Northern Land Use during the Cold War: An Historical Study

Lesson Overview:

This lesson will analyze the motives and impact of uses of northern lands for defence purposes in the Cold War era and compare lessons learned from this historical example to other northern land use issues today and in the future.

Grade Level:
Grade 12

Time Required:
Teaches should be able to conduct the lesson in one or two 60 minute classes.

Curriculum Connection:
Saskatchewan: History 30 Canadian Studies – Unit 4: The Forces of Nationalism

Links to Canadian National Standards for Geography:

Essential Element #2: Places and Regions
- Physical and human processes shape places and regions
- Changes in places and regions over time
- Interdependence of places and regions
- Political and historical characteristics of regions
- Critical issues and problems of places and regions
- Regional analysis of geographic issues and questions

Essential Element #4: Human Systems
- Economic development by world regions, country, or regions within country
- Patterns of global power and influence (NATO, United Nations, European Union, etc.)
- Cooperation and conflict in the division and control of the Earth’s surface

Essential Element #5: Environment and Society
- Impacts of technological hazards/decisions on the physical environment

Essential Element #6: The Uses of Geography
- Influence of geographical features on the evolution of significant historic events and movements

Geographic Skill #1: Asking Geographic Questions
- Plan and organize a geographic research project
Geographic Skill #2: Acquiring Geographic Information
- Systematically locate and gather geographic information from a variety of primary and secondary sources

Geographic Skill #3: Organizing Geographic Information
- Select and design appropriate forms of maps to organize geographic information
- Select and design appropriate forms of graphs, diagrams, tables and charts to organize geographic information

Geographic Skill #4: Analyzing Geographic Information
- Make inferences and draw conclusions from maps and other geographic representations

Geography Skill #5: Answering Geographic Questions
- Apply geographic models, generalizations and theories to the analysis, interpretation and presentation of geographic information.

Link to the Canadian Atlas Online (CAOL)
www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas/
Using this reference shows the northern areas being used for defence purposes in relation to the US and the Soviet Union and can be used to show specific communities where defence stations were built.

Additional Resources, Materials, and Equipment Required:
Helpful websites include:
  This site has documents and reports outlining the air defence plan proposed for Canada’s North. It also has the locations and names of the radar stations.
- http://www.lswilson.ca/dewhist-a.htm#Z
  Gives a short summary of the DEW line construction efforts
  A really great site that captures photos from DEW line stations

Main Objective:
Students will study the motives and impact of building the DEW line defence system in Canada’s north during the 1950’s and compare this experience with other land use issues in Canada’s north.
Learning Outcomes: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Outline the political and economic motives for allowing the US to build the DEW line defence system in Canada’s north
- Identify the location of the DEW line and its ring of stations by using a map of Canada and the northern polar regions
- Describe what conditions were like for those constructing and working in DEW line camps
- Discuss Canada’s contribution to this project- workers, regulations, materials, etc
- Role play interest groups and their perspectives as to decision-making and environmental and economic impact for such a project
- Predict the outcome of other land use issues in the northern polar regions for Canada (mineral and natural resource use and exploration, protecting the North West Passage as a Canadian waterway, land claims issues with Native peoples)
- Outline the lasting impact of the DEW line with respect to:
  - the negotiations for land use with First Nations people in the areas affected
  - the economic impact for the polar region then and presently
  - the change in land use and how that has impacted animals, vegetation and soils
  - our country’s ability to dictate the fate of its own land use due to pressures from more powerful international policing organizations
### The Lesson:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Activity</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Review brief summary of factual information about this historic event using existing class texts, resources and web sites.</td>
<td>Prepare a time line of major events</td>
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<td>Track Canadian vs. US involvement in this project</td>
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<td><strong>Lesson Development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Role play/dramatize the meetings where decisions were made in the initial planning and construction for the DEW Line</td>
<td>Participate as members of the contractors, government, military and communities of the north (interest groups).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Prepare reports to bring back to the planning committee that outlines your perspective and concerns.</td>
<td>Research findings and report back to the final planning committee about their perspective and the impact it has for each interest group.</td>
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<td>2. Present a map of the DEW line and its ring of stations on a map of Canada and/or polar region.</td>
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<td>3. Present a brief panel presentation to the group to try and convince them of the benefits and drawbacks of this kind of project for the north.</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td>- Who was consulted/not consulted compared to how the class mock meeting went?</td>
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<td>- Was a similar decision made?</td>
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<td>- How could this decision-making process have been different so that Canada was more respected and represented in the project?</td>
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Lesson Extension:

- Have the students compare the decision-making process and impact of this project with at least one other northern land use issue. Have Canadian government, business and citizens learned anything about how to proceed with similar problems? What recommendations do students suggest in order to handle it properly?

- Have the students research and prepare a paper on the status of the DEW Line Cleanup Project, initiated by the federal government in 1989, which involves the cleanup of 21 radar sites scattered in remote locations, and stretching across 5000 km of the Canadian Arctic.

Assessment of Student Learning:

- Short quiz on factual details of the DEW line construction project

- Locate and create a sketch of the DEW line system of defence and where it was roughly located in Canada

- Assess impact of construction and human use on northern habitats

- Make recommendations for future handling of similar issues to prevent problems created in past experiences such as the DEW line project.