

Boldt Decision Role Play:

Overview: The Boldt decision can be complicated for students and their teachers to understand. Judge Boldt issued a ruling upholding Indian treaty rights and providing Indian people with access to half of all fish and shellfish harvests. This activity allows students to explore who was involved in the conflict over fishing rights and what their concerns were.

Teacher:

Divide students into groups of 5 and hand out role cards. Give students 5 minutes or so to read their role card and ask any questions they may have. You may want to define any terms you think your students may struggle with. For example, if your students have never heard of a treaty, they need to know what a treaty is.

Note: If you have an upper level class, or have researched the Boldt decision as a class you should feel free to supplement the role cards with additional relevant information to make the discussion more rich. You could also format this activity so it is in a debate structure.

Ask students to select a speaker and create a short introduction to their selected stakeholder that explains who they are, whether they are for or against Judge Boldt's decision, and how the Boldt decision effects their stakeholder personally (job, access to resources, etc.)

Once all have shared, tell students to consider the points made by each group. Possible questions might include:

1. Which groups support the Boldt Decision? Which groups oppose the Boldt decision?
2. What reasons do those who support the Boldt decision give for supporting it?
3. What reasons for disagreeing are given by those who oppose it?
4. Which group do you agree with most? Least? Why do you feel that way?

Once students have debriefed, explain that the treaties protected Washington tribe's SOVEREIGN right to fish on their usual and accustomed fishing grounds. Because treaties are a GOVERNMENT to GOVERNMENT agreement at the federal level, they may not be overridden by any State statute (law) or private decision.