



Lesson Plan: Debate – Should Oil Drilling Be Allowed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

OVERVIEW:

This lesson plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the film *Arctic Son*, which captures the lifestyle of Native people (the Vuntut Gwitchin) living above the Arctic Circle in the Canadian Yukon while documenting the reunion of a father and son after a lifetime apart. This lesson asks students to conduct a role-play debate that discusses whether or not oil drilling should be allowed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Note: The filmmaker’s version of *Arctic Son* contains strong language. To avoid such content, be sure to record the PBS broadcast version off-air or request the “broadcast version” of the film from the P.O.V. lending library. The film also has a scene showing the skinning and evisceration of a rabbit, plus a few shots that show young people drinking alcohol. Please preview before showing the film in its entirety in the classroom.

P.O.V. documentaries can be taped off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, P.O.V. offers a lending library of DVD’s and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE!

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Use viewing skills and note taking strategies to understand and interpret video clips.
- Work in groups to research and develop an argument from the perspective of a specific stakeholder affected by the debate question.
- Give a three-minute presentation that presents their group’s viewpoint, clearly identifies and describes its principal argument, and provides examples that support the argument.
- Mount a rebuttal to a challenge question posed by the teacher following each presentation.
- Discuss which groups of stakeholders presented the strongest arguments.

GRADE LEVELS: 6-12

SUBJECTS: Current Events, U.S. History, Civics, Geography, English

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Method (varies by school) of showing the class online movie clips
- Index cards

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED: Two 50-minute class periods

SUGGESTED CLIPS:

Caribou (length: 2:30)

(additional footage clip on P.O.V. Web site: www.pbs.org/pov/pov2007/arcticson)

BACKGROUND:

Old Crow, the town featured in the film *Arctic Son*, is a small village 80 miles north of the Arctic Circle at the confluence of the Porcupine and Crow Rivers. Home to members of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the remote town has a population of about 300 aboriginal people and is accessible only by air, water or an arduous journey via skidoo or dogsled.

Central to the culture of the Gwitchin is the Porcupine Caribou herd, whose calving grounds lie primarily in the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain of the 19.3-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) located in the northeastern corner of Alaska. Not only is this coastal plain the birthplace of the Porcupine Caribou, but it is home to denning polar bears, wolves, grizzly bears, and, in the summer months, over 135 different species of migratory birds.

The Gwitchin and other Native peoples are fighting U.S. government efforts to begin drilling for oil in the ANWR, saying such development would endanger the environment and disrupt their cultural traditions. Other Natives support oil drilling because of the jobs it could bring to their financially strapped tribes. The Bush administration also favors drilling, arguing that the amount of oil believed to lie under the tundra, could bolster U.S. supplies, decrease reliance on oil from the Middle East, and reduce high fuel prices.

ACTIVITY:

1. Show students on a map where the town of Old Crow is located on the Porcupine River in Canada's Yukon Territory. Point out the town's proximity to the Arctic Circle (80 miles north) and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, just west in the U.S. state of Alaska. (To help you know what to point out, please review [this map](http://www.oldcrow.ca/caribou.htm) (www.oldcrow.ca/caribou.htm) from the Web site for the town of Old Crow in advance.
2. Tell students that Old Crow is the home for approximately 300 Vuntut Gwitchin, a Native people whose culture centers around the Porcupine Caribou herd. Each spring and fall, more than 150,000 Porcupine Caribou cross the Porcupine River near Old Crow as they travel to and from their calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Gwitchin people hunt these caribou and use all parts of the animal for food, tools, medicine, clothing, and craft items. The Gwitchin say the caribou are essential to their way of life, and they are extremely concerned that this lifestyle might disappear because oil companies want to start drilling for oil in the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou.
3. Show students a video clip (length: 2:30) that illustrates life in Old Crow and shows a Gwitchin man explaining the importance of the caribou to his people. (**Note: This clip includes the shooting and carving up of a caribou.**) Focus student viewing by having them take notes on why the man in the clip thinks drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a bad idea. After watching the video, ask students to summarize in their own words why the Gwitchin people value the caribou.
4. Next, show a brief [Flash movie](http://www.anwr.org/flash.htm) (www.anwr.org/flash.htm) (length: 4:30) provided by Arctic Power, an organization that says opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to

oil drilling would provide jobs and energy, and would not harm the caribou herds. The clip is narrated by an Inupiak man who lives in the small town of Kaktovik in the coastal area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Ask students to take notes on why the narrator believes oil drilling in the ANWR would be beneficial to his people and the U.S.

