

## The Trading Trail

### 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:

Students explore the economic and technological exchanges between Aboriginal people and fur traders and become archaeologists as they dig for artifacts that represent key events in the development of BC.

The 90 minute program begins outside along the river where students can observe their surroundings. They will then be given a brief introductory presentation before being split into three groups and rotating through the following three stations:

- Trading Post Game
- Archaeology Dig
- Archaeology Journal

## Program Objectives

- To see how humans have always been dependant on the river
- To learn the importance of trade today and in the past in BC
- To examine the relationship between First Nations and European settlers
- To determine what made goods valuable to different people
- To learn some of the skills used by archaeologists
- To learn about different significant events along the river

## Helpful Vocabulary

**Archaeologist:** a scientist who studies human history by digging up human remains and artifacts

**Aboriginal/ indigenous:** people existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists

**Artifact:** an object made by a human being, typically an item of cultural or historical interest.

**Eulachon:** is a small fish that is plentiful in the river

**Export:** send (goods or services) to another country for sale.

**Hide:** an animal skin treated for human use

**Import:** bring (goods or services) into a country from abroad for sale.

**Obsidian:** a hard, dark, glasslike volcanic rock formed by the rapid solidification of lava without crystallization.

**Paleontologist:** a scientist who studies fossils

**Pioneer:** a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area (Europeans)

**Population:** all the inhabitants of a particular area.

**Ro-ro:** vessels designed to carry wheeled cargo, such as cars

**Trade:** the action of buying and selling goods and services.

**Watershed:** an area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas.

## 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. Ask students to bring a photograph or drawing of a very old object in their house. Talk about the item. Some questions to ask students:
  - a. What is it made of?
  - b. What was it used for? How would it be used?
  - c. Who would have used this item?
  - d. How did it find its way to your house? Was it gifts, inherited (passed on from older generations), purchased, found?
  - e. How old do you think it is?

### Post visit:

1. Search through newspapers, magazines, and books and the internet to research 3 ports along the Fraser River. For each port find out the following;
  - a. What are the main goods brought through the port? Do they all import and export the same goods?
  - b. What countries these goods are going to/ coming from?
  - c. How are these goods important to Canada or to you in particular?
2. Think about how importing and exporting affects the river. Are there negative effects on the river with so many ships and boats running up and down? Is it healthy for the river to have so many roads, bridges, and railway tracks around it? How can our high demand for imported items effect the river?
3. The Port of Vancouver has a 40-year plan to keep the various ports in Metro Vancouver sustainable, which includes making sure to take care of the land around it, the air, and the water quality. What are some things you could do to also help keep the river clean? (i.e. reuse old materials and items, dispose of hazardous materials properly, do not buy more than you need) The more we recycle and reuse, the less we need to bring into the country!

## Word Search Puzzle Activity

R K F I Z Q J R K I M P O R T S  
 B Q Q D K U L S D R C F W B Y V  
 O Q F L N O M L A S J J I U G Q  
 R H L Y M D P G G V D B V P V J  
 E X T C W L A N I G I R O B A K  
 S F B D C T O B S I D I A N P L  
 A S N O I T A N T S R I F H O A  
 R R K K Z E R A I L R O A D R R  
 F Q S E T T L E R S E X X H A T  
 N V W R P T R A D E R R V S D I  
 O S M V U Z T C W F O D T U E F  
 M N E U L F O N Z Z R N O R C A  
 I T L E P R E V A E B T Q D D C  
 S T J R H G C C K N G A A L W T  
 Z R O B S O N V Y Z H Z P O Z L  
 S G H U I E X P O R T S G G E J

aboriginal  
 artifact  
 Beaver pelt  
 cedar  
 exports  
 First Nations  
 fur  
 goldrush

imports  
 obsidian  
 railroad  
 Robson  
 salmon  
 settlers  
 Simon Fraser  
 trade

**RIVER  
SCHOOL**  
PROGRAMS

AT THE FRASER RIVER DISCOVERY CENTRE