

The Trading Trail

Background Information on the Fraser River:

The Fraser River starts as a trickle of melted snow at the top of Mount Robson which is in the Rocky Mountains, sitting on the border of British Columbia and Alberta. The river travels 1,375 kilometers through BC and empties into the Pacific Ocean. There are many tributaries (a river or stream that flows into a larger river or lake) that add water to the Fraser as it travels through BC. The Fraser River is longest river in BC, and one of the largest in all of Canada.

The landscapes of the Fraser River change from the beginning of its journey to its end. As you exit the headwaters on Mount Robson the water is crystal clear, shallow, and extremely cold. The middle portion of the river is called the Fraser Canyon, where the river is squeezed between 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. Because estuaries have access to both riparian (river) and marine nutrients, they are home to an incredible diversity of life. The lower mainland is located in the estuary portion of the Fraser River.

Indigenous people have been living in what we now call Canada for time immemorial, meaning that Indigenous communities have no stories of arriving here. They have always been here. There are many different First Nations along the River; each group is unique, with their own language or dialect, specific traditions, particular relationships with the landscape, stories, etc. The river has been used by Indigenous communities for thousands of years and they have specialized technologies, traditions and celebrations related to the river, nature, and biodiversity. Hul'q'umi'num', Halq'eméylem, and hənq'əmin'əm are Indigenous language dialects spoken in the lower portion of the Fraser River. In Halq'eméylem, the language dialect spoken in the upper portion of the lower Fraser, the word for river is Stolo. In hənq'əmin'əm, a language dialect spoken in the lower portion of the lower Fraser, the word for river is stalə'w'. Indigenous communities throughout BC speak other languages and dialects and will have other names for the river.

The Fraser River Discovery Centre is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the hənq'əmin'əm and Halq'eméylem speaking peoples. Territory acknowledgement is one small part of Reconciliation. We ask you take a moment to think of other ways you can participate in Reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

The River is also now known as the Fraser River, named after Simon Fraser, a European fur trader and explorer who led an expedition in 1808 along the river, establishing trade routes for what is now called the Hudson Bay Company.

The Fraser River Basin is an extremely biodiverse region, with hundreds of species of plants, animals, and fungi. 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 3 million people. A watershed is an area of land that drains all the water into one main river. You could imagine this as the watershed being a sink, and the Fraser River the drain; anything poured along the sides of the sink will end up in the drain, just like all the rivers and streams around the watershed end up in the Fraser River.

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.