

Protesting against fracking in Argentina



New Internationalist Easier English
Ready Intermediate Lesson


This lesson

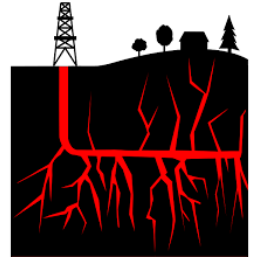




Match:

- 1) fracking
- 2) indigenous
- 3) shale
- 4) contaminate
- 5) livestock
- 6) landfill
- 7) vegetation
- 8) bleat
- 9) subsidy
- 10) renewable energy
- 11) human chain
- 12) cemetery

- a) describes people who originally lived in a place
- b) when sheep or goats make a sound
- c) plants
- d) drilling into the earth with high-pressure water, sand, and chemicals to release the gas inside
- e) type of soft, grey rock
- f) place for burying bodies
- g) place where waste or rubbish is buried
- h) money given to help pay the cost of something
- i) make poisonous
- j) made from sun, wind, or sea
- k) 
- l) animals kept on a farm





What do you think?



**Who is she? Where is she?
Why? What is she wearing?**



Indigenous spokesperson, Lorena Bravo, in a Mapuche flag, looks towards a gas plant at Campo Maripe, in Argentina.

Predict the answers with a partner and then read the text to check:



- 1) A large group of Mapuche people protested at a fracking site in Argentina True/false?
- 2) There was an agreement between the Mapuche people and the YPF company to start fracking on their land. True/false?
- 3) There are many gas and oil companies working in the area. True/false?
- 4) Vaca Muerta has the most shale gas in the world. True/false?
- 5) Which of these effects of fracking do the Mapuche people notice?
(a) changes in the weather (b) water they cannot drink
(c) earthquakes (d) people dying (e) animals dying



In the early hours of a Monday in February 2022, 50 Mapuche women, men, and children of the Fvta Xayem community came together. Some were on horses, others were on foot. They came to block the entrances to a fracking site in Vaca Muerta, western Argentina.

They stood together by the gates of the Loma Campana fracking installations, and they held up the red, green, and blue flag of the indigenous Mapuche people. The YPF oil and gas company was fracking on their land without any discussion or their agreement. The Mapuche people came to say they would stop the fracking.

The Argentine state-owned YPF and the US multinational Chevron work together at the Loma Campana installations. It is the leading fracking site in Vaca Muerta, close to the town of Añelo, now the centre of the fracking industry here. Many other companies have fracking operations nearby. Multinational companies including Shell, ExxonMobil, and BP subsidiary Pan American Energy are all working there.

Vaca Muerta is home to 34 Mapuche communities; it also has the world's second-biggest shale gas reserves. Community members say fracking is destroying their land, contaminating water supplies, killing livestock, and causing earthquakes.

Put the words in the correct place in the text:

(a) pipelines (b) contaminated

(c) stomach pains (d) oil landfills

(e) fracking (f) water

(g) vegetation (h) dead (i) gas

wells (j) shale gas



(1) _____ began in Vaca Muerta in 2013, and when I first visited in 2016, these lands of northern Patagonia were already full of (2) _____. But things have moved very quickly in the last six years: there are now more than 2,451 wells. There are also more (3) _____, roads, waste dumps, sand mines, and (4) _____.

Fracking uses a lot of (5) _____. They put 90 million litres of water, with chemicals and sand, into each well to release the (6) _____ and oil in the layers of rock under the ground. 'Our animals are really suffering,' says Jorge Nawel from the Neuquén Mapuche Federation. 'There is very little (7) _____ to eat, the land is drying out because the industry has taken all the water.'

About a quarter of the water returns to the surface, (8) _____ with heavy metals such as mercury, chromium, lead, cadmium, and arsenic. They put the wastewater into old fracking wells, says Nawel. 'The animals drink this contaminated water. Then we find them (9) _____. We also have animals born with deformities such as an extra hoof, an animal's foot.'

People from the town of Allen, in the province of Rio Negro, in the southeast, have made a legal complaint. They are saying that people living near one drilling site have asthma, (10) _____ stomach pains, and are vomiting.

Imagine you are a member of a Mapuche community. You have a house, land, children, goats, and sheep, and fresh water nearby. One day there are earthquakes during the night and the daytime.

How do you think the earthquakes will affect your land, house, family, and animals, and the fresh water. Talk to a partner and write a list.

Then read the text and compare



Two communities in Neuquén province, in the northwest of Vaca Muerta, have made legal complaints about the earthquakes with the help of Eduardo Romero, the chief of the Wirkaleo Mapuche community. He told me, 'There are earthquakes day and night when the fracking work is going on. The houses shake, the land moves, the children start crying, the animals start bleating and running about. It is causing great anxiety, we never felt anything like this before.'

Andres Durán is a fruit farmer. He also raises goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys, and geese. He had to leave his home in Sauzal Bonito, by the river Neuquén, because earthquakes made big cracks in the walls and the floor. His community's freshwater is also contaminated. 'Twenty of my animals died. Some of my neighbours lost everything. Before we had clear water here, but now we have to buy it in plastic tubs. The situation is very bad, but no one is listening.'

In 2021, the Argentine government gave new subsidies, \$1bn a year for four years, to oil companies working in the Vaca Muerta gas field. And in 2019, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a US agency, gave \$450m for fracking here. Citi, Credit Suisse, and Morgan Stanley have also subsidized projects in Vaca Muerta, and BlackRock, BNP Paribas, and Goldman Sachs hold shares in YPF.

The Argentinian government is in serious debt and so it has promoted fracking and said producing gas will reduce the need to spend on imports. But environmentalists say the Argentinian government has given billions of dollars, such as tax breaks and guaranteed prices, to the fossil fuel industry. Both the state and consumers have paid the bill.

‘For countries in the Global South, it is expensive to change to renewable energy,’ says Santiago Cané, a lawyer for FARN. ‘Big multinational companies should help to pay for the change to clean energy. They should not take subsidies to invest in fossil fuels.’

Read the last part of the text and decide on 5 things that surprised you, interested you, or you agree with. Then compare with another student.



I'd also like society to change how they talk about prisoners as 'violent offenders', 'non-violent offenders', or 'drug offenders'. The crime a person committed 20 years ago does not show us who they are today – it's what they did and not who they are. So why not call them who they are today – for example, to free me, you can say, 'Let's free the kitchen cook, he is Christian, he got all A grades in college, he is always positive, and he values his family and kindness.'

We can't base laws on emotion. Some of my family were murdered and nothing will bring them back. Sadly, they say, my nephew killed my uncle on 17 September 2020. I was heartbroken but I don't wish prison on him; it doesn't help or make the pain go away. I wish that he feels sorry, that he changes, and loves himself so he can love others. If we can see ourselves in each other, then we can get beyond the blame and vengeance. If I can see your son as my son, and you can see my son as your son, and if you can see the murderer and victim as human, then we can build a better world. We can build a better world, a more loving world, where we value treatment more than vengeance, where people get help and not death or prison, where we care for the least of us, and no children are homeless tonight in our city, our town, our world.

Homework

Read the original article and note some new words you want to remember:

<https://newint.org/features/2022/02/07/healed-people-prisons>

