

NEWS BREAK

Article: **Indigenous women tour Ecuador oil field as a warning against drilling**

Section: **MAIN, A4**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, March 15, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

****Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.****

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will analyze the environmental and social impacts of oil development in the Amazon and explain how Indigenous communities are responding to protect their land and resources.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

Standing beside a stream stained dark with oil in Ecuador's northern Amazon, an Indigenous woman shook her head in disbelief as she stared at the oily **sheen** drifting across the water and broken pipes cutting through the forest. Nearby, gas flares burned above the treetops.

Sheen Guess:

Sheen Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. Julia Catalina Chumbi, a 76-year-old leader from the Shuar ethnic group in the southern Amazon province of Pastaza, had traveled hundreds of miles to see the damage for herself — the legacy of what?
2. "Everything is _____, even the air," she said quietly. Moments earlier, she had learned something that shocked her.
3. In communities near the oil fields in Sucumbios, residents can no longer safely drink from local rivers and instead must buy _____ because of contamination and health fears.
4. "Seeing this makes me want to _____," she said.

5. Chumbi was among about 30 Indigenous women from across Ecuador's Amazon who traveled to the region on what activists call a _____, visiting oil fields, pipelines and gas flaring sites to see firsthand the environmental and health impacts of extraction.
6. Organizers said the trip aimed to connect whom?
7. Because many oil blocks overlap Indigenous territories, communities are often among the first to experience contamination of what three life-sustaining things?
8. The women — representing seven _____ communities — gathered for several days in the city of Nueva Loja for workshops to share experiences and discuss the growing threat of oil expansion in their territories.
9. The Associated Press was present as they quietly entered parts of the oil-producing area to witness the impacts firsthand. What three things did they notice?
10. By the end of the meetings, they had begun outlining strategies to strengthen _____ to potential new oil concessions in their regions.

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

Deeper-Dive “Connect & Explain” comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:

1. What environmental problems are described in the article, and how might oil contamination affect ecosystems in the Amazon rainforest over time?
2. The article mentions that some communities can no longer drink from local rivers. How might losing access to clean water change daily life for families in these communities?
3. Many oil projects overlap with Indigenous territories. What rights should Indigenous communities have when governments or companies want to develop natural resources on their land?
4. Do you think the communities described in the article are experiencing environmental injustice? Why or why not?
5. Governments often support oil development because it creates jobs and revenue. How should countries balance economic growth with protecting the environment and Indigenous communities?
6. The women in the article organized a “toxitour” to witness environmental damage. Why might seeing the damage firsthand motivate people to take action?

7. Many of the leaders described in the article are Indigenous women. Why might women play an important role in environmental and community activism?
8. The article mentions communities that have lived near oil operations for more than 50 years. What long-term effects might industrial development have on culture, land use, and traditional ways of life?
9. What responsibilities should oil companies have when operating near communities and natural ecosystems?
10. What policies, laws, or actions could help reduce environmental damage while still addressing a country's energy needs?

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