



## Lesson Plan

# Who Uses the Land?

The Seward Peninsula has been used for over 10,000 years. The earliest evidence of usage harkens back to the Bering Land Bridge, when the earliest inhabitants of this continent crossed over from Asia. This land use continues up to today, with many different groups competing for rights to use the land. The various types of usage have not always been beneficial.

## Objective

The students will engage in research to learn how the local environment has been used throughout history.

## Background

For background information on land use history in Alaska, visit the following websites:

- Alaska history: <http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=138>
- Native Alaskan History wiki: [http://wiki.bssd.org/index.php/Native\\_Alaskan\\_history](http://wiki.bssd.org/index.php/Native_Alaskan_history)
- ANCSA info for Elementary School age: [http://www.alaskool.org/projects/anca/elem\\_ed/elem\\_anca.htm](http://www.alaskool.org/projects/anca/elem_ed/elem_anca.htm)
- Inuit History in Alaska: <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Ha-La/Inuit.html>
- History of Northwest Alaska: <http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=75>

## Introduction:

- Point to a couple of places on a map of the United States. Picking Texas or Florida may prove to be good starting points.
- Ask the students how those lands are used today? Some potential answers may include fishing, tourism and orchards for Florida. Some potential answers for Texas might include fishing, tourism, ranching, and oil drilling. Write these answers up on the board.

**Grade Level:** Sixth Grade-  
Eleventh Grade

**Grade Subjects:** American Indian History and Culture, Community, Government, Historic Preservation, History, Planning/Development, Public Policy, Regional Studies, Westward Expansion

**Duration:** 30-60 minutes

**Group Size:** Up to 24

**Standards:** (8) SA3.1, AH. PPE3, AH. CC6

## Vocabulary

Land use  
ANCSA  
Native corporations



- Have the students engage in a discussion about how these uses might conflict with each other. For instance oil drilling and fishing may conflict in Texas. Point out that both states have native populations still present (Comanche's in Texas and Seminoles in Florida). How would the native populations have access to the land in these two states?

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## Procedure

Assign approximately 1/3 of the class to research Alaska and the uses of the land before modern contact. By before modern contact the students should focus on Alaska before its exploration by the Russians and Europeans. They should research the following questions:

1. What groups were present on the land?
2. What did these groups use the land for?
3. Were any of the uses of land (or people) at odds with each other? How would this conflict have been resolved?

Assign the second third of the class to research the colonial period in Alaskan history. This period includes the time from when white men (Russians, British and Americans) began using the land up until statehood. Once again they will answer the following questions:

1. What groups were now present on the land?
2. What did these groups use the land for?
3. Were any of these uses of land at odds with each other? How would these conflicts have been resolved?

Assign the final third of the class to research the modern period in Alaskan history. This time period runs from gaining statehood until the present day. Have them answer the following questions:

1. What groups are present on the land (make sure they answer for groups of people and organizations)?
2. What did these groups use the land for?
3. Were any of these uses of land at odds with each other? How would these conflicts have been resolved?

## Materials

- Books on Alaskan history
- Internet access
- Local Elders (if applicable)
- Butcher paper or something large to write on
- Worksheet (see attached)

Next, have the students share the information that they have found and place it onto different sheets of butcher paper.

## Discussion

1. Ask the students to take some time to examine each time period. Answer the following questions:
  - Over time, what groups of people have used Alaskan land?
  - What new uses of the land could be deemed to be harmful?
  - What new groups of people have conflicted with native groups and how?
  - How have new groups of people conflicted with each other in terms of land use?
  - What sorts of conflict resolution would you recommend to resolve any land use conflict?
2. There are some special events and groups of people that may be of interest to your class. For the colonial and modern periods you may want them to research reindeer herding and how it affected the land. You may also want to have them research Project Chariot during the statehood period for a discussion of how nuclear usage would have affected the land. An investigation of the proposed Rampart Dam may also be relevant.

There are a couple of events closer to home that are also of importance. Have the students working on the modern era include the Red Dog Mine and Rock Creek Mines. Information is included on these mines that will help show students how different land uses can conflict with each other.

3. Once students have had a chance to place their work up onto the butcher paper, have them add a new category. This category will be titled Environmental Impact. Have them write on the butcher paper how different group's usage of the land would affect the environment. For example, early miner's use of fire to clear land had a negative impact on forests and tundra, negatively impacting local wildlife. Have the students focus in on how some of the various usages contribute to climate change. Oil and gas exploration is a definite contributing factor. Mining can also contribute to climate change. Tourism could also contribute to climate change. When dealing with a delicate ecosystem like the arctic tundra, contact with humans can take years to recover from. Many types of lichen take 20-30 years to fully grow. Increased land usage threatens to disrupt these ecosystems.
4. At this point introduce the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the concept of native corporations. Resources are included to help share information about ANCSA. Some specific points to highlight is that the continuing struggle for native land claims to be recognized coupled with the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay in 1968 led to ANCSA. The government and corporation wanted to extract the oil by pipeline but couldn't do so until they had rights to use land claimed by natives. Ask students to brainstorm what these concepts mean and how they affect people in Alaska. Be sure to ask students how this Act and the native corporations affect different kinds of land usage (i.e. hunting, ATV use, oil exploration etc.). Under this act who determines land usage?

## Assessment

1. Have students define the 3 periods in Alaskan history and list who used the land at that time.
2. Have students define the concept of native corporations and the ANCSA. Have them list how these two concepts affected land use in Alaska

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## Extension

An alternate example of this activity would include energy usage. Alaska is home to an abundance of natural energy sources. Of course there is the Alaskan pipeline and oilfields. Alaska also contains significant amounts of natural gas. Recent efforts to build pipelines that use this gas have met with limited success. Many smaller villages and cities have begun to use wind power and geothermal power sources. Chena Hot Springs began using geothermal power in 2006. Wales, Kotzebue, Nome and many other cities have built wind turbines. When examining these issues we can ask ourselves the same questions about using the land and potential conflicts. While renewable energy is always preferred, we still run into some conflicts when using it. Wind generators have to be built somewhere. They can affect birds and other animals in the area.



Traditional reindeer herder. Photo by ©Konstantin Savva

**(Sample)**

Colonial Era

Group	Activity	Conflict	Resolution	Environmental Impact
Miners	Gold Mining	Takes away hunting land from locals	None	Fire threatens habitat, disrupts water flow of streams
Natives	Hunting	Hunted on areas desired by miners	Little resolution until passage of ANCSA	Normal population management
Whalers	Whaling, hunting for seals and walrus	Took away native food source	Whaling restrictions in 1900's	Removed food source from locals and caused other game to grow in importance

ROUGH DRAFT

GROUP	ACTIVITY	CONFLICT	RESOLUTION	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

## Energy Use

Energy	Activity	Conflict	Resolution	Environmental Impact