**First Salmon Ceremony Presentation**  
By Shannon Campbell

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Slide 2-4 | Ask students what they notice and wonder. |
| Slide 5 | The First Salmon Ceremony is something that is practiced by First Nations people all along the Northwest Coast. Each community has their own way of holding this ceremony, but they all have some things in common.   1. **Catch the Salmon**:  * The chief, community, or a leader chooses a person to catch the first Spring Salmon, also known as Chinook Salmon, of the year. There may be certain protocol that the fisher has to follow. For example, the fisher will pray to the salmon people, and may have special regalia that they must wear. Regalia is a uniform or clothing only worn for special events and ceremonies. * The fisher person waits until a certain amount of salmon have passed through the river before catching the first salmon.  1. **Cook the Salmon**:  * The salmon is cooked, usually barbequed over an open fire, as pictured here. Once it is cooked, it is placed on a ceremonial plank of wood, over a bed of cedar boughs. Cedar is a sacred tree on the Northwest Coast, and is used in ceremonies because it is thought to be pure, cleansing and healing.  1. **Share the Salmon**:  * The community gathers together. Drummers and singers escort the salmon into the hall or longhouse. The people are celebrating the return of the salmon. * The chief or the hired speaker at the event will talk about the importance of this ceremony. This ceremony has happened for hundreds of years. The First Nations people believe that the salmon people live in the ocean. They transform into the salmon that we see and know when they enter the rivers or come close to the shore. The chief of the salmon people gifted salmon children to the First Nations people. They were given specific instructions on how to hold this ceremony for the first salmon. They were told not to eat or throw out any of the bones, because the salmon are considered to be immortal. When the bones are returned to the river or ocean, the First Nations people believe that it will transform back into a salmon and return to the Salmon People in the ocean.  1. **Return the Bones**:  * After everyone eats the salmon, the bones are placed back on the ceremonial tray. * A chief or person is selected to return the bones to the river or ocean. Sometimes drumming and singing will happen at this part. * The person walks out into the water, and places the bones and cedar boughs into the river or ocean. |
| Slide 6 | Here is a word cloud about the first salmon ceremony. First Nations Elders say that today we celebrate the First Salmon Ceremony to honour the salmon and give thanks to them for their sacrifice so that we may live. The First Salmon Ceremony is about respecting the environment, respecting salmon and all beings on Mother Earth, and coming together as a community. It is also about giving thanks to the Creator for the gift of life and the gift of salmon. It is about following the footsteps of their ancestors, and the sacred responsibility of keeping their culture alive. The First Salmon Ceremony recognizes the importance of sustainability – taking only what is needed to ensure that the future generations of people will be able to enjoy salmon. |
| Slide 7 | Here is a video of a First Salmon Ceremony in Lummi Nation, Washington. |