



# Land-Based Learning & the Salmon Lifecycle

by Jeniffer, Jess, Katy, & Tanya

# Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we live, learn and teach on the traditional and unceded lands of the T'kemlúps te Secwépemc people within Secwépemc'ulucw. As guests on this land, we recognize the privileges and responsibilities we hold. The Secwépemc People have cared for these lands since time immemorial, and we are committed to learning from their relationships with the Land so we can strive to do the same.

As teacher candidates, we are committed to meaningfully indigenizing our practice with indigenous ways of knowing and being, and amplifying Indigenous voices in our classroom materials. Further, we commit to ongoing reflection on how colonialism appears within our teaching so we can actively challenge and reduce its impacts.

# Introduction

## Centering the Land as First Teacher

- Bringing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into regular school programs is an important part of decolonization and reconciliation
- Our project looks at Land-Based Learning (LBL) as a way of teaching that comes from Indigenous ways of knowing
- We have created a full learning module about the salmon lifecycle to show how LBL can be used in the classroom
- This project is connected to the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc Peoples
- It includes lessons and assessments that respect Indigenous perspectives, teach students to care for the environment, and support their overall growth
- This unit is built on the belief that the Land is a living, spiritual being that is always changing and is our First Teacher



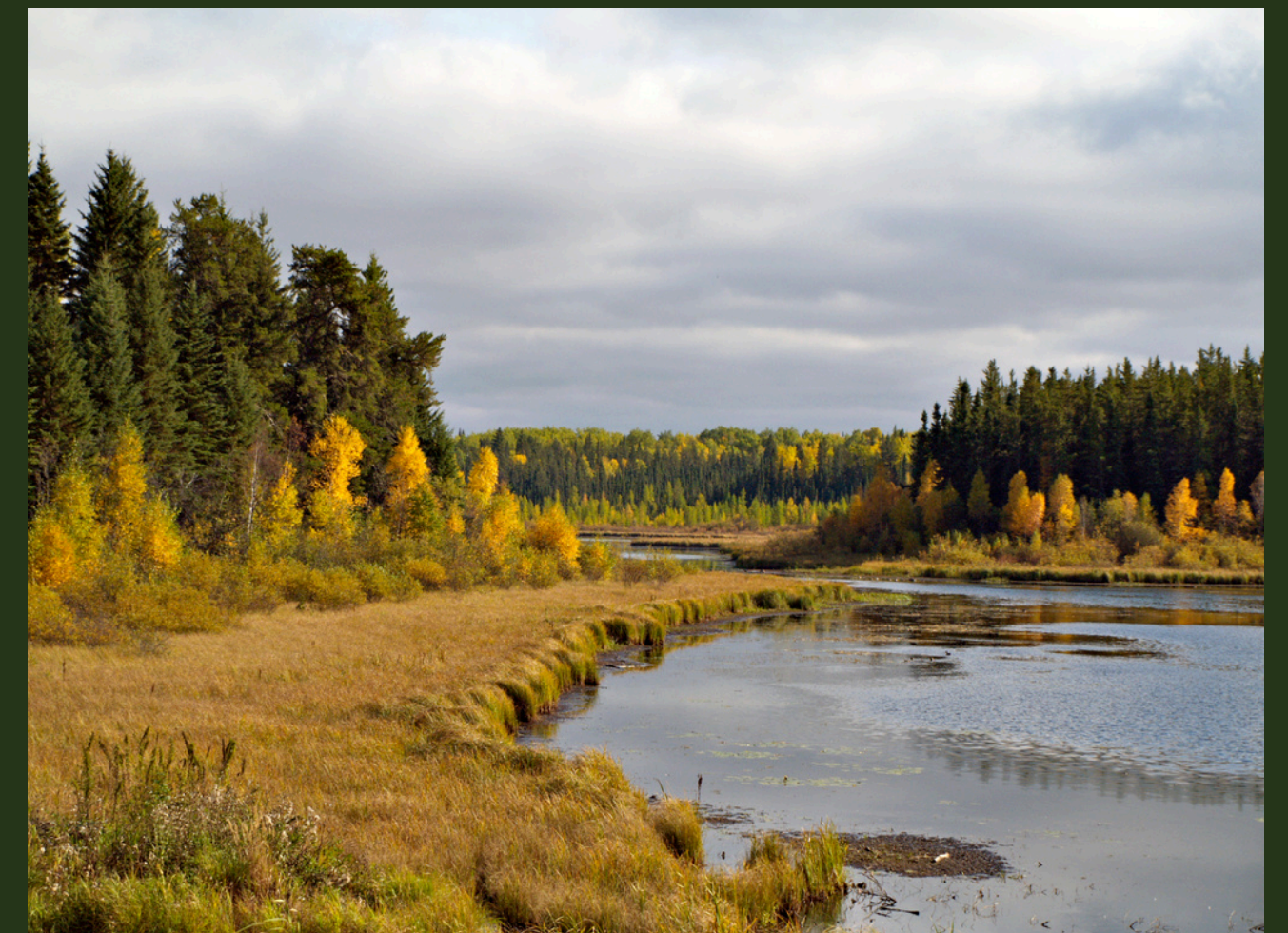
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# Indigenous Epistemology & the Nature of Land-Based Learning

