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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2023 Volume IV: Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice and Land Issues of Indigenous People

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This unit, created for High School World History and Ethnic Studies classes, focuses on environmental racism and environmental injustice by examining the loss of land and resources that indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere suffered and continue to suffer at the hands of European explorers and their descendants. Focusing on the Sioux nation in present day United States and the indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest, the unit looks at both historical and contemporary injustices in the environmental arena. Deforestation of the Amazon and the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline are both examples of recent ongoing environmental injustices that students will study. An inquiry driven culminating project will task students with individual research, interpretation of data, and presentation of conclusions and potential solutions, as well as peer review and comment. Although designed for High School students this unit could be adapted for Middle School grades as well and adjusted to focus on a United States History classroom if desired.

(Developed for Ethnic Studies, grades 9-12; recommended for World History, grade 10, and U. S. History, grade 11)

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