5. As a class, list who would benefit from opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Who might be harmed by it? Students should use the notes they took while watching the clips to help identify this list of stakeholders.

6. Next, take some index cards – one for each student in the class – and write one stakeholder (e.g., different native groups, politicians, oil companies, etc.) on each card. Create at least three index cards for each stakeholder. Then, let students randomly draw an index card and form a small group with others who drew the same stakeholder cards.

7. Explain that each group will research and develop arguments for a classroom debate on whether or not the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be opened for oil drilling. Students may wish to begin their research using the sites listed in the Resources section of this lesson plan.

8. When it is time to debate, each stakeholder group should give a three-minute presentation that presents the group's viewpoint, clearly identifies and describes its principal argument, and provides examples that support the argument. After each presentation, ask the group a challenge question and give them one minute to respond.

9. Afterwards, discuss if those for or against oil drilling in the ANWR presented the strongest arguments.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS:

Students can be assessed on:

- Contributions made to their teams during the debate activity.
- How well they used persuasive techniques to present and support their positions in the debate. Consider using this [classroom debate rubric](http://mh034.k12.sd.us/classroom_debate_rubric.htm) (http://mh034.k12.sd.us/classroom_debate_rubric.htm) for scoring purposes.

EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS:

- Watch the broadcast version (See the lesson's Overview) of *Arctic Son* in its entirety. Then, do one or more of the following activities:
 - Discuss what traits Junior and his father have in common. How does their relationship change over the course of the film? How do each of these men change individually? Have students create a short video, slideshow, or poster display that illustrates characteristics of their own relationships with their parents and how those relationships have changed over time.
 - Point out what people in the film (such as Steve, their visitor at the cabin) say about the impact of increasingly warmer seasonal temperatures. Discuss what the people of Old Crow would lose if global warming changed their natural surroundings? What effect could students' everyday choices have on global warming and the people who live in Old Crow? Ask students to identify one thing they can do today to help the environment.
 - Name the skills that Junior and his father needed to know in order to be self-sufficient and survive in the harsh Arctic environment (e.g., hunting,

trapping, fishing, fixing snowmobiles, etc.). You could remind students about how important it was for them to be able to fix their own skidoos by watching the film clip, *Zen and the Art of Skidoo Maintenance* (length: 3:45) on the P.O.V. Web site (www.pbs.org/pov/pov2007/arcticson). What might happen if their skidoos break down and they can't fix them? Discuss what skills would be important for students to know in order to be self-sufficient in their lives. What skills would be important to know for emergency situations? Have students create plans for acquiring the skills identified.

- Discuss the pros and cons of living in an isolated community like Old Crow. Watch the film clip, *Living Here Is Life* (length: 4:25) on the P.O.V. Web site (www.pbs.org/pov/pov2007/arcticson). What balance should there be between adopting modern practices and preserving traditional culture? How do factors like technology and geographical features shape culture? Research the Gwitchin people or another culture to confirm or refute student ideas.

RESOURCES:

Arctic Power's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge site

www.anwr.org

This site provides information in support of drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

<http://arctic.fws.gov/>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides general information on the wildlife that live in the ANWR, natural land features, history of the refuge, native cultures, and more.

Help Save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

www.savearcticrefuge.org/

This site provides information in opposition to drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Old Crow's Official Web Site: Protecting the Caribou

www.oldcrow.ca/caribou.htm

The residents of Old Crow use text, photos, maps, poetry, and other resources to describe their lifestyle and reliance upon the Porcupine Caribou herd, as well as their concerns about possible drilling for oil in the herd's calving grounds. This site also contains information about the Gwitchin people and the town of Old Crow.

STANDARDS:

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Civics

Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Geography

Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Standard 13: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.

Language Arts

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

U.S. History

Standard 31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in broadcast journalism, secondary education, and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource Web site (now PBS Teachers), and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

Background Sources:

"Caribou People' Wage Last Stand in the Arctic." Paul Salopek. *Chicago Tribune*. October 7, 2005.

"CRS Report for Congress: Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR): New Directions in the 110th Congress." February 8, 2007. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/80677.pdf>

www.anwr.org

www.oldcrow.ca