

Welcomed by the Water

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 hən'qəminəm' 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 hən'qəminəm', 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 hən'qəminəm' 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:

Prior to European colonization, Indigenous peoples got what they needed from the land and water around them. Indigenous people have relied on salmon since the fish became abundant in the Fraser River about 5000-6000 years ago. They used native plants for food, medicine, building materials and more. This program explores the connection between Indigenous people, salmon, and the broader Fraser River Basin. Students experience the movement of salmon, storytelling and oral histories, and the many uses of native plants through an Indigenous perspective.

Program Objectives

- To introduce the importance of traditions to a culture.
- To understand that the cultural importance of indigenous communities does not depend on written history, but instead is recorded in the oral traditions passed through generations.
- Understand that the interconnectedness of people, land, plants, and animals requires dependence, nurturing, respect and reciprocity.
- To explore the salmon lifecycle through multiple perspectives.
- To learn about some of the medicinal and edible native plants of BC.
- To understand that land and nature have been and continue to be a source of life-sustaining resources.

Helpful Vocabulary

Elder: a leader or senior person, often who teaches things.

Spawning: laying eggs.

Migration: movement from one area to another, usually seasonal.

Anadromous: a fish that can go from fresh water to salt water.

Tradition: passing on customs or beliefs from one generation to the next.

Tuber: a root vegetable.

Weed: a plant that is invasive and takes over, taking the water and nutrients from other plants to thrive.

In- class activities:

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

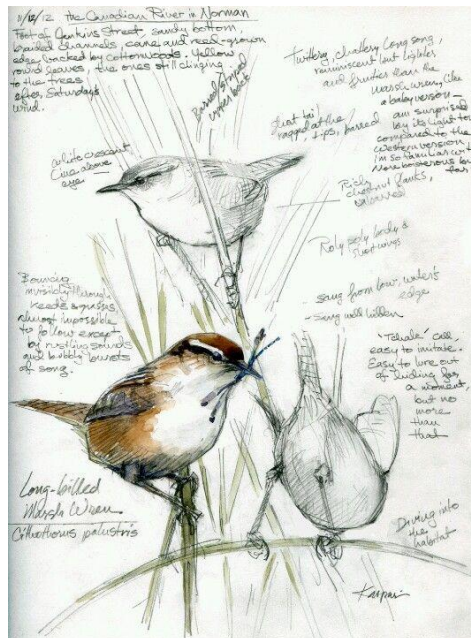
Pre-visit:

1. In this program, we'll be talking about native plants and some of their uses. To set the context for this, explore with your class the difference between native and invasive species. You can easily explain to your class what a native species is: it's a species that normally lives in an area. You can use the following video to help explore invasive species, what they are, and the impact they can have.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4Ds8aFh8hM>
2. Introduce your students to an Indigenous perspective on harvesting and using native plants as food and medicine by watching this video. In it, Barb Whyte, a member of the K'omoks First Nation on Vancouver Island, and June Johnson from Cape Mudge on Quadra Island, talk about holistic nature of their knowledge of medicinal plants.
 - a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=204&v=RANcnlOtR1o&feature=emb_title
3. Introduce your students to an Indigenous perspective of salmon, and their lifecycle, with this video filmed in BC.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST5Wp5RsBb4>

Post visit:

1. In the program we touched on the interconnectedness of the landscape in the salmon lifecycle game. To learn more about the ways that salmon, the forest, and all its residents support each other, watch the video below. Help students solidify the knowledge presented in the video by drawing food web diagrams, showing the connection between salmon and trees (their diagrams should end up circular).
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g00fAKG31lw>
2. Re-enact the salmon life cycle in your classroom! Using the printable below, make salmon puppets. Have students color in their salmon, cut it out leaving the two halves connected, fold it in half, and glue or tape their salmon to a stick. You can use their puppets as is, and have everyone act out the salmon lifecycle. Or, you can go a step further and create a river and ocean out of fabric or paper and markers for your salmon to swim through. Add as many details as you want, like a waterfall, a gravel redd, a bear, a sturgeon, etc.
 - a. [Salmon Puppets](#)

3. Continue learning about BC's native plants by creating a page from a nature journal. Most nature journals consist of a mixture of drawings, block text and small notes. Have each student pick a native BC plant from the plants we talked about at the centre below and create a nature journal entry about it. Alternatively, you can search for native plants in BC to have a larger variety for students. They should draw the plant from a couple different perspectives, highlighting key characteristics with both their drawings and text, and they should add some notes about the plant somewhere on the page. See below for some examples of nature journal pages. We have also included a nature journal template.
 - a. [Plant Summary and Nature Journal](#)



RIVER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

AT THE FRASER RIVER DISCOVERY CENTRE