- Land-based learning (LBL) comes from Indigenous ways of understanding the world, which are different from typical Western school approaches
- At its core, LBL is based on relationality — the idea that everything is connected
  - The Land is seen as a living, changing, and spiritual being that teaches us and shows how all living and non-living things are linked
- LBL includes all learning that happens when we recognize our connection to the world around us, not just when we are outdoors.
  - These experiences can help people heal and reconnect with their cultures, languages, and identities from before colonization
- LBL also pushes back against the historical separations that kept Indigenous Peoples from their traditional land-based practices
  - such as hunting, fishing, and learning from seasonal changes



# Distinction Between Land-Based and Place-Based Learning

- Place-based learning teaches about and within the local community
  - Focuses on the local place such as the community, neighbourhood, built environment, & natural surroundings
- Land-based learning intentionally centers around Indigeneity, acknowledges all places as Indigenous Lands, and honours the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical relationships that Indigenous Peoples have with the sentient Land
  - Focuses on relationships with the Land, all living & non-living beings, ancestors, culture, and language



# Rationale: Decolonization, Reciprocity, & Holistic Development

- Land-based learning is more than ecological education; it is a fundamental act of decolonization and a critical strategy for reconciliation.
- Grounded in reciprocity: the Land and human beings exist in a symbiotic relationship of mutual give & take
- By decentering settler approaches and honouring Indigenous values and perspectives, LBL shifts away from western individualization and fosters kinship, collective knowledge-sharing, and reduced isolation. This, in turn, strengthens community relationships.
- A holistic model of education supports student well-being, reduces stress, and improves cognitive function through active, hands-on engagement.
- Learning through traditional skills (ex., hunting) teaches core values such as patience and resourcefulness, promoting self-worth, resilience, problem-solving skills, and collaboration.
- LBL that integrates both Indigenous oral histories and traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific methodologies deepens learning for all students through Two-Eyed Seeing.



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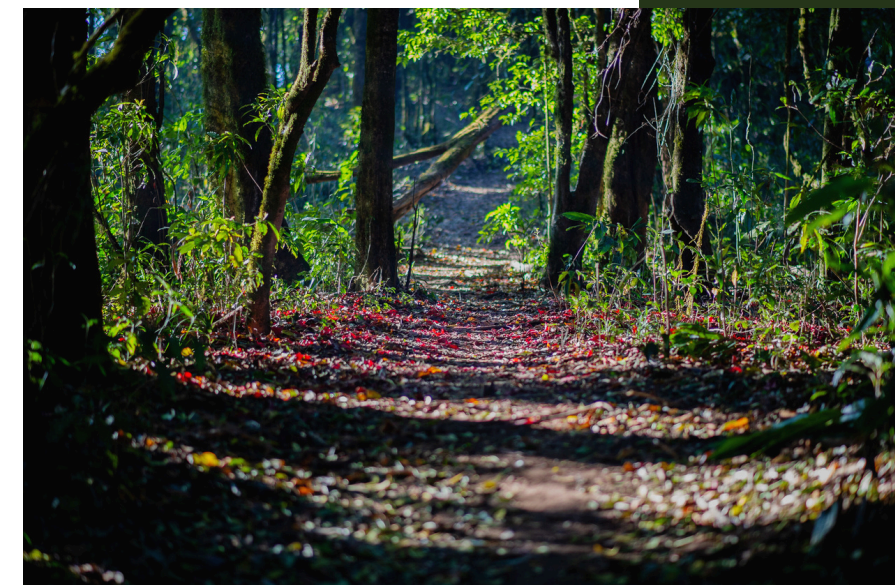
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# Proposed Curricular Module

