

Indigenous Voices in Global Environmental Protection

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do Indigenous perspectives contribute to international environmental protection policies?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students explore Indigenous environmental activism by viewing interviews with Sônia Guajajara, the Brazilian minister for Indigenous people. Students consider the role music plays in environmental activism, and roleplay a mock environmental conference to gain a better understanding of the multiple and often conflicting interests related to environmental policy, and how consensus can be reached.



Photo: Gert-Peter BRUCH

While specifics differ, one characteristic shared by Indigenous people across the globe is a respect for the environment. For centuries, tribal land has served Indigenous people as a source of survival by providing water, food, and medicines. Many Indigenous groups also have a sacred relationship with the land, and therefore act to protect the environment and keep it healthy.

Today, Indigenous environmental activists often raise awareness toward a multitude of issues affecting the health of the environment, such as unsustainable agriculture practice, mining, logging, and infrastructure projects on Indigenous lands. In addition to this, activists often have to continue to fight against social prejudice and racism against Indigenous people. Such work has brought global recognition to many indigenous activists. One such activist is the Brazilian minister for Indigenous people, Sônia Guajajara.

Sônia Guajajara was born on the Araribóia Indigenous Territory in Brazil. She was the daughter of illiterate parents, and at the age of 15, left her home to study. After attaining a degree in Literature, Guajajara began working as an activist for Indigenous rights, and held leadership roles in small and local Indigenous organizations. As a leader, she fiercely advocated for Indigenous rights in Brazil's National Congress. This work led her to represent Brazil's Indigenous people at international forums like the United Nations and the European Parliament, the legislative body of the European Union. In 2023, Guajajara was appointed Minister of Indigenous People — a newly established position and cabinet-level ministry in Brazil's federal government.

For Guajajara, being the first minister of Indigenous people in the world entails responsibility to represent not only Indigenous concerns in Brazil, but internationally as well. She feels environmental issues and Indigenous issues are deeply intertwined. “The world is experiencing a climate emergency,” she states in the lesson interview, “and there is no way to discuss solutions.

...without bringing Indigenous people into the debate.” To strengthen these voices, Guajajara seeks to bring together a global alliance of tribes, environmental NGOs, and national governments to advocate for environmental issues—and in this alliance, Guajajara stresses, young people internationally need to have one of the strongest voices.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The biography and accomplishments of Sônia Guajajara, Brazil’s first Minister of Indigenous People
- How Indigenous voices contribute to global discussions about environmental policy
- The various perspectives and stakeholders involved in crafting environmental policy
- How music plays a role in environmental activism

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE

- Students will be able to investigate the value of Indigenous voices in global environmental policy making by watching an interview with Sônia Guajajara and participating in a mock environmental conference.

ACTIVITIES

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Devices with access to the internet.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Play **Clip 1, Performance from Festival de Parintins 2023**. Then ask students:

- What sort of performance might this video be capturing?
- Where might this performance be happening? What are some sonic or visual clues that might reveal where it is occurring?
- What might the performance be celebrating? What evidence leads you to this hypothesis?

2. Display **Image 1, Map with Parintins**. Inform students that the video is from the Parintins festival in 2023. Explain to students that the 3-day festival celebrates the regional culture of the people around Parintins, which are a mixture of Indigenous and *quilombolas*, or escaped enslaved people that fled into the area. Then, ask students:

- What country is the Parintins festival held in? (*Brazil*)
- What state in Brazil is the Parintins festival held in? (*Amazonas*)

- Does the name of the state remind you of anything? (*Possibly the Amazon Rain Forest or the Amazon River*)
3. Display **Image 2, Comparative Maps of Brazil**. Inform students that the map on the right represents the percentage of Indigenous people that live in the various states of Brazil, with the darker shades representing a larger Indigenous population. Then, ask students:
- Comparing maps, where would you say the majority of Indigenous people reside in Brazil? (*Amazonas*).
 - What might be the concerns of the Indigenous people who live in this region?
 - How might festivals such as Parintins address these concerns?

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform students that in this lesson they will be hearing from Sônia Guajajara, Brazil's first Minister of Indigenous Peoples, on the concerns of Indigenous people in Brazil and globally.
2. Display **Image 3, Biographical Timeline of Sônia Guajajara**. As a class, read the timeline. Then, ask students to name one aspect they thought was interesting or important about her biography.
3. Distribute **Handout - Sônia Guajajara Interview Notes** to each student. Inform students that they will be watching three clips from an interview with Sônia Guajajara. Instruct students that as they watch the interviews, they will make notes in response to the questions on the handout.
 - **Clip 2, Sônia Guajajara on Indigenous Voices in the Environmental Movement**
 - **Clip 3, Sônia Guajajara on Indigenous Participation in Environmental Conferences**
 - **Clip 4, Sônia Guajajara on How Individuals can Help the Environmental Movement**
4. Play the following clips, allowing a break between for students to fill in their worksheets:
 - **Briefing Document - State Leaders**
 - **Briefing Document - International Organizations**
 - **Briefing Document - Indigenous Leaders**
 - **Briefing Document - Farmers and Cattlemen Associations**
5. Point out to the class that throughout the videos, Guajajara speaks of the need to build partnerships and create international discussions on environmental policy.
6. Display **Image 4, Conference on Sustainable Agriculture Scenario** and read through as a class. Then split students into four groups representing the interest groups attending the conference. Inform students that in their groups they will be researching briefing documents related to agriculture from the perspective of the stakeholders they represent. Distribute to each group the appropriate materials below:
 - **Briefing Document - State Leaders**
 - **Briefing Document - International Organizations**
 - **Briefing Document - Indigenous Leaders**
 - **Briefing Document - Farmers and Cattlemen Associations**
7. Display **Image 5, Conference Proceedings**. Distribute to student groups **Handout**

- **Conference Proceedings Graphic Organizer.** Instruct students to use the handout as guide for the conference proceedings. Proceed with the mock conference in accordance to the above image and the handout.

8. Inform student groups that in order to both celebrate and promote the new policy statement, they will be putting on a festival. Ask student groups to complete the last page of **Handout - Conference Proceedings Graphic Organizer** and share their suggestions to the class.

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Discuss as a class:

- In what ways are environmental issues a global concern?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks to creating environmental policy that considers a wide variety of stakeholders?
- Why might Indigenous voices be essential to global conversations about the environment?



COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE (C3) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Civics

D2.Civ.1.9-12. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level

D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

Geography

D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Information Text Standards for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

College and Career Readiness Standards for Writing for Grade 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 9: Global Connections

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices



RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Performance from the Festival de Parintins 2023
- Sônia Guajajara on Indigenous Voices in the Environmental Movement
- Sônia Guajajara on Indigenous Participation in Environmental Conferences
- Sônia Guajajara on How Individuals can Help the Environmental Movement

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Sônia Guajajara Interview Notes
- Briefing Document - State Leaders
- Briefing Document - International Organizations
- Briefing Document - Indigenous Leaders
- Briefing Document - Farmers and Cattlemen Associations
- Handout - Conference Proceedings Graphic Organizer