

EDCP 333 Annotated Resource Guide
Environmental Racism Selected Sources, 1870 to present

This resource guide stands at the intersection of primarily Weeks Six and Nine of the course, and it focuses on how environmental injustices are disproportionately and differently experienced by persons of colour. Much of this guide will also highlight how settler-Indigenous relations within Canada have imposed environmental inequalities connected to resource extraction, energy production, and settler constructs of “nature,” hence this guide will also extend from Week Five’s content. For the most part, these sources will function as research material towards foregrounding/lecture sessions.

In terms of the application of this content, I am looking to use it throughout my Grade 10 courses. While I recognize that some of the content extends back to the late nineteenth century, I am someone who believes it is appropriate to take five to ten minutes of “Frontloading” time to give a PowerPoint presentation about how, for example, when settlers designed park spaces within Canada, they envisioned Indigenous peoples as not belonging in those places. To not provide the historical background of such socio-cultural and physical constructs in a disservice to students, the subject matter, and the peoples who have faced colonial discrimination as a result of such histories.

It is my hope that the extent to which this unit challenges traditional settler narratives will not be read as unnecessarily political, but there will likely be some who question the value of the content for such reasons. (I mean, really, if someone is going to call my teaching content ‘excessively political,’ they have more leverage if they use my proposed postwar lesson on labour right and union histories. I will likely get the students to analyze the current BC teacher collective agreement and ask where students feel that their needs are benefitted or not, for instance in regard to the number of students in a class.) That said, I do expect there could be some pushback from students or parents who feel like my postwar unit, as an example, may be focused heavily on postwar content, note-taking, and the commodity project, but lack in the coverage of more traditional historical “facy facts,” as a mentor of mine has phrased it.

To those critics, I would note that my postwar unit focuses heavily on commodities and environmental inequalities, while taking time to address a timeline of Canadian rights (and lack thereof), consumption patterns which connect global economic and technoscientific frameworks with local experiences of environmental injustices, and, of course, the curricular focus on different perspectives, an objective which I hope to implement in the majority of my lessons. In addition, I do plan to tackle the more traditional Sputnik and Kennedy-esque content, but I would like to first build students' core and curricular competencies using non-traditional content.

The guide proceeds to discuss environmental relations within Canada and, to a lesser extent, the United States, through a focus on park spaces, resource extraction, hydroelectric projects, highways/urban planning, solid waste disposal, globalization, and Indigenous connections with land.

The Settler Defining of Park Spaces in Tandem with Indigenous Peoples

Binnema, T., & Niemi, M. (2006). 'Let the Line be Drawn Now': Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada. *Environmental History*, 11(4), 724-750. doi:10.1093/envhis/11.4.724

This source is a stellar presentation of how park spaces in settler Canada are socially and physically constructed spaces. Binnema and Niemi contextualize the settler notion of parks as being separate from humans, including Indigenous peoples. Their case study of Banff from 1890 to 1920 demonstrates how Indigenous peoples were increasingly seen by settlers as part of a landscape which was increasingly becoming part of a pre-contact past. Indigenous peoples, according to settler authorities, were to be removed from park spaces, regardless of whether those peoples relied on the park sites for hunting. In the process of forming parks, settlers likewise altered Indigenous relations to lands, both culturally and physically. (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

Kheraj, S. (2013). *Inventing Stanley Park: An Environmental History*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Sean Kheraj's work dovetails beautifully with the former source in preparation for a foregrounding session on colonial park histories. Kheraj demonstrates that in spite of millennia of occupation within what we know as Stanley Park, the Squamish and Musqueam peoples were evicted from their territory. Their expulsion paved the way for a peculiar and particular manifestation of "wilderness" within an urban setting. As settlers created a space for Vancouverites to escape the noise and filth of the city, so too did they evict Indigenous (and Chinese occupants as well) who called that land home. (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

Resource Extraction

Manwiller-Thompson, B. (2014, May 21.) *A VILLAGE OF WIDOWS* [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSRej1JX-c&ab_channel=BeccaManwiller-Thompson

This source is a must-show when covering World War Two content, though students should be provided a trigger warning as the visuals and testimonies can be quite upsetting. The source is a white-hot poker stick jabbing into the notion that the bombing of Japan in World War II was strictly an American initiative. This documentary centres on the Dene Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories whose community was spatially and culturally connected to the mining of uranium ore next to Great Bear Lake. The video is a visceral demonstration of how intimately these people lived and worked within spaces dominated by the uranium dust. In addition, the film drives home the race and class intersections as white workers were also subjected to dangerous working conditions. A fundamental lesson of this source is that the working class was kept in the

dark even as senior members of government and the El Dorado Company were aware of the dangers of working with such radioactive substances.

