



LEARNING INQUIRIES

STAKEHOLDERS AT THE OILSANDS

TIME: 75 MINUTES

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OVERVIEW/FOCUS QUESTION

Who are the stakeholders of Alberta's oilsands and what is their perspective?

SUBJECT/TOPIC

GEOGRAPHY (CGC1D/1P)

(but easily adaptable to science or social science)

GRADE LEVEL

GRADE 9

(but easily adaptable to Grade 8)

LEARNING GOALS

- To be able to understand the stakeholders for mining or energy projects.
- To be able to find a relevant article, read for comprehension, and understand multiple perspectives.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Chart paper or white boards, along with markers.
- Chromebooks or technology for research, write-ups, or presentations.

CONNECTION TO THE CANADIAN GEOGRAPHY FRAMEWORK

CONCEPTS OF GEOGRAPHIC THINKING

Spatial Significance - As students explore the topic and their article, they will be able to understand why the issue is occurring at that specific location in Canada.

Interrelationships - As students explore the topic and their article, they will be able to explore the connections between Canadians and our ability to responsibly extract bitumen from the oilsands.

Geographic Perspective - Students will be able to analyze the environmental, social, economic and political aspects of a major energy project.

INQUIRY PROCESS

Formulate Questions - By way of an extension activity, students can be encouraged to pursue further knowledge by creating a list of questions about the oilsands (e.g. "I am curious about...").

Gather and Organize - In this lesson, students are asked to find a recent and relevant news article.

Interpret and Analyze - Through the use of guiding questions, students are asked to practice their comprehension skills as they read and understand the points of view within the article.

Communicate - Students are given the opportunity to share their findings with their peers by way of a formal or informal presentation. Teachers can also choose to collect a written submission of their article analysis.

GEOSPATIAL SKILLS

In order for students to gain a sense of place, have on-hand maps of the oilsands and their locations within Alberta for display. Graphs can also be displayed to show students the importance of bitumen and its products for Canada's energy needs. Many are available through <https://energyiq.canadiangeographic.ca> or <https://www.canadasoilsands.ca/en/>.

LESSON DESCRIPTION

MINDS ON

Students will answer questions with think-pair-share and through class discussion.

ACTION

Find a news article about Canada's oilsands and summarize key points (e.g, Who, What, When) and determine who the stakeholders are.

CONCLUSION

Share findings with the class, either formally or informally.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

MINDS ON

To get students started, ask the following questions as a think-pair-share activity where they jot down their answers in pairs or small groups. Take up the answers as a class to share ideas and clarify facts.

1. In comparison to the rest of the world, how does Canada rank in terms of its oil reserves?

A. 3rd in the world

2. Where is most of Canada's oil found?

A. About 64 per cent of Canada's crude oil production comes from three main oilsands regions (Athabasca, Peace River and Cold Lake).

3. What do we use Canada's crude oil for?

A. Each barrel of oil is processed into refined petroleum products, such as gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and much more. In addition, crude oil is also used in the manufacturing of products such as ink, crayons, dishwashing liquid, tires, etc.

4. What are some perspectives that Canadians have about the oilsands? Guide students to think in terms of social, environmental, economic, political and regional factors.

A. This is an open-ended question, but some of the answers may include: Socially, the people in Fort McMurray enjoy job security and a strong town community with recreation centres. Environmentally, there are many concerns about the effects of mining activity on fresh water, wildlife habitats, and more. Economically, Alberta plays a big role in providing jobs for Canadians, as well as contributing to the GDP, exporting its products around the world. This is also an opportunity to discuss with students the meaning of "direct" and "indirect" jobs. Politically, voters in Alberta want a leader who understands and supports an industry vital to their livelihoods. It is also important to keep communication open with Indigenous groups in and around traditional lands. Lastly, it is important for students to understand that there are regional differences. For example, Canadians in Ontario or New Brunswick may not fully understand oilsands extraction, processing, and exports. As such, they may have a biased view or they may be lacking all the information to form their own opinion.

ACTION

Have the students find an article in the news regarding Alberta's oilsands. Try and have them find an article that is recent (e.g., within the last year) and from an established media source, such as the Toronto Star, Edmonton Journal, Globe and Mail, or CBC. If access to media is difficult in the classroom, have a selection of articles ready for them (see below). Have the students determine the following criteria using the prompts provided:

1. **What?** What is the article about or what is the main issue?
2. **When?** When did this issue occur and how long has it been going on for?
3. **Where and Why?** Where in Canada is this issue occurring specifically? Why is this an issue at that particular location? What is the spatial significance of this issue?

4. **Who?** Who are the stakeholders, what is their perspective, and why do they care about the issue? In some articles, this may be very obvious, and students will be able to easily identify at least two. Have students think about other people or organizations who have a stake in the issue, but were not specifically mentioned in the article.
5. **Citation.** You could also ask the students to practice their citation skills and have them prepare a source entry according to MLA or APA style.

Possible Articles

Dubinsky, Zach. "Oilsands CO2 emissions may be far higher than companies report, scientists say". CBC News. 23 April 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/oilsands-carbon-emissions-study-1.5106809>

Malbeuf, Jamie. "Acid rain from oilsands having less impact than expected on boreal forest, studies find". CBC News. 24 June 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/oilsands-emissions-study-fort-mcmurray-1.5181727>

Markusoff, Jeff. "The rise of Alberta's unapologetic petro-patriots". Maclean's. 15 July 2019. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-rise-of-albertas-unapologetic-petro-patriots/>

Bakx, Kyle and Genevieve Normand. "Drawing a line in the oilsands". CBC News Interactives. 25 December 2018. <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/drawing-a-line-in-the-oilsands-fight>

The Canadian Press. "Oilsands CEOs take federal election message to voters in full-page newspaper ads". CBC News. 1 August 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/ad-oilsands-letter-companies-oilpatch-industry-federal-voters-1.5232828>

CONCLUSION AND CONSOLIDATION

There are a number of options for consolidating the learning on this topic. You can have students work individually or in small groups. You can have them display their point-form answers on white boards or large flip-chart paper. You can choose to have them present orally to the class (formally or informally). You can also choose to have them create a one-page write-up for submission.

EXTEND YOUR GEOGRAPHICAL THINKING

Teachers and students can learn more about the oilsands through <https://energyiq.canadiangeographic.ca>. There are various articles, lessons, activities, videos, and quizzes that can extend learning on this topic.

If time allows, you can provide an opportunity for students to create their own questions about the oilsands. They can then use their geographic inquiry skills to find the answers and share them with their peers.

MODIFICATIONS

Depending on the students and resources in the classroom, you can choose news articles ahead of time about the oilsands with various reading levels. A word wall can be created as students encounter new vocabulary. You can also create and provide a worksheet that provides all the prompts in written form to guide students through the task ahead of them.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

During the Minds On discussions, you have an opportunity to determine students' prior knowledge about Canada's oil industry. This will help guide further inquiry on this specific topic as well as the broader topic of Canada's energy mix.

If you choose to collect or assess presentations or write-ups, it would give you the opportunity to observe students' understanding of stakeholders as well as their comprehension of the article. The students' oral and written skills can also be improved through feedback.

SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources Canada - <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/publications/18756>