## The Salmon's Journey-Reciprocity with the Land

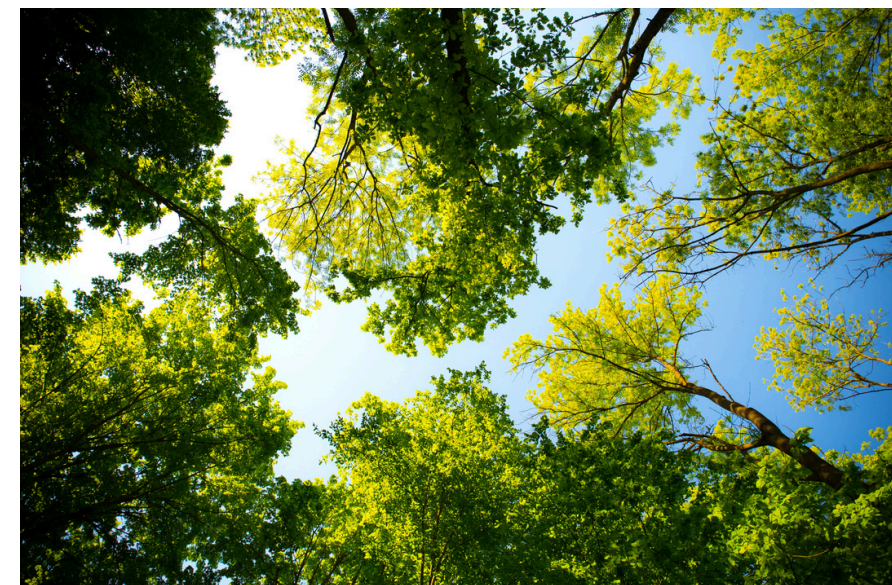
- Land-based learning is essential for honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and recognizing the Land as the first teacher.
- This module is based on the salmon lifecycle and centered on Tsútswecw Provincial Park (Adam's River) which is on Secwépemc territory.
- Why did we pick this?
- Salmon is of immense importance to the Secwépemc peoples for their culture & survival
- Connections to SEL, Science, Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, ELA, and PHE.



# Out-of-Classroom (Land-Based) Activities

## 1. Elder Led Field Study & Storytelling

- Students visit the river with an Elder or community knowledge keeper
- Focus on the spiritual significance of the salmon's journey and sacrifice
- Through the eyes of the Elder, students will learn about the salmon's role in the ecosystem and cultural uses
  - ex. Food, ceremony, nourishment of the earth.
- Elders may share oral stories such as The Story of the Porcupine, and Coyote and the Salmon
- This activity supports emotional and spiritual learning, fostering belonging and resilience.



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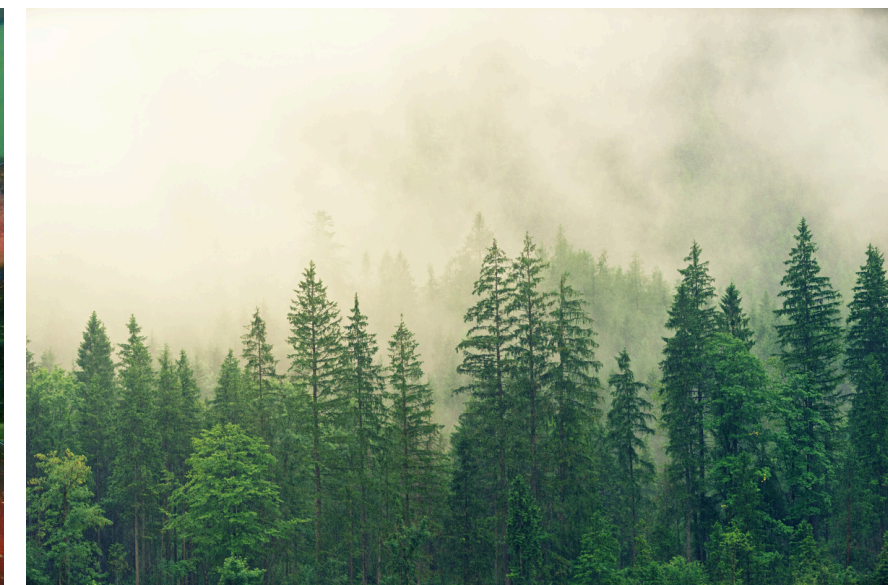
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Thomas, K. (n.d.). *Coyote and the Salmon* [Audio recording]. In *Secwepemc Stories*. Salmon Arm Folk Music Society. <https://rootsandblues.ca/secwepemc-stories>

