, with an emphasis on Montana.

Science Content Standard Earth and Space Science content standards for fifth grade are that each student will: obtain and combine information from various sources about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth's resources, environment, and systems and describe examples of how American Indians use scientific knowledge and practices to maintain relationships with the natural world. (Note: Lesson reinforces this 5th grade science standard)

Understandings

- Students will understand aspects of traditional and contemporary uses of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille tribes. (Essential Understanding 3)

Essential Questions

- In general, how did American Indians perceive their relationship to the natural world?
- To what extent did this environmental perspective lead tribes, like the Salish and Pend d' Oreille to use fire as a means to revitalize plant and animal communities?

Students will be able to...

- research, analyze, and discuss the use of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille tribes.

Students will know...

- the traditional and contemporary uses of fire by the Salish and Pend d' Oreille Tribes.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Students will read articles and gather background information regarding historical and/or contemporary uses of fire and share their finding with the rest of the class via poster board/PowerPoint presentations and an oral summary of major points.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Share the following background information with students:

For thousands of years, the Salish, Pend d' Oreille, and other tribes of the Northern Rockies periodically set fire to the land, profoundly shaping plant and animal communities.

Fire on the Land: A Tribal Perspective (excerpt taken from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Web site):

Reason for the Project

- The landscape European-Americans first saw when they traveled west of the Mississippi was not a natural terrain in the sense of being untouched by humans. It was a cultural landscape, a landscape in which the plant and animal communities had been shaped in large part by many thousands of years of burning by Indian people.
- In many areas, tribal people more than doubled the frequency of fires.
- Today, as managers attempt to reintroduce fire after more than a century of fire exclusion, the extent to which Native Americans used fire as a land management tool is often left out of the public debate.

Brief Description

- This project will increase public awareness of and appreciation for the Indian use of fire as a land management tool and increase the public's acceptance of prescribed fire by producing an integrated set of educational materials focusing on the use of fire by Indian people and the profound effects that Indian burning had on plant and animal communities.
- The materials produced will also discuss fundamental principles of fire ecology in the Northern Rockies, the changes that have occurred in vegetation as a result of one hundred years of fire exclusion, and how and why fire is being restored to the landscape. It will integrate the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and technology with traditional tribal knowledge about the use of fire.

As a way to introduce the interactive DVD, have a laptop/computer hooked up to a projector along with good speakers. Play select excerpts of interviews with various tribal elders and experts as a way to introduce the tribal perspectives contained on the DVD. Clips are relatively short, which allow time for good discussion and reflection.

On this DVD, you can hear elder interviews and learn about fire ecology, the traditional use of fire by the tribes, and today's efforts to restore landscapes by reintroducing fire. Tell students they will be utilizing the DVD and the web site (contains very much of the same information as the DVD) to conduct research on various aspects of traditional and contemporary fire use).

Assign students the following topics to research (DVD and website are also organized in the same categories):

- Fire Ecology
- History
- Traditional Culture
- The Great Changes
- The 19th Century
- 20th and 21st Centuries
- Fire Management Today

Independent/Guided Research

Students will utilize the web site and DVD to research their topics, share their finding with the rest of the class via poster board presentations, and also prepare and give an oral summary of major points.

Materials/Resources Needed

Prior to the lesson go your local school library and check out a copy of the DVD entitled *Fire on The Land*, produced by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. A copy was sent to all Montana school libraries. An on-line version of the [DVD and interactive web site](#) is available.

Yazzie, Victoria, 2007, "[The Tribal Perspective of Old Growth in Frequent-fire Forests—Its History](#)" . *Ecology and Society* **12**(2): 21.

[Background information from the US National Park Service](#)

[Fire Ecology - Fire History](#)

Students can also utilize the reference books sent out by OPI for more background information. The following reference books were sent to all Montana school libraries.

Champagne, Duane (Ojibwe) (ed). *Native North American Almanac: A Reference Work of Native North Americans in the United States and Canada*. Detroit: Gale Publishing, 2001.



This comprehensive volume provides historical and contemporary information about the Native peoples of North America.

Davis, Mary B. (ed). *Native America in the Twentieth Century, An Encyclopedia*. Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, N: 1996.

All classroom teachers who are teaching anything about "Native Americans" should have this single-volume encyclopedia available and use it frequently.

Keoke, Emory Dean (Lakota) and Kay Marie Porterfield (eds). *American Indian Contributions to the World: 15,000 Years of Inventions and Innovations*. New York, NY: Checkmark Books, 2003.

With entries ranging from anti-asthmatic medications to zoned biodiversity, this meticulously researched volume is a comprehensive resource to the numerous inventions and innovations made by the indigenous peoples of North, Meso-, and South America. Containing over 450 entries, alphabetically arranged and fully cross-referenced, this indispensable reference book is a must for every classroom and library.