

Indigenous Sovereignty in the News

Here are student handouts for researching current issues dealing with Indigenous sovereignty. See the related article on pages 16–22 by Sarah B. Shear, Leilani Sabzalian, and Lisa Brown Buchanan.

Questions to Guide Your Research on an Indigenous Nation

Question or Inquiry	Notes and Results
Name: What is the nation's name in its own language (if applicable)? What does it mean? Is this nation commonly known in English by another name?	
Population: How many citizens belong to this nation today?	
Language: What Native language(s) is spoken within the nation?	
Geography: Where do the people of this nation live today? Where are the nation's traditional homelands?	
Flag: What is the meaning of symbols, colors, shapes, or words within the nation's flag?	
Governance: What is the leadership structure (e.g., president, chairman/woman, tribal council), and how are leaders selected?	
Departments or Services: What services does the nation offer its citizens?	
Treaties: What treaties have been signed between this nation and the United States? What rights are upheld in the treaty?	
Interesting Facts: What other interesting facts did you notice from the nation's website?	
Questions: At the conclusion of your research, what new questions do you have?	

Contemporary Issues Facing Indigenous Nations



1. Passports for Travel (Haudenosaunee Confederacy in Ontario)

In 2010 and 2015, Haudenosaunee lacrosse teams withdrew from international tournaments because their Haudenosaunee-issued passports were not recognized by national governments as legitimate travel documents. Sports experts predicted these teams would be strong contenders in the world championships, and the teams were encouraged to obtain United States or Canadian passports so they could travel. The Haudenosaunee teams, however, refused because they believed that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy held a sovereign right to issue its own passports. In July 2017, the women's team successfully used their Haudenosaunee passports to travel to Guildford, England for the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) Women's World Cup.

Sources to support student research

Haudenosaunee Confederacy (links to Government, Culture & History, Land Rights & Treaties, News & Events, etc.): www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com.

Megan Schneider, "Haudenosaunee Use Own Passports, Stand Proud to Represent Nation at World Cup," *Lacrosse Magazine* (July 19, 2017), www.uslaxmagazine.com/fuel/international/haudenosaunee-use-own-passports-stand-

[proud-to-represent-nation-at-world-cup](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2CmZbuVMtE).

"Spirit Game: Pride of a Nation," ESPN documentary about the Thompson trio who excel in the sport (10 minutes), www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2CmZbuVMtE



2. Fishing Rights (Nisqually Nation in Washington State)

In 1945 at the age of 14, Billy Frank Jr. was arrested for fishing with a gillnet on the Nisqually River in the State of Washington. Frank was jailed about 50 times after that over three decades, along with many other tribal citizens who took part in the "fish-ins." They felt they had to defy laws in the state of Washington in order to assert their treaty rights. The 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek stated that members of the Nisqually Nation had the right to fish in their "usual and accustomed places." In a 1974 decision that shocked state officials, U.S. District Judge George *Boldt* said treaties guaranteed tribes the right to half the annual salmon harvest. This court ruling is known today as "the Boldt decision."

Billy Frank Jr. (1931–2014) was a civic leader in many ways, not only in protest. For example, he served as chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) for most of its first 30 years. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in November 2015.

Sources to support student research

Nisqually Nation, www.nisqually-nsn.gov.

Salmon Defense, which includes free curriculum on Billy Frank Jr. and the fish-ins (PPTs, handouts, videos, etc.), salmondefense.org/projects/educate/billy-frank-jr-school-curriculum.

"The Life and Legacy of Billy Frank, Jr.," billyfrankjr.org.
(Curated by the NWIFC).

3. Protecting Fresh Water (Standing Rock, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River Sioux Nations—Oceti Sakowin—in the Dakotas)

The company Dakota Access was planning to build a pipeline carrying crude oil through Indigenous homelands. LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, a Standing Rock Sioux tribal historian, called for people to come stand with her to protect the lands and waters from the pipeline. She probably didn't expect various Sioux tribes, the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires),



to reunite for the first time since the Battle of the Greasy Grass (Battle of Little Bighorn) in 1876. The movement grew until more than 10,000 people—Indigenous peoples, advocates, and allies—eventually came to the camp along the banks of Lake Oahe in North Dakota to protest the pipeline and to assert Indigenous rights. Despite attacks from police dogs, teargas, water hoses, and sound cannons, the water protectors stood firm.

Sources to support student research

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, www.standingrock.org.

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, www.sioux.org.

Rosebud Sioux Tribe, www.rosebudsiouxtribe-nsn.gov.

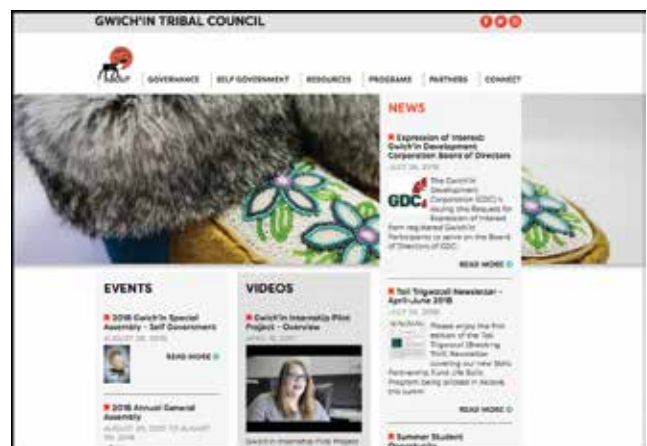
Mikki Halpin, "Interview with LaDonna Brave Bull," Teen Vogue (April 26, 2017), <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/standing-rock-sioux-tribe-ladonna-brave-bull-allard-interview-dapl-protests>.

National Museum of the American Indian, "Native Knowledge 360," <http://nmai.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties/dapl.cshtml>

Advocacy site for Standing Rock protests and Water Protectors, standwithstandingrock.net

4. Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Gwich'in Nation in Alaska and Canada)

In 1988, the Gwich'in Nation gathered to oppose oil and gas development in the Arctic and to protect the birthplace and nursing grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.



Development would damage the lands as well as the caribou, which the Gwich'in have relied on to support their way of life with food, shelter, clothing, and tools since time immemorial. They call this region "Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit" the Sacred Place Where Life Begins. Not forgotten by the Gwich'in is the devastating 11-million-gallon oil spill when the *Exxon Valdez* ran aground in 1989. Crude oil befouled 1,500 miles of shoreline along Prince William Sound in Alaska.

Sources to support student research

Gwich'in Nation, gwichintribal.ca.

Gwich'in Steering Committee's (GSC's) statement on oil spills, www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org

Our Arctic Refuge (GSC videos and resources), ourarcticrefuge.org.

"Gwich'in Women Speak" (a free, 20-minute documentary on the struggle to protect the refuge), www.weartheartctic.org/action/sacred-place-where-life-begins-gwichin-women-speak

Exploring an Issue that involves Indigenous Sovereignty

Your name: _____

- A.** Choose one of the issues on Handout B that you would like to learn more about. Read the short description and visit the website sources that are listed. In your own words, summarize the issue (dispute, conflict, or current event) using the five Ws. (Who, What, When, Where, and Why).

- B.** Why is this conflict important to the Native nation of that area?

- C.** In this issue, how were sovereign rights upheld, protected, or threatened? Provide examples to support your answer.

- D.** How are members of the Indigenous nation responding to the issue? In what ways are they acting as good citizens of their nation or tribe?

- E.** Why is upholding Indigenous sovereignty important for Native nations? Why might it also be important to you?