# Out-of-Classroom (Land-Based) Activities

## 2. Practicing Reciprocity: Habitat Stewardship

- Students engage in hands-on activities that demonstrate giving back to the Land
- Possible partnerships: Kingfisher Interpretive Centre, T'kemlúps te Secwépemc Natural Resources Department.
- Activities could include:
  - Raising and releasing salmon fry
  - Aquatic insects/plant counts to monitor water health
  - Caring for waterbeds and/or river banks
- Reinforces the role of students as caretakers of the Land
- These activities provide an authentic context for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills



Kingfisher Interpretive Centre. (n.d.). Reuniting people with the natural world. [Organization statement]. <https://www.kingfishercentre.org/>

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T'kemlúps te Secwépemc. (n.d.). *Natural resources*. <https://tkemlups.ca/natural-resources/>

# Out-of-Classroom (Land-Based) Activities

## 3. Seasonal Rounds & Behavioural Adaptations

- Students observe local seasonal patterns and environmental changes, and how they connect to the salmon life cycle
- Learn how factors like water levels, temperature, and forest health (ex. wildfire) affect salmon survival
- Recognize that the Land is in a constant state of change and requires ongoing respect, nurturing, and understanding.



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# In-Classroom Integration Across Disciplines

## Science and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

- IEK on water usage, sustainability, and traditional harvesting practices alongside western scientific investigation.
- Collect and test water samples and analyze data through both contemporary science and Secwepemc lenses
- Examine impacts of wildfires:
  - How do they change habitat conditions?
  - Reinforces the need for understanding ecological systems.



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# In-Classroom Integration Across Disciplines

## English Language Arts

- Space for self-reflection and knowledge transfer
- Aligns with oral traditions central to Indigenous epistemology
- Students keep forest/river journals to record:
  - Sensory experiences
  - Emotional responses
  - Intellectual observations from the field
- Journal writing can be transformed into narratives about
  - The salmon's journey
  - Honouring the Land as a living being
  - Using:
    - Story-writing skills
    - Traditional Indigenous storytelling structures
- Potential format:
  - Short story or comic from the perspective of a salmon