The video further provides a documenting of a more recent meeting of the Dene people and the Japanese. It is heartbreaking to see the former group pain-stricken with guilt tied to their contributions to the devastation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and yet they were not aware at the time as to what they were working towards, let alone the health consequences imposed on their own community. This source thus works to challenge notions of Canada as a historically peaceful nation with good relations with Indigenous peoples, while placing Canada in a global context of environmental inequalities.

Hydroelectric Projects within Canada

Carlson, H.M. (2008). *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*.

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.

While frontier-based narratives have traditionally dominated settler publications about the Cree, this source centres on the Cree's understanding of their relationship to their lands, histories, and cultural contexts since contact. This source incorporates the settler-based histories of resource extraction, damming, and Christianizing of the Cree, yet the narrative frames the Cree as resisters of cultural and infrastructural oppression. This is one such source to ensure that Indigenous peoples are not simply given a label of victimhood, but rather that their agency and resistance is recognized when one discusses the diverse impacts of hydroelectric projects. (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

Loo, T. (2007). Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River. *Environmental History* 12(4), 895–919.

This is an excellent source to challenge students' perceptions about what Indigenous peoples may desire as compensation for the oppressive impacts of postwar dams. This article presents the social, political, economic, and environmental impacts of the damming of the Peace River, but it also includes a discussion of what Indigenous peoples such as the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree would want in terms of 'restored' relations with the land. While a settler-operated group sought to bring back pre-dam landscapes, the nations asked "for an all-weather road, improvements to the airport, better schools, help with starting a quarry, and jobs in tar sands development" (Loo, 2007: 909). For the settlers, they experienced challenges in redefining their understanding of people-land relations in *social* terms, rather than spatial understandings grounded in Western sciences. Once again, this is a great source to paraphrase for students in a lecture-esque session about differing perspectives tied to dams and their impacts. (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

———. (2004). People in the Way: Modernity, Environment, and Society on the Arrow Lakes. *BC Studies* 142–143, 161–91.

If one is going to read just one scholar's work about colonial dams in postwar BC, Tina Loo is an excellent person to learn from. Her work highlights the oppressive tactics used to silence and remove the peoples who stood in the way of WAC Bennett's postwar hydroelectric dam projects. In the mind of Bennett and those who thought similarly, BC's more remote riverscapes were ripe for alteration in order to enable a new postwar lifestyle for settler Canadians. The vision of possessing a washer, dryer, and other such appliances, in their minds, hinged on altering sites such as the Arrow Lakes region, regardless of the people in the way. While this source does not address Indigenous perspectives to the extent of Loo's "Disturbing the Peace," it provides critical context to understanding

different approaches to “modernity.” (Source for teacher foregrounding, but with guidance, students might be able to take on their own analysis of this work.)

Highways/Urban Planning

Erwin, R., & Pietropaolo, P. (2015, April 16). Elders looking to help govern youthful B.C. First Nation | CBC News. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/tsawwassen-first-nation-s-new-legislative-seat-eyed-by-elders-1.3022421>

This article references the implications of colonial oppression, particularly since the twentieth century. The source can work well in conjunction with the Tsawwassen nation timeline referenced below as the former addresses the small population of elders to provide the nation’s histories and pass on the language. In particular, Hun'qumi'num, a Coast Salish dialect, is nearly lost, seeing as there are no longer any fluent speakers.

