

### Sequencing Drama Strategies: Front End Loading

From Jeffrey Wilhelm's, *Inquiring Minds Learnto ReadandWrite*, p. 119

**LessonTopic:**Salmon Fishing Practices and the story, *The First Salmon Ceremony*

**Roles:**Students cast as fishery officers/scientists.

Teacher in Role: Chief of the village called upon by her elders with concerns about the lack of salmon returning up the river from the ocean. There are hungry people in the village and it has been a long winter with the food supplies running low from the low amounts of salmon being caught last year.

**Setup/framing:**Teacher inform students, who are the experts on all things salmon, that since the people of the village rely heavily on the salmon for food and their cultural practises that they need to think about what they know about salmon and salmon fishing and to think about where the salmon could be and why they were not returning. Make a list of ideas of what could have happened to the salmon.

**Technique:**Studentswork in pairs in role to discuss what could have happened and things they may have noticed. Students can come up with a list of possible scenarios.

Once students have shared their scenarios then orally tell the **FirstSalmonCeremony**below,

***There are Salmon Felt Board stories available at the Aboriginal Education Center and soon to be one available at the LRC.***



## The First Salmon Ceremony

Long ago, a great darkness filled the land and the villagers went hungry day after day. They sat huddled in front of the Big House, waiting anxiously for the return of the salmon.

Excitement filled the air as the mouth of the river began to fill with the silver glint of thousands of fins. As the fish made their way up the river to their hereditary spawning grounds, they were greedily snatched from the water. They were cooked and devoured immediately. The bones were left unceremoniously scattered about in the dirt, unable to return to their spawning grounds.

Far away in the land of the dog salmon people, the salmon people waited for their dead kin who would never return. The chief of the dog salmon became alarmed and called the other four great houses of salmon to a council. As the salmon people arrived, he graciously acknowledged their esteemed presence as he sat them in order of rank. When all of the five houses were gathered together, he addressed them with deep concern in his voice.

“As you are aware, our brothers and sisters are being slaughtered as they make their way up the river. Their dying voices cry out to us at the dishonor that is being heaped upon them. If their bones are not delicately reshaped and placed gently back into the waters, our ancestors cannot be reborn,” the chief said mournfully.

“Our village lies almost empty,” replied the Sockeye Salmon chief.

“Our people’s bones lay strewn about the camp of the villagers, never to return to us,” wailed the Coho and Pink Salmon Chiefs.

“I have a plan,” said the Chinook Salmon chief. The council listened intently as he began.

“Tomorrow at dawn I will leave for the village that is filled with our dead and make a pact with the villagers. I will guarantee them they will go hungry no more if they but only agree to honour and respect the five great houses of salmon.”

At dawn, the Chinook Salmon chief and his people swam to the village. The villagers were amazed at the density of salmon filling the river. They began licking their lips greedily. "Greeting brothers and sisters," the Chinook Salmon chief said eloquently. The frightened villagers were shocked into silence.

"We have come to offer ourselves to you, but first...." The Chinook Salmon Chief began. The people, not heeding his words, rushed forward to grab as many fish as they could. In response, the Spring Salmon Chief lifted his fin and the multitude of fish disappeared as if into thin air. "Yieeee," the people screamed in fear.

"Before we offer ourselves to you, my brothers and sisters, you must agree to my conditions. Firstly, you must vow to teach your children and your children's children respect for all living things. Secondly, the bones of the salmon must be carefully placed into the stream from where they came. If this pact is followed, you will go hungry no more. If not, my people will disappear, never to return." The Chinook Salmon chief decreed.

The villagers knelt down before the Chinook Salmon chief, pledging their allegiance. A trust of honour had been forged between the two great nations and the darkness overhanging the village receded.

"Each year, our people will return to the river and you must remember to acknowledge us accordingly," the Chinook Salmon chief said. The people agreed, welcoming their new kin. From then on, a First Salmon Ceremony was held yearly in our of the salmon's arrival from their underwater kingdoms. During the ceremony, the children's clear voices could be heard rejoicing and welcoming their family from the sea. Sacred down was gathered from the mighty eagle and sprinkled in honor of the salmon. The body of the salmon was prepared and shared by all. The bones were carefully replaced in the sea to be reborn. The spirits looked on and were pleased. The villagers became known as the 'People of the Salmon.'

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Story adapted from the Salish traditional First Salmon Ceremony. *'Story from Time Immemorial- The First People of the Pacific Northwest Coast.'*