# 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). While we can't know an exact arrival date, it would have been after the last ice age, 10-14 thousand years ago. It is worth noting, though, that within the oral traditions of First Nations groups, there are no stories of them arriving in what we now call Canada. For them, they have always been here.

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 estimated to be 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 longest river in BC, and 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 on Mount Robson 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 drier lands with low vegetation as a result of little rainfall and hot temperatures. In the Fraser 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 mudflats alternate between being exposed and submerged). Because estuaries have access to both riparian (river) and marine nutrients, they are home to an incredible diversity of life.

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. A 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 Indigenous peoples and European 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:

- FRDC 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
**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, particularly those of dinosaurs
**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
**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:

Here are some ideas to help prepare your class for the program, and to continue the learning back in the classroom.

Pre-visit:

1. Watch this short video about beavers and the expanding fur trade into Canada. Depending on how much time you want to spend on this, you may consider making a KWL chart about the fur trade in the 1800s.
    a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGoVlgcT6tM
2. Draw an Archaeologist! Spend a minute or two defining archaeology, then have students draw what they think an archaeologist looks like. In small groups, then transitioning to the entire class, discuss their drawings, the preconceptions or misconceptions students have about these scientists. For example, students may draw dinosaurs and fossils, however, those are studied by paleontologists. Students may also draw an Indiana Jones-like figure. While there is far from equal representation of women and minorities in the sciences, that does not mean that only white men are archaeologists. Finally, students may think that archaeologists get to keep the artifacts they find. This is not true, keeping artifacts would be theft. In light of this discussion, you can then give student time to make changes or corrections to their drawings, or perhaps draw a second archaeologist.

Post-visit:

1. Try to imagine what it was like for the Indigenous peoples and European settlers when they first met each other. Students could write journal entries, draw pictures, perform skits, or use any other expressive medium. Just make sure to create a piece from each group's perspective.
2. The dynamics between Indigenous peoples and European settlers established in those first trade relationships in the 1800s have had a continued effect throughout Canada's history, including the present. The unfair power dynamic was touched on during the River School program, but there is a lot more that can be said on this topic. There are a lot of fabulous resources for learning on this subject, geared towards a range of ages and learning styles.
3. Have each student bring in a tool from home (kitchen gadgets and beauty tools work well). Have students imagine they are an archaeologist centuries in the future just discovering this unfamiliar tool. Doing their best to ignore what they themselves know of this tool, what would an archaeologist in the future think this is? Are there any ways they can see someone misinterpreting this tool? Replicating the Archaeology Journal activity from the River School program, have the students draw a picture and make notes. Students can then share their findings in pairs, small groups or with the entire class.