This source works well in tandem with settler Canadian sources about highway construction within the Delta-Tsawwassen area. Students can interrogate the notions of progress and Canadian prosperity heralded by postwar settler sources – such as these videos:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9I6BpXwUZE&list=UUrqlrc7oZSW3L814S73YR_w&fbclid=IwAR3zXNVjDFXukmXgFerTwcX2xhjde-IpGAGE7q-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9I6BpXwUZE&list=UUrqlrc7oZSW3L814S73YR_w&fbclid=IwAR3zXNVjDFXukmXgFerTwcX2xhjde-IpGAGE7q-MNz3BXKqMfuStzK_IXJo)

[MNz3BXKqMfuStzK_IXJo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9I6BpXwUZE&list=UUrqlrc7oZSW3L814S73YR_w&fbclid=IwAR3zXNVjDFXukmXgFerTwcX2xhjde-IpGAGE7q-MNz3BXKqMfuStzK_IXJo) – in contrast to the lasting consequences of the Tsawwassen longhouse being torn down, the kidnapping of the Tsawwassen children as they were sent to residential schools, or other such acts of colonial acts of genocide.

Spirn, A.W. (2005). Restoring Mill Creek: Landscape Literacy, Environmental Justice and City Planning and Design. *Landscape Research*, 30(3), 395-413.

doi:10.1080/01426390500171193

Anne Spirn recounts the successes and shortcomings as part of her work with Middle School children within a Black, impoverished neighborhood. The community may have been poorly constructed over a hidden creek and then neglected by urban planners and politicians, but the children could still come to see their neighbourhood (and themselves as individuals) as worthy of advocacy. After reading the landscape and understanding the consequences of burying a creek and constructing on top of it, the students began to ask tough questions of regional planners. They also began to see themselves as worthy of higher education and urban planning which addressed the socio-economic and geographical challenges in a just manner. Spirn's work functions as a gold standard for the implementation of landscape literacy within curricula in order to promote self-advocacy against environmental injustice. (Source for teacher foregrounding and general pedagogical approaches.)

Tsawwassen First Nation, "Timeline of History: Pre-Treaty and Colonialism Treaty," accessed December 1, 2020, <http://tsawwassenfirstnation.com/about-tfn/our-nation/timeline-of-history/>

This source provides a timeline of pre-contact Tsawwassen historical events as well as Tsawwassen-settler relations since then. A great activity for students might be to get them looking up "Delta history" and assessing the differences in content, approaches, perspectives, and key lessons about local histories. Students can examine the differences in how the sources talk about resource-based economic activities, interactions with the land, and the important figures of the Delta area. What students will notice is that the settler sources paint a far different picture and are much less inclined to even reference Indigenous peoples.

Waste/Landfills

Bullard, R.D. (2007) Dumping on Houston's Black Neighbourhoods. In Martin V.

Melosi and Joseph A. Pratt (Eds.), *Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast* (pp. 207–223). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

As a key driver of efforts to educate about and counter environmental racism, Robert Bullard is an important figure to bring in. As he notes, “environmental decision making and policies often mirror the power arrangements of the dominant society and its institutions. A form of illegal ‘exaction’ forces people of colour to pay the costs of environmental benefit for the public at large” (Bullard, 1994). Bullard’s works contribute to our understanding of waste-based injustices in tandem with race and class-based discrimination. Likewise, teachers should also access Bullard’s *Dumping in the Dixie*. (Bullard, R. (1994). *Race, Class, and Environmental History*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc.) (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

Melosi, M.V. (2007). “Houston’s Public Sinks: Sanitary Services from Local Concerns to Regional Challenges.” In Martin V. Melosi and Joseph A. Pratt (Eds.), *Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast* (pp. 109–147). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Martin Melosi stands as one of the prominent historians related to waste disposal, though his traditional focus has been centred on waste infrastructure history since the nineteenth century. This piece, while shorter than his three most recent books, references race-based environmental inequalities. That said, Robert D. Bullard’s contribution to the same volume provides a fuller discussion of how disposal facilities have been cited in Houston according to race-based discrimination. Melosi’s work thus helps to contextualize such inequalities through an examination of historical infrastructure. (Source for teacher foregrounding.)

King, T. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2012.