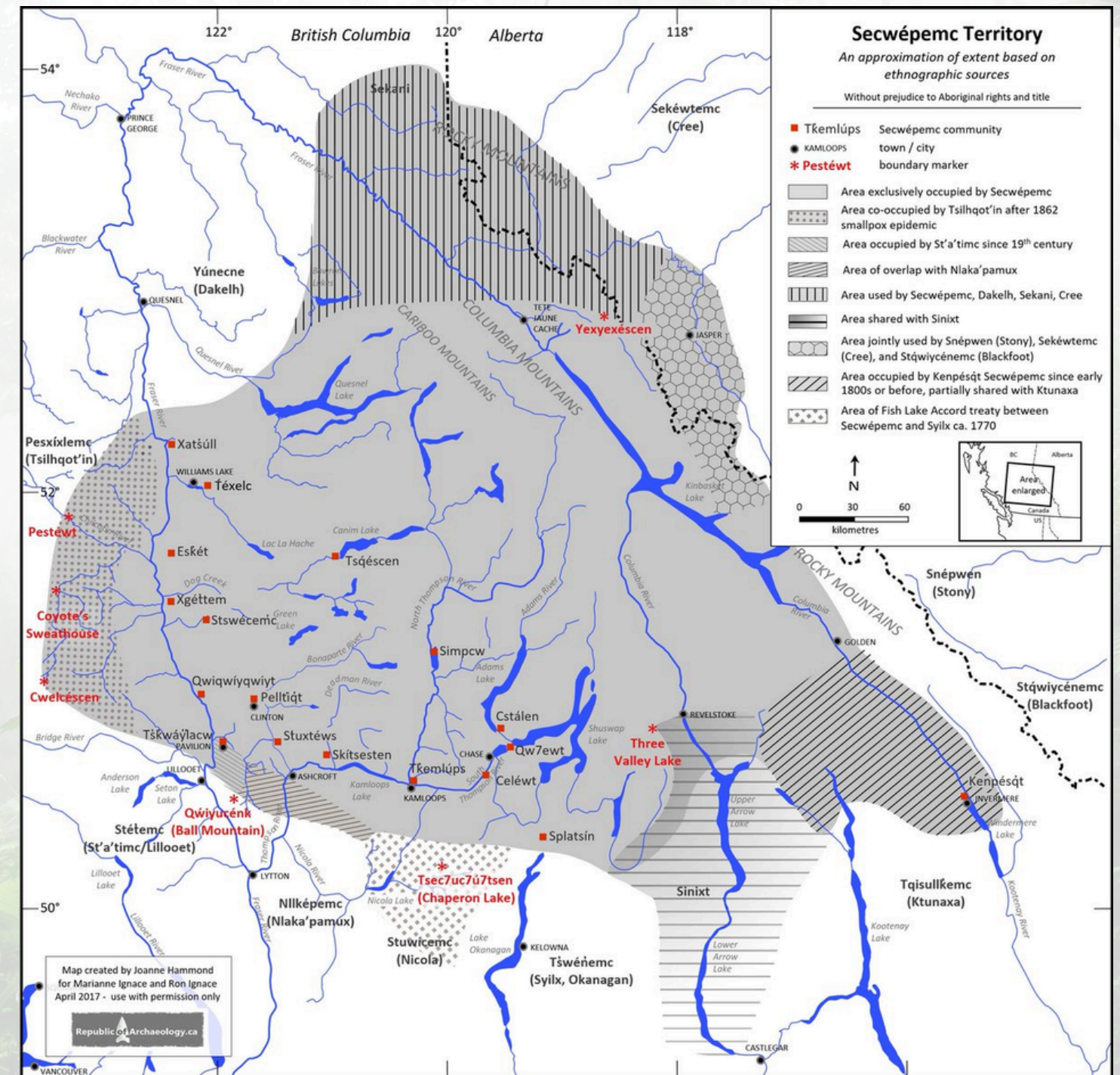


Name: _____
<b>My life as a Salmon!</b>
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# In-Classroom Integration Across Disciplines

