

Fish Trap Topic Points

- Setting: Standing on the Comox Mud Flats at low tide. Notice the Big House and Whale House, Royston, Royston Wrecks, River, Air Park, Comox, Courtenay. This was the site of a highly productive and functional Aboriginal fishery. We would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation Territory
- K'ómoks means land of plenty or wealth – reference the amount of food/resources available in this area.



Have a small scale model drawn in sand (chopsticks as poles and branches or long pieces of grass as the net) Students are gathered on the sand in a large circle.



Definition and Awareness:

- **What is a fish trap?**

A trap is a barrier or obstruction than can be used as a trap
Comox Traps are unique, so far largest found in history.
Comox Bay is best place for this type of fishing (mud flats, river, ?)

- **Back story (Nancy Greene and David McGee)**

Nancy GPS 'ed 14,000 stakes and carbon dated 56 stakes. Connection to Time
One stake was about 1300 years old, from 720AD, to as early as 174 years around 1830AD (just before contact was made in the Comox Valley).

Visual pieces of the trap:

- **Shapes of the trap**

Heart

Chevron

Engineers today recognize these shapes as being strong and able to hold large loads.
Good designs that exploit the rise and fall of tides.

- **Posts**

Laborious to put stakes in the mud. Stakes would have had to pound each stack in to the mud flats.
Part of that is in ground is in anaerobic environment that is why it is preserved.

- **Size of Traps**

- From this data, it is estimated that there are 100 000 – 200 000 stakes in the tidal flat area
- 30-40m wide (I have students line up side by side with arms outstretched to show how wide they were. Assuming students are about 1 to 1.5m tall)

(Insert picture of pile driving posts from Indian fishing)

How they Work

- Did not stand alone, but functioned together. Traps would be chosen to used based on where fish were known to go and level of tide at the particular time the fish were in harbour.
- Tide related
- Series of traps, one behind the other.
- Fish movement habits (behaviour)
- Scientific observation
- Would/could have supported a large population.

Location

- Trading with other nations
- Other nations would probably have camped around harbour
- Estuary

Industry and Trade

- Scale
- Processing
- Sharing

Environmental Responsibility

- Connection to First Salmon Ceremony
- Removing of wall to regulate number of needed fish

Influence of Settlers

- What happened to the traps?
- Settlers? Trade? Population decrease? Smallpox?
- Newer fishing practises
- This type of fishing would have been people intensive.

Ecosystem

- Seasonal
- Dredging of River

Walk out to Fish Trap

GPS coordinates...?

Put flags by posts



Play Salmon

Include Suzanne's story



Importance of this knowledge today

- Used in treaty negotiations to show extent of aboriginal fishery/rights and to prove ownership of beaches/ocean
- We are sharing oral history of the K'ómoks First Nation combined with modern science techniques. When students pass this knowledge on to their children – this is oral history.
- Bid has been launched to make it a Natural Historic Site

Information to send to teacher

- Stone Bone Antler Book by Hilary Stewart
- Map
- Indian Fishing by Hilary Stewart
- Thinking Sheet

- Reflection page
- Poster – to be made by Lynn
- PDF information sheet
- Questioning page?