

Our Bones Are Made of Salmon

Background Information on the Fraser River:

The Fraser River was named after Simon Fraser (1776-1862) who explored the river in 1808 on behalf of the North West Company in search of a navigable route for fur trading. Simon Fraser believed that he was traveling on the Columbia River to its ocean outlet. It was another explorer, David Thompson, who later named the river after Simon Fraser.

First Nations people had lived along the Fraser River for thousands of years before Simon Fraser's arrival. Some of the archaeologists estimate up to 9000 years before. (A site under the Alex Fraser Bridge has been dated back that far).

The Fraser River starts as a trickle at Mount Robson (Headwaters) and ends in the Strait of Georgia in the Pacific Ocean. There are many tributaries that add water to the Fraser, including the Thompson River (22% of the total water flow).

The Fraser River is 1 375 kilometers long. If it was stretched out across Canada, it would span the distance between Vancouver and Regina, Saskatchewan. The Fraser River is the fifth largest river in Canada. It is less than 15 000 years old.

The characteristics and landscapes of the Fraser River change from the beginning of its journey to its end. As you exit the Headwaters and enter the Upper Basin region, the river's sediment load increases creating more turbulent waters with the water appearing grey or brown in colour. The river then passes through the Drylands with low vegetation as a result of little rainfall and hot temperatures. In the Canyon, the river is squeezed between the Coast and the Cascade mountain ranges increasing the speed and creating many impressive rapids.

The point at which the fresh water of the Fraser River meets the salty water of the Pacific Ocean is called the estuary, (also sometimes called "between land" by the First Nations people because as the tides ebb and flow, the estuary changes from land that is covered with water to dry land). Other estuaries include the mouths of great rivers such as the Amazon, the Nile and the Mississippi.

The Fraser River Estuary is as rich in its biodiversity as it is an ideal habitat for many organisms. A habitat can be defined as a place where an organism can get food, water and shelter. The major habitat types along the Fraser River include: brackish and freshwater marshes, salt marshes, tidal flats, sloughs, and flood-plain forests among others.

The Fraser River watershed is also home to 60% of BC's population, approximately 2.7 million people. S watershed is an area of land that drains all the water into one main river. The Fraser River watershed is also called a drainage basin, since it collects so much water and drains such a large area (25% of BC's area).

Program Overview:

This program explores the connection between Aboriginal people and salmon on the Fraser River. Students get hands-on experience with fishing technology, learn about wind-drying salmon, and discover that salmon is in the hearts of Aboriginal people living along the Fraser River today.

Program Objectives

- to show the importance of the Fraser River to Aboriginal people
- to share the importance of fishing to Aboriginal people on the lower Fraser River
- to explore the complexity of fishing methods and technology
- to explore the diversity of First Nations along the river
- to link traditional fishing practices with contemporary issues in the Aboriginal Fishery.

Helpful Vocabulary

Aboriginal: a descendent of the original inhabitants of North America.

Coast Salish: a First Nations language group consisting of groups along the lower Fraser River.

Sockeye: a type of salmon prevalent in the Fraser River.

Spawn: an act of reproduction of fishes; mixing of the milt of a male fish and the eggs of a female fish.

Estuary: the wide part of a river where it nears the ocean; fresh and salt water mix.

River basin: the area of land that drains into a river.

Oral storytelling: a reliance on passing history to future generations through spoken means rather than written.

Tradition: the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information etc. from generation to generation.

Life cycle: the continuous sequence of changes through the development of an organism (i.e. – salmon from birth to death)

Spirituality: a sense of connectedness regarding a set of beliefs or values

Elder: an influential member of a First Nations group; respected by virtue of age and wisdom.

Hemp: a plant fiber used to make rope and fabrics.

Dogbane: a strong, grass like plant used in making netting.

Nylon: a modern fiber used in the production of many types of fishing equipment, among other things.

Canyon: a deep valley with very steep sides.

Granite: a course rock, often found in canyon walls

Dehydrate: to preserve by removing water from a substance (ie – drying salmon using wind or smoke)

Wind tunnel: a narrow channel with a constant stream of wind.

Radiating: to emit stored-up heat energy (ie – stored heat in canyon walls)

Preservation: in relation to food, preparing to avoid spoiling or decomposition.

Entrails: the intestinal part of an animal that is generally removed before consumption.

Kwetsel: a flat slate blade used to process salmon.

Trade: the exchange of commodities between multiple people or groups.

Community: a group of people working together towards a common goal or objective.

