

Kwakiutl Indians Unit—Lesson 2  
The People of Salmon (Part 2)

Date: Day 2

Subject/Grade: Social Studies, Grade 3

Length: 1 period (30 min.)

**I. Objectives / Pennsylvania Standards:**

1. Students will discover more about the life cycle of the salmon and their importance to the Kwakiutl by viewing a demonstration of the salmon's life cycle and by listening to an Indian legend about the salmon.
2. PA Standards: 8.3.3.A (History), 3.3.4.A (Science), 1.6.3.A and 1.6.3.B (Language Arts)

**II. Materials:**

- Textbook—From Sea to Shining Sea
- 1 or 2 pieces of chart paper (optional)
- Salmon life cycle handout
- Book—*The Prince and the Salmon People* by Claire Rudolph Murphy

**III. Anticipatory set:**

1. The teacher will put review the main ideas of the chapter reading the previous day and put student responses on the board and discuss them with the class.

**IV. Procedure:**

1. The teacher will review with the students the importance of the salmon to the Kwakiutl. The class will also review the Kwakiutl philosophy of not taking more than needed from nature.
2. The teacher will explain the life cycle of the salmon, and how the return of the salmon every year is important to the Kwakiutl.
3. The teacher will then read the legend of Niawas-ye to the students, showing them pictures from *The Prince and the Salmon People* in order to better tell the story (the book itself is above grade level).
4. The students and teacher will discuss the values that this story teaches the Kwakiutl and all people (not to be wasteful, to be thankful for the things we have, only take what we need, etc.).
5. The students will be invited to explore other versions of the Salmon People legend by visiting the following websites:
  - The Salmon Story:  
<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/ANCR/Southeast/iamsalmon/SalmonStoryActivities.html> (this site contains both information and activities based around the multiple versions of the Salmon People story)
  - Salmon Boy: [http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmnh/exhibits/north-south-east-west/tingit/salmon\\_boy/sb\\_index.html](http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmnh/exhibits/north-south-east-west/tingit/salmon_boy/sb_index.html) (this site is a great auto-refreshing site that tells the Tlingit Indian version of this story).

Students could compare and contrast the different versions of the story.

**V. Closure:**

The teacher will review the story with the class to try to pull out the main ideas about Kwakiutl philosophy. The teacher will also make *The Prince and the Salmon People* available to students who wish to read the legend for themselves.

**VI. Evaluation / Assessment:**

The teacher will check for understanding and comprehension by asking questions throughout the reading of the story.

## **A Haida Legend**

Long ago, among the Haida people, there was a boy who showed no respect for the salmon. Though the salmon meant life for the people, he was not respectful of the one his people called Swimmer. His parents told him to show gratitude and behave properly, but he did not listen. When fishing, he would step on the bodies of the salmon that were caught and after eating he carelessly threw the bones of the fish into the bushes. Others warned him that the spirits of the salmon were not pleased by such bad behavior, but he did not listen.

One day, his mother served him a meal of salmon. He looked at it with disgust. "This is moldy" he said, though the meat was good. He threw it upon the ground. Then, he went down to the river to swim with the other children. However, as he was swimming, a current caught him and pulled him away from the others. It swept him into the deepest water and he could not swim strongly enough to escape from it. He sank into the river and drowned.

There, deep in the river, the Salmon People took him with them. They were returning back to the ocean without using their bodies. They had left their bodies behind for the humans and the animal people to use as food. The boy went with them, for now, he belonged to the salmon.

When they reached their home, in the ocean, they looked just like human beings. Their village there in the ocean looked much like his own home and he could hear the sound of children playing in the stream which flowed behind the village. Now the Salmon People began to teach the boy. He was hungry and they told him to go to the stream and catch one their children, who were salmon swimming in the stream. However, he was told, he must be respectful and after eating return all of the bones and everything he did not intend to eat to the water. Then, he was told, the children would be able to come back to life. But, if he didn't return the bones, to the water, salmon child would not come back.

He did as he was told, but one day after he had eaten, when it came time for the children to come up to the village, from the stream, he heard one of them crying. He went to see what was wrong. The child was limping because one of its feet was gone. Then, the boy realized he had not thrown all of the fins back into the stream. he quickly found the one fin he had missed, and threw it in and the child was healed.

After he had spent the winter with the Salmon People, it again was spring and time for them to return to the rivers. The boy swam with them, for he belonged to the Salmon People now. When they swam past his old village, his own mother caught him in her net. When she pulled him from the water, even though he was in the shape of a salmon, she saw the copper necklace he was wearing. It was the same necklace she had given her son.

She carried Salmon Boy carefully back home. She spoke to him and held him and gradually he began to shed his salmon skin; First, his head emerged. Then, after eight days, he shed all of the skin and was a human again.

Salmon Boy taught the people all of the things he had learned. He was a healer now and helped them when they were sick.

"I can't stay with you long," he said, "you must remember what I teach you."

He remained with the people until the time came when the old salmon who had gone upstream and not been caught by the humans or the animal people came drifting back down toward the stream. As Salmon Boy stood by the water, he saw a huge old salmon floating down toward him. It was so worn by its journey that he could see through its sides. He recognized it as his own soul and he thrust his spear into it. As soon as he did so, he died.

Then the people of the village did as he told them to do. They placed his body into the river. It circled four times and then sank, going back to his home in the ocean, back to the Salmon People.

*(adapted from:*

*[http://www.turtletrack.org/Issues00/Co05202000/CO\\_05202000\\_Chinook.htm](http://www.turtletrack.org/Issues00/Co05202000/CO_05202000_Chinook.htm))*