## Social Studies and decolonization

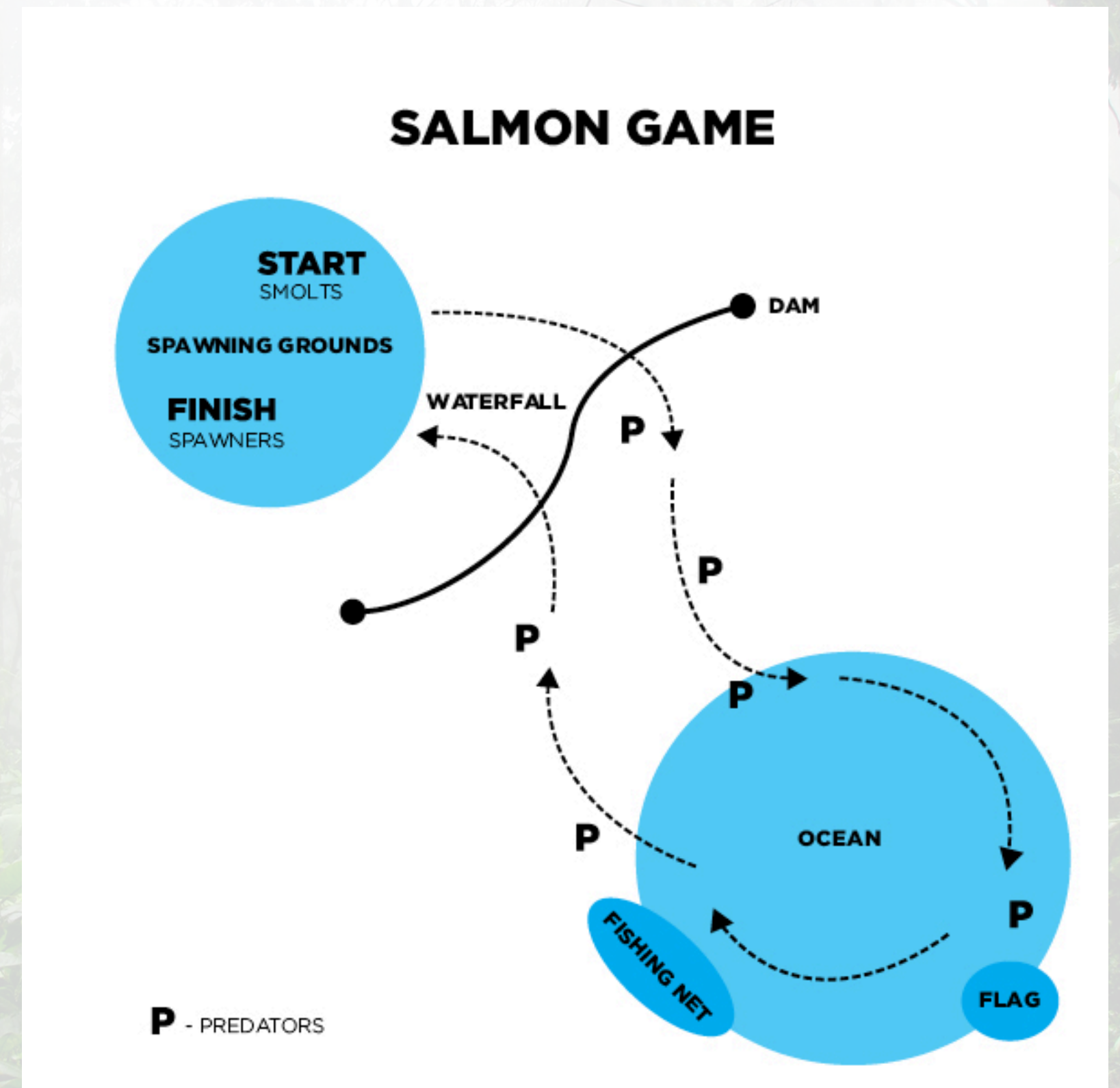
- Examine land rights and treaties related to the Adams River and Secwepemc Nation
- Students critically evaluate:
  - Own positionality in relation to historical and ongoing conflict over land
  - How these conflicts continue to shape patterns of behaviour
- Deepen understandings of reconciliation through analysis of:
  - Power Structures
  - Historical imbalances in environmental management



# In-Classroom Integration Across Disciplines

## Physical Health Education

- The Salmon Migration Obstacle Course allows students to act out the salmon life cycle from fry to spawners and try to survive in the wild.
- Physically learning about the experiences of salmon migration through the Salmon Run game



# Assessment for cultural relevance and fairness

Assessment must align with the holistic and relational learning goals of LBL and ensure cultural relevance.

Therefore, the assessment will focus on students' physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth, not just cognitive recall.

## Process-Oriented Observational Assessment

- Occurring during on the Land activities such as:
  - Water health monitoring
  - Caring for river banks
- Use of checklists or rubrics based on Indigenous values:
  - Patience
  - Contribution to the collective
  - Collaboration and resourcefulness
- Evaluation focuses on skills development and adherence to ethical protocols in context

## Holistic Product Assessment

- Replaces or supports traditional essays
- Students create a narrative of the salmon's journey that weaves together information from:
  - Scientific data (e.g. Water quality charts)
  - Cultural teachings (e.g. Elder stories)
  - Personal reflections (e.g. ELA journaling)
- Embraces multiple intelligences and combines knowledge from both Indigenous oral histories and scientific inquiry.

## Relational Self and Peer-Assessment

- Students reflect on their own and peers' learning in relation to the Land and the class whole
- Use guided prompts such as:
  - "What did the land teach you about the concept of balance?"
  - "How did your actions contribute to the collective goal of stewardship?"
  - "Identify a moment where you demonstrated patience or resourcefulness."
- Supports relational accountability and the nurturing of kinships..

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# Conclusion: Embracing LBL as a Necessity



The salmon lifecycle offers a powerful opportunity to integrate land-based learning in holistic, inclusive, and meaningful ways. By grounding the unit in indigenous epistemologies, we support student well-being and contribute to the broader work of decolonization and reconciliation.

Ultimately, land-based education is essential for fostering a more sustainable society that respects Indigenous ways of knowing and honours the Land, culture, and future generations.

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**Thank you!**  
**Questions?**