In- class activities:

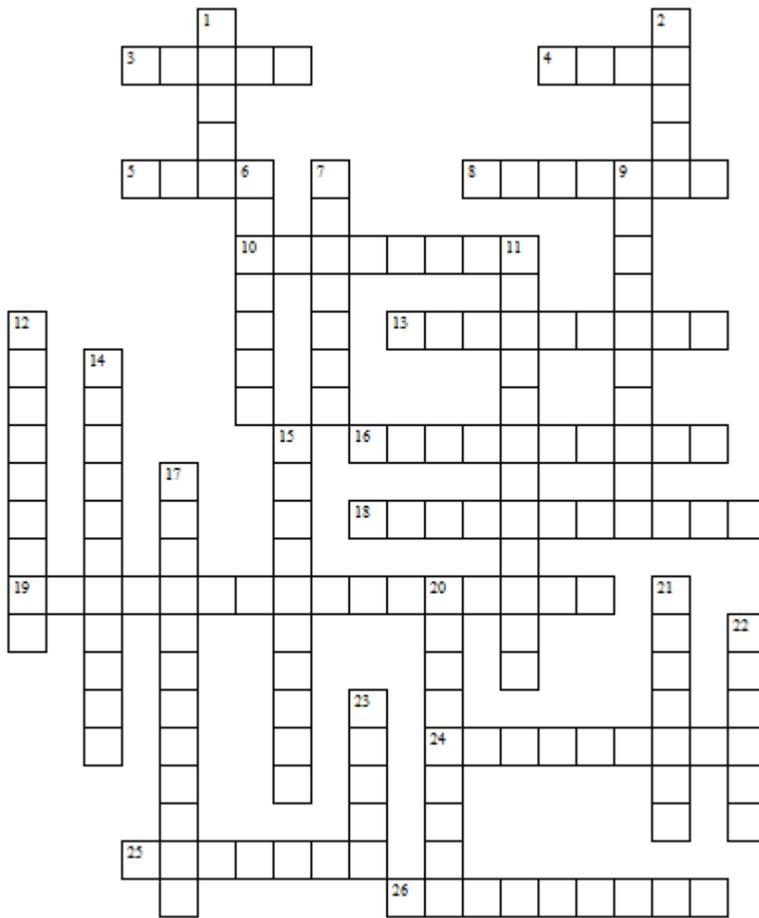
Pre-visit:

1. Students should be able to recognize the Fraser River on a map. Have students identify the major cities and tributaries found along the Fraser River.
2. Have students think about traditions that exist in their own families. These could be traditions from holidays or things their families do regularly. Share traditions with the class. Are there any families who have the same or similar traditions? Where did these traditions come from?
3. Have students brainstorm about what their own connections to the river are. Do they use the river for recreation? Does anyone in their family have jobs on the river? Have they ever travelled on a boat, plane, or train? Everyone living in the Fraser River basin is connected to the Fraser River in one way or another. Remember that a lot of the items we buy in stores are imported and a lot of our natural resources are exported in order to share with the world. What would life be like if we didn't import anything from other countries? What kind of items would we be missing in our daily lives?

Post visit:

1. After your visit to the Fraser River Discovery Centre, what did your students learn?
2. Elders are a very important part of the First Nations communities. They have lived on the river for thousands of years, and throughout this time have managed to continue to pass down traditions, skills, and stories. Ask your students what are some skills they learned from their parents or grandparents that are important to them? For example, perhaps a student learned to build something out of wood because their parent or grandparent taught them, or maybe a student learned to cook a special meal or dish because their families enjoy it and want to pass it on. Elders are important in most communities, and sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the value they offer into our lives.
3. What are some ways that First Nations show their appreciation to mother nature and to the salmon for their sacrifice? Why is it important to do this?
4. Ask your students to think about what an elder is to them. Think about people in your life that you learn from and have a lot of respect for, or someone you spend a lot of time with. Let them know that an elder can be an older family member, but can also be anyone that has influenced their lives in some way. Get the students to gather pictures, write down stories or interesting things about these people that they remember. Have students share with the class and explain a bit about why these people are so important.

Crossword Puzzle Activity



ACROSS

- 3 A modern fiber used in the production of many types of fishing equipment, among other things.
- 4 A plant fiber used to make rope and fabrics.
- 5 The external, separable covering of a tree used in making certain tools
- 8 A strong, grass like plant used in making netting.
- 10 The intestinal part of an animal that is generally removed before consumption.
- 13 To emit stored-up heat energy (ie – stored heat in canyon walls)
- 16 A narrow channel with a constant stream of wind.
- 18 The scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of artifacts and other remains.
- 19 A method of passing history on to future generations through spoken means rather than written.
- 24 A group of people working together towards a common goal or objective.
- 25 A type of salmon prevalent in the Fraser River.
- 26 To preserve by removing water from a substance

DOWN

- 1 An influential member of a First Nations group; respected by virtue of age and wisdom.
- 2 An act of reproduction of fishes; mixing of the milt of a male fish and the eggs of a female fish.
- 6 A flat slate blade used to process salmon.
- 7 The wide part of a river where it nears the ocean; fresh and salt water mix.
- 9 A descendent of the original inhabitants of North America.
- 11 A sense of connectedness regarding a set of beliefs or values
- 12 The handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information etc. from generation to generation.
- 14 A First Nations language group consisting of groups along the lower Fraser River.
- 15 The area of land that drains into a river.
- 17 In relation to food, preparing to avoid spoiling or decomposition.
- 20 The continuous sequence of changes through the development of an organism (ie – salmon from birth to death)
- 21 A course rock, often found in canyon walls
- 22 A deep valley with very steep sides, often carved from the Earth by a river.
- 23 The exchange of commodities between multiple people or groups.

RIVER SCHOOL

PROGRAMS

AT THE FRASER RIVER DISCOVERY CENTRE

