



BRITISH COLUMBIA
FireSmart™

Education Program

(Grades 7-9)



Lesson Five

In this lesson, students will explore attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and their relationship with wildfires. Students will demonstrate their learning by creating social media posts that describe the relationships between colonialism and wildfires.



Lesson Question:

What are the relationships between colonialism and wildfires?

Lesson Challenge:

Design a series of social media posts that describe relationships between attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and wildfires.

Suggested Materials

- **Activity Sheet A:** Describing the Relationships
(one copy for each student)
- **Activity Sheet B:** Describing the Relationships Between Colonialism and Wildfires
(one copy for each small group)
- **Briefing Sheet:** Colonialism and Wildfires
(one copy for each small group)
- **Handout:** Additional Sources

Big Ideas

- Exploration, expansion, and colonization had varying consequences for different groups. (Social Studies 8)
- Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas and those wanting to preserve established traditions. (Social Studies 8)
- Emerging ideas and ideologies profoundly influence societies and events. (Social Studies 9)
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world. (English Language Arts 4-9)
- Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking. (English Language Arts 6-7)



Before Starting the Lesson



Consider beginning this lesson by acknowledging the traditional territories upon which your class is learning. Your school or district likely has an acknowledgment you may share with students. Model for students that it is important we think about what the acknowledgment means. Share with students how you show respect and honour for the peoples and the land and invite them to do the same. In this lesson, also be aware that students may have experienced trauma associated with the legacies of colonialism.

While this lesson includes some examples of First Peoples' perspectives and knowledge about fire, please be mindful of the following:

- Students can use the thinking strategies in this lesson to learn more from local First Peoples' knowledge and practices. Consider inviting Elders and knowledge keepers into the classroom to provide local examples as the content for this lesson, remembering to respect the fact that not all First Peoples' traditional knowledge and practices may be shared.
- Follow proper protocols when inviting an Elder or knowledge keeper to your classroom. Your school or district likely has guidelines for collaborating with local First Nations.

Start the Thinking



1. Organize students into pairs and provide each student with a copy of Describing the Relationships (Activity Sheet A). Begin the lesson by briefly explaining that Indigenous peoples around the world have used cultural burning for cultural and land stewardship purposes since time immemorial.
2. Ask groups to carefully read the information about the banning of cultural burning. Prompt groups to choose any words or phrases that describe relationships between banning cultural burning and wildfires: how might the banning of cultural burning be connected or related to wildfires? Groups can also add their own words or phrases to the list.
3. Invite groups to share their words and phrases with the class. As they share, inform students that the banning of cultural burning is an example of an action related to colonialism. Co-create or introduce the main features of colonialism. Colonialism usually features:
 - **Control over people:** One group of people or country controls or dominates another group of people. This could include a country taking full or partial control of another country or people and imposing their own languages, cultures, and ways of being on the indigenous peoples of a colonized area. This can also include the intentional destruction of indigenous cultures and genocide.



- **Control over land:** One group of people or country takes and exploits natural resources from another country or place. This could include the removal of valuable resources, destruction of ecosystems, and taking away traditional lands from indigenous peoples.
4. Invite groups to suggest any other attitudes, laws, and actions that are related to historical and current colonialism in Canada. Student suggestions could include treaties, laws such as The Indian Act, reservations, and residential schools. Consider noting student ideas for use later in this lesson.
 5. Introduce the lesson question and challenge to students, and inform them that in this lesson they will describe the relationships between attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and wildfires in Canada. Explain that the lesson challenge will be to create a series of social media posts that explain relationships between colonialism and wildfires.
 6. Direct students to now work on their own. Guide their attention back to the activity sheet and ask them to list any words or phrases that describe relationships between colonialism and wildfires.

Grow the Thinking



1. Explain to students that there are several kinds of cause-and-effect relationships:
 - **Direct cause-and-effect relationships:** A connection or relationship between a cause and effect are very clear and obvious.
 - **Indirect cause-and-effect relationships:** A connection or relationship between a cause and effect is not as clear or obvious. To find an indirect cause-and-effect relationship you may need to infer or “read between the lines” to find connections.
 - **Reciprocal cause-and-effect relationships:** In this type of relationship, causes and effects may be part of a chain. For example, one effect may cause a second effect, which may then cause a third effect, and so on. To find this type of relationship, look for effects which may also be causes.
2. Guide students’ attention back to Activity Sheet A. Ask students to revisit their initial ideas about the relationships, this time looking for examples of each type of cause-and-effect relationship. Examples of cause-and-effect relationships related to the banning of cultural burning could include:



- **Direct cause-and-effect relationships:** The banning of cultural burning had a direct impact on the amount of dry fuel available to be burned in wildfires.
 - **Indirect cause-and-effect relationships:** The banning of cultural burning led to a decrease in the diversity of plants and animals in ecosystems. While this didn't directly cause more wildfires, it harmed the health of ecosystems and made them more likely to burn in wildfires.
 - **Reciprocal cause-and-effect relationships:** The banning of cultural burning led to a loss of traditional knowledge about how fire could be used to care for the land. This had many connections to the number and intensity of wildfires.
3. Organize students into small groups and provide each group with a copy of Describing the Relationships Between Colonialism and Wildfires and the Briefing Sheet Colonialism and Wildfires (Activity Sheet B). Explain that their task is to look for ideas that can help them describe relationships between attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and wildfires. Ask groups to note in the right-hand column any attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism. For example, groups might suggest that reservations are an example of a law or action related to colonialism. Alternatively, consider assigning each group a specific section from the Briefing Sheet.
 4. Prompt groups to now decide which type of relationship best describes each connection between the attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and wildfires. Remind groups to describe any details that help support their decisions.
 5. Invite groups to share their decisions and thinking with the class. As they share, guide students' attention back to Activity Sheet A and their initial lists of words and phrases that describe relationships between colonialism and wildfires. Ask students to add or revise any words or phrases that help describe relationships between colonialism and wildfires.
 6. If desired, groups can use the same process to identify more information about the relationships between colonialism and wildfires in other sources found in the Additional Sources handout, or as part of learning more about historical and current colonialism in Canada.

