

**Teacher Materials**

**American Indian Responses to  
Environmental Challenges**

**Lesson Understandings**

- American Indian communities have deep ties to the places they have lived for thousands of years.
- These deep ties to place define Native history, their cultures, and their ways of living. Their ties to the places where they live make them who they are.
- Today, American Indians are working to address serious environmental problems in these places to help keep their communities and unique cultures alive.

**Grade Level**

- 6-9

**Time Frame**

- Lesson One will take approximately four 50-minute class periods, depending upon how students are grouped.
- [Lesson Two](#) can be used by teachers with one or two 50-minute class periods available.

## Lesson One Preparation and Procedures

### Lesson One Preparation

- Review the website yourself
- View the five short videos for each American Indian community: [\*\*Akwesasne Mohawk\*\*](#), [\*\*Campo Kumeyaay Nation\*\*](#), [\*\*Leech Lake Ojibwe\*\*](#), and [\*\*Lummi Nation\*\*](#).
- Look at the interactive activities, focus questions, and key terms that accompany each video.
- Experiment with the [\*\*Story Project Planner\*\*](#), which enables students to “favorite” images, answer questions, and take notes that they’ll incorporate into their Story Project presentation.
- Download the [\*\*Story Project PowerPoint template\*\*](#), which students will use to build the Story Project presentations they’ll give to their classmates.
- Review the [\*\*Sample Story Project\*\*](#) to get ideas about the kind of projects your students can create.
- Review the [\*\*Resources\*\*](#) page for additional research opportunities for you and your students.
- Read the one-page Teacher Backgrounders on each American Indian community: [\*\*Akwesasne Mohawk\*\*](#), [\*\*Campo Kumeyaay Nation\*\*](#), [\*\*Leech Lake Ojibwe\*\*](#), and [\*\*Lummi Nation\*\*](#).
- Decide how many of the four American Indian communities your class will study. Ideally, each of the four communities will be studied by small groups, but you may choose to have all student groups study the same community, or you may study one community as a class.
- Think about where students will sit as they use this website and do their planning work for the Story Projects. They’ll need to be able to hear the video they’re watching without disturbing their classmates. Please note that a transcription of each video is provided for those who need or wish to use it.
- Learn about efforts to remediate environmental damage in your own community or region, so you can help students connect what they learn about Native communities to their own and to complete all portions of the Story Project. Use the websites of your local newspaper or news channel to find environmental stories.

### Lesson One Procedures

- Class period #1
  - Introduce the website and tell students that they are going to learn about how contemporary American Indians are working to remediate environmental problems in their communities. Using a projector or large monitor, show students the home page and how to navigate to the main page for each community the class will study—[\*\*Akwesasne Mohawk\*\*](#), [\*\*Campo Kumeyaay Nation\*\*](#), [\*\*Leech Lake Ojibwe\*\*](#), and [\*\*Lummi Nation\*\*](#)—and use the map to identify each community’s location.

- Explain to students that they will:
  - watch a series of five videos
  - do online interactive activities
  - answer online focus questions
  - use Key Terms to get definitions for words they might not know
  - use an online Story Project Planner
- Explain that each group of students will use the **Story Project Planner** and the **Story Project PowerPoint template** to create a presentation they'll deliver to the class.
- Assign students to groups and each group an American Indian community, then give students a few minutes to become familiar with the section of the site they're studying.
- Class period #2
  - Briefly share with students stories of environmental remediation in your own community (see step 5 under Preparation), then after splitting into their groups, have students watch the following videos for the community they're studying:
    - Meet the People
    - About Our Homeland
    - Our Environmental Challenge
  - Remind them to do the interactive activity for each video and answer the focus questions. Show them how to favorite images, take notes, and answer the questions in the **Story Project Planner**. Monitor the groups' progress during the work time. Answer their questions about how the site works or what they'll do with their notes and the answers to the questions in the **Planner**. Show students how to mark and print their progress. Anything that is favorited at this point needs to be saved to a thumb drive, hard drive, or mobile device or it will be lost once the student leaves the site. Notes should be printed.
  - Regroup as a class. Ask a representative to summarize what their group learned about the people, land, and environmental challenge.
- Class period #3
  - Have students meet in their groups to watch the remaining videos:
    - Our Strategies
    - Our Future
  - They should continue doing the interactive activity for each video, answering the focus questions, and using the **Story Project Planner** at the end of the video. When they've finished watching the videos, gather the class together to review the next step in the Story Project: developing a presentation on the community they studied and delivering it to the class.
  - On a projector, show students the **Story Project PowerPoint template**. The work on the template is done offline. Explain how to save this file to a hard drive, thumb drive, or mobile device. Tell students that they should use the images they favorite, the questions they answered, and the notes they made to build their presentation. Remind students that each group has learned about a different Native American community, so when they deliver their presentations, they will be teaching each other.