For an excellent reference to Indigenous-settler politics related to landfill siting, consult this work, specifically page 207. Discussions about waste and Indigenous-settler relations tend to place Indigenous peoples in the position of victimhood. With a fair amount of nuance for such an accessible work and a brief section, King reflects on how Indigenous nations have also sought contracts to host landfills as a means of stable, long term income. Meanwhile, we do need to properly frame the intentions of the waste disposal companies who contract with such nations. When those companies have said “Recognize Indigenous sovereignty,” it has been for the purpose of securing cheap contracts with potentially less strict environmental practices, not because corporations such as Waste Management, Inc. have a genuine interest in promoting Indigenous rights tied to culture and land use. In this sense, this little excerpt provides excellent content to consider differing perspectives and intentions. Likewise, teachers can gain further economic and political context through Melosi’s “Historic Development of Sanitary Landfills and Subtitle D.” (Found in the Energy Laboratory Newsletter, volume 31 (1994), pages 20–24.) This excerpt helps to better establish the web of motivations and lacking innovations/regulations associated with solid waste in the US (and Canada) up to recent decades. On the whole, this source also serves well to indicate the importance of land back initiatives, as per the last section of this resource guide.

This source can be used within English and Social Studies classes as it was written to be accessible. This book might be ideally covered over the course of a semester with the teacher implementing check-in points to ensure that students are keeping up with the content. If students do not relatively follow the chronology, then they lose the grasp of a

key point that King drives home. There is no solid divide between a colonial era and now. Exploitation and oppression is a consistent timeline.

Globalization

Hecht, G. (2018, February 6). The African Anthropocene. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://aeon.co/essays/if-we-talk-about-hurting-our-planet-who-exactly-is-the-we>

Gabrielle Hecht's piece is a brief but apt demonstration of how environmental injustice is defined according to race and class barriers and geographies. If one wants students to have an accessible source which delivers content, this already ticks that box. It also works as lesson material for why we should not say "we" in our writing. This article sufficiently demonstrates how it is lazy writing which veils detailed actors and relations at play, whether we are writing about the past, present, or future. Whether one is doing a lesson on globalization, climate change, or the Anthropocene in general, this is an excellent source.

Indigenous Connections with Land

Alfred, T. (2017). It's all about the land. In Peter MacFarlane & Nicole Schabus (Eds), *Whose Land Is It Anyway? A Manual for Decolonization*, (pp. 11-13).
https://fpse.ca/sites/default/files/news_files/Decolonization%20Handbook.pdf

Taiaiake Alfred's brief contribution to this volume is an accessible source for students to read themselves. It is a brief discussion of the importance of land in discussions of decolonization, but also the falsehoods associated with "reconciliation." Indigenous speakers, like Alfred, have long been noting that reconciliation promotes the notion that

there are good relations to go back to. Likewise, Alfred connects the notion of land entitlement and sovereignty to the concept of mental wellness within Indigenous peoples as a whole, with particular reference to Indigenous youth.

Wagamese, R. (2012). *Indian horse: A novel*. Minneapolis: Milweed Editions.

Wagamese's fictional work balances engaging, exquisite writing with a fair portrayal of the Residential School experience for many Survivors. *Indian Horse* tells the story of an Ojibway child in the postwar era who survived his time at a St. Jerome's Indian Residential School in White River and then struggled to heal as an adult. *Indian Horse* has come to be recognized in Canada as an excellent source for high school education, particularly in Social Studies/History and English studies. Saul's character may be fictional, but the account highlights the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse which was key to the oppressive and assimilative goals of the schooling system. The book also sheds light on the racist relations which took place outside of the school.

Arguably, the best approach for using this text in a class is to work through the book first, taking time for students to process the emotional weight of Saul's experiences. After a class has covered the book, they can view the film (available on American Netflix and free on CBC Gem). Equipped with background discussions of historical context and trauma, students will be better able to recognize the unspoken dynamics which take place in the film, namely the aggressive use of stereotypical "savage Indian" imagery and those silent interactions between Saul and the allegedly kind pastor. Key to this resource guide, students should also be asked questions about the importance of language usage/preservation and the power of land in the healing process for Saul, with that discussion acting as a springboard for discussion about the importance of land to Indigenous peoples today. Excerpts of Thomas King's *Inconvenient Indian* can also be brought into this discussion.