Reflect on the Thinking



1. Encourage students to revisit Activity Sheet A and their collection of words and phrases to describe relationships between colonialism and wildfires.
2. Invite students to share one or two of their most descriptive words and phrases that could be used to describe relationships between colonialism and wildfires. As they share, guide them in discussing the legacies of historical colonialism and wildfires by posing questions such as:
 - Are there any current examples of attitudes, policies, or actions related to colonialism that have relationships to wildfires?
 - Are there any examples in our community of actions that reaffirm Indigenous approaches to the stewardship of fire and land?
3. Encourage students to use words and phrases from their collections to create a series of social media posts that effectively explain relationships between colonialism and wildfires. Encourage students to share their posts in pairs or small groups for feedback and to review and revise their posts as needed.
4. Invite students to display or share their completed posts with the class.



Activity Sheet A: Describing the Relationships

Carefully read the description of cultural burning. Then, decide which words and phrases best describe the relationships between banning cultural burning and wildfires. You can also add your own words or phrases.

Fire has been an important aspect of First Peoples' cultural practices since time immemorial. In fact, there are known to be about 70 different uses of fire by First Peoples. Cultural burning is one of those important uses.

Cultural burning can be described as the traditional practice of planned and controlled use of fire on the landscape by Indigenous peoples for cultural and land stewardship purposes. The careful use of small fires encourages diversity of plants and animals, nurtures ecosystem health, and even helps decrease the size and number of wildfires.

Although there were important benefits of cultural burning, non-indigenous governments made such practices illegal. British Columbia was the first province in Canada to pass laws to ban cultural burns with the Bush Fire Act of 1874. Individuals caught burning were subject to fines and even jail time. Since these laws were passed, the number and intensity of wildfires have increased.



Which words and phrases best describe the relationship between banning cultural burning and wildfires?

There's a strong relationship

There's no relationship

A weak connection

The bans caused more wildfires

The bans created conditions that led to more wildfires

A direct connection

An indirect connection

Which words and phrases best describe the relationships between colonialism and wildfires?



Activity Sheet B: Describing the Relationships Between Colonialism and Wildfires

Describe relationships between attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism and wildfires by following these steps:

1. In the left-hand column, list any attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism that are connected to wildfires.
2. In the middle column, decide which type of cause-and-effect relationship best describes each connection.
3. In the right-hand column, include any details that support your decision.

Attitudes, Laws, or Actions Related to Colonialism	What is the relationship to wildfires?	Details That Support the Decision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Direct cause-and-effect<input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cause-and-effect<input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal cause-and-effect	

Attitudes, Laws, or Actions Related to Colonialism	What is the relationship to wildfires?	Details That Support the Decision
	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal cause-and-effect	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal cause-and-effect	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect cause-and-effect <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal cause-and-effect	

Briefing Sheet: Colonialism and Wildfires

Examples of attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism

Destruction of Indigenous cultural practices

- Beginning in the 1880s, the Government of Canada removed Indigenous children from their families and forced them to attend residential schools. Approximately 150 000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students attended residential schools. The purpose of the schools was to assimilate Indigenous youth into Canadian society. The schools intentionally destroyed Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices.
- Governments passed laws banning cultural burning and other related practices.

Removal of land

- Governments in Canada removed Indigenous peoples from their traditional homelands. Some Indigenous peoples signed treaties and then were moved to reserves. Other Indigenous peoples had their land taken away by governments.
- In many situations, Indigenous peoples were moved from traditional lands to places where they had not lived. This caused the loss of traditional knowledge about the land and stewardship.

Examples of attitudes, laws, and actions related to colonialism

Resource extraction

- Logging, mining, and fossil fuel extraction are very important industries in Canada.
- Methods used to extract resources has had many impacts on the health of ecosystems, including:
 - Fewer different kinds of trees led to vulnerable, dense, and young areas of trees planted
 - Reduced biodiversity led to more vulnerable ecosystems
Changes to rivers and other bodies of water
- The extraction of resources changed forests. Many forests were managed so they could be harvested more often. This has led to unhealthy and less diverse forests.



Handout: Additional Sources

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/what-on-earth-indigenous-fire-forests-1.6194999>
- Culture of Fear of Fire/Smokey the Bear (U.S. from 1940s)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8938580/>
- <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/08/15/was-smokey-bear-wrong-how-a-beloved-character-may-have-helped-fuel-catastrophic-fires.html>
- <https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/10.1139/cjfr-2020-0314>
- <https://www.ctvnews.ca/climate-and-environment/experts-explain-link-between-wildfires-and-climate-change-1.6444990>
- <https://sierraclub.bc.ca/climate-change-and-industrial-logging-are-making-wildfires-worse/>
- <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9672&context=etd>
(Chapters 2 and 3)