- Give students time to work on their PowerPoint presentations. If they need more time, decide whether they will complete the presentation for homework or during an upcoming class period.
- Have each group meet to decide how they will do outside-of-class research to answer the questions in the “My Community” section of the **Story Project Planner:**
  - What environmental problem exists in your community and what are people doing to repair the damage?
  - What can you do to help your community fix this problem?
- An alternative to outside-of-class research: In hard copy or online, you could provide several stories on local environmental remediation efforts and invite each student group to choose a local story to incorporate into their Story Project presentation. Encourage students to make connections to the work of the Native community they studied.
- Class period #4
  - Have each group make its presentation to the class about the American Indian community it studied. Consider inviting parents, students from other classes, or members of your school’s environmental action or “green” club or committee to listen to the presentations.
  - Between presentations, summarize what happened in American Indian communities, help students make connections to their own communities, and answer any questions.

## Lesson Two Preparation and Procedures

### Lesson Two Preparation

- Review the website yourself:
  - View the five short videos for each American Indian community—[Akwesasne Mohawk](#), [Campo Kumeyaay Nation](#), [Leech Lake Ojibwe](#), and [Lummi Nation](#)—or just view the videos for the one community you’re planning to study.
  - Look at the interactive activities and focus questions that accompany each video.
  - Experiment with the [Project Planner](#) that enables students to favorite images and take notes.
- Choose one of the American Indian communities for your class to study. You may want to study a community that is near your own or lives in a similar environment.
- Read the Background Information on the community you’ve chosen to study: [Akwesasne Mohawk](#), [Campo Kumeyaay Nation](#), [Leech Lake Ojibwe](#), and [Lummi Nation](#).
- Arrange for use of a projector or large monitor so all students can view the website’s videos, interactive activities, focus questions, and the [Story Project Planner](#).

### Lesson Two Procedures

- Class period #1
  - Introduce the website and tell students that they are going to learn about how contemporary American Indians are working to remediate environmental issues in their communities. Using a projector or large monitor, show students the main page for the community the class will study—[Akwesasne Mohawk](#), [Campo Kumeyaay Nation](#), [Leech Lake Ojibwe](#), or [Lummi Nation](#)—and use the map to identify the community’s location.
  - Show each video for the community you have chosen:
    - Meet the People
    - About Our Homeland
    - Our Environmental Challenge
    - Our Strategies
    - Our Future
  - After the class watches each short video:
    - Answer the focus questions as a class.
    - Show the interactive activity for that video and discuss the overall concept it illustrates.
    - Discuss the open-ended questions found in the [Story Project Planner](#). You can type students’ answers to these questions into the fields if you want to generate notes from the discussion.

- Class period #2

*Teacher Tip: If you can devote a second class period to this website, or if you would like students to work with the website at home, here are some extension ideas:*

- Learn about efforts to remediate environmental damage in your own community, so you can help students connect what they learn about Native communities to their own. Search the websites of your local newspaper or TV news channels to find environmental stories. In handouts or online, share the local story with students, then ask them to compare what’s going on in their own community to what they learned about the American Indian community.
- Give students a class period to study a second community. They could work in small groups or individually. Have them watch the five videos, do the interactive activities, answer the focus questions, and take notes in the [\*\*Story Project Planner\*\*](#).
- Show the class the [\*\*Sample Story Project\*\*](#) and consider having them create their own project using the [\*\*Story Project Planner\*\*](#).
- For homework, have students do video interviews of people in their community about environmental issues. If they’d like, students could adapt some of the questions in the [\*\*Story Project Planner\*\*](#) to use during the video interview. Then, students could upload their videos to YouTube or other media sharing site (as deemed appropriate by your school district policy).
- Have students do online or library research to find before and after images of environmental damage and remediation in their own community. Or, have them do research to find the “before” images, then take their own “after” photos. Have students caption the photos and save them.