



# Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Chinook Trilogy Curriculum: *My Strength is from the Fish*



## My Strength is From the Fish

*My Strength Is From the Fish* is the first in a three-part video series presenting the tribal perspective on Columbia River salmon, the dramatic losses the salmon have suffered. Using evocative interviews with tribal elders, fishers and others, *My Strength Is From the Fish* shows salmon to be the core of a profound ancient culture and the key to its survival.

### *Topics*

- Anthropology
- Comparative Religion
- Environmental Science
- Ethics
- Geography
- History
- Political Science
- Sociology

## Goals and Objectives

---

1. By viewing the video, participating in a class discussion, and completing a writing assignment, students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the relationship between Columbia River treaty tribes and salmon.
2. Through class discussion and the completion of a writing assignment, students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of why Indian people feel it is their moral duty to restore the salmon runs.

## Materials Needed

---

*My Strength Is From the Fish* video.

Map #1: The Columbia Basin

*My Strength Is From the Fish* Backgrounder

Handout #1: *My Strength Is From the Fish*

Handout #2: *My Strength Is From the Fish*

## Time Required

---

1-2 class periods

## Implementation:

---

- **Prepare students for viewing the video by providing a little background (Use Map #1 as a visual aid for the class. It can be used as a handout or copied onto a transparency for use on an overhead projector. For further background on the four Columbia River treaty tribes see the *My Strength Is From the Fish* Backgrounder.): ~5 minutes.**

The Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation are the only tribes in the Columbia Basin to have reserved rights to fish in 1855 treaties with the United States. In these treaties, the Columbia River treaty tribes ceded (transferred the ownership of) almost 40 million acres of their lands to the United States but specifically retained the right to fish in their traditional fishing areas. The reservation of fishing rights is the heart of the Columbia River tribes' treaties.

The people of these tribes continue to share a common understanding — that their very existence depends on the respectful enjoyment of the Columbia River Basin's vast land and water resources. Indeed, they believe their very souls and spirits are inextricably tied to the natural world and its many inhabitants. Among these inhabitants, none are more



important than the teeming millions of salmon enriching the basin's rivers and streams.

These Indian people, who have lived in the Columbia River Basin for thousands of years, have always used salmon as a staple of life and as a foundation of culture, economy, and religion. Estimated average annual salmon runs historically exceeded 5-11 million fish in the portion of the basin now above Bonneville Dam. This area contains the majority of the tribes traditional fishing areas. Today, fewer than 500,000 salmon return above Bonneville.

That is why now, perhaps even more than in the past, the Columbia River treaty tribes are brought together by the struggle to save the salmon and their culture.

- ② **Show the video. Tell the class to look for at least three points which best describe the relationship between Indian people and salmon.**

~30 minutes.

- ③ **After the video, ask the class to share their ideas regarding this relationship. (Possible answers should include: salmon have been an integral part of Indian religion and culture since time immemorial; salmon is the Columbia River treaty tribes' first food; salmon is medicine to tribal members; salmon is a gift from the Creator, a blessing, created to take care of Indian people; salmon is sacred, holy; salmon is a**

**brother to Indian people; salmon is a giver of life; salmon gives strength to tribal members so that they may be able to get to the next world; salmon can not be owned, only shared; salmon ensures Indian survival. Additional answers are included in Handout #2.)**

~10 minutes.

## **Conclusion/Follow-up**

**Anthropology, Comparative Religion, Ethics, Sociology**

Following the discussion regarding the relationship between Indian people and salmon distribute Handout #1 to the class. Instruct the class to respond in writing to the passage stated during the end of the video by Ted Strong, Executive Director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Distribute Handout #2 to the class for the students to use as a reference while they are writing. (Possible topics for the writing assignment include: Why does Mr. Strong feel this way? Why is it the moral duty of the Indian to restore salmon? What does Mr. Strong mean by stating that the fates of salmon and Indian people are entwined together inextricably? How do Indian people and salmon take care of each other? How does Mr. Strong's perspective differ from other societies' value systems?) As an alternative question to the ones posed above, students could explain what they learned from the video and discussion that was totally new to them.

~Homework assignment or one class period.



**Anthropology, Comparative Religion, Environmental Science, Ethics, Geography, Sociology**

Following the discussion regarding the relationship between Indian people and salmon distribute Handout #2 to the class. Instruct the class to compare, in writing, the relationship between Indian people and salmon to non-Europeans and their relationship to natural resources and/or food sources.

~Homework assignment or one class period.

**Environmental Science, Ethics, History, Political Science**

Following the discussion regarding the relationship between Indian people and salmon distribute Handout #2 to the class. Instruct the class to compare, in writing, the relationship between Indian people and salmon to the relationship between farmers and the water from the Columbia River used for irrigation, ranchers and the cattle they raise, or timber companies and the timber they harvest.

~Homework assignment or one class period.

**Comparative Religion, Geography**

Emphasize points made during the preceding class discussion which addressed the religious significance of salmon to the Columbia River treaty tribes. Ask the class to consider, in writing, what other religions consider sacred and how these sacraments compare to salmon.

~Homework assignment or one class period.



---

# THE FOUR COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES

---

## The Nez Perce Tribe

---



The Nez Perce homeland once consisted of 13 million acres in what is now Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The original land base included significant portions of six different river watersheds. Today, the reservation consists of 750,000 acres, of which 13 percent is owned by the tribe. The remaining 87 percent is owned by non-Indians.

The management of land and natural resources continues to be paramount for the Nez Perce. The tribe is trying to buy back some of the 7.5 million acres originally reserved in the 1855 Treaty with the Nez Perce. The tribe's strong fish program employs nearly 150 full-time and part-time workers. Nez Perce co-management responsibilities extend to the Columbia, Snake, Tucannon, Grande Ronde, Imnaha, Clearwater and Salmon river watersheds. Tribal members fish on the Clearwater River, which runs through the reservation near its northern and eastern borders, and on the Columbia, Rapid and Selway rivers.

The General Council, which is all voting-age members of the tribe, elects the nine-person Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC), the tribe's governing body. The tribe's Fish and Wildlife Committee is made up of appointed members of NPTEC. The tribe, whose enrolled membership is about 3,000, is headquartered in Lapwai, Idaho.

## The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

---



Umatilla

When the leaders of the Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Umatilla peoples signed a treaty with the United States in 1855, they ceded 6.4 million acres of homeland in what is now northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. Today the three-tribe confederation numbers 2,500. The 172,000 acre reservation, almost half of which is owned by non-Indians, includes significant portions of the Umatilla River watershed.

The Umatilla River and Grande Ronde rivers have been the focus of the tribe's fish restoration activities for more than a decade. Under the tribe's leadership, salmon were reintroduced in the Umatilla river in the early 1980's. The tribe, along with the state of Oregon, operate egg-taking, spawning, and other propagation facilities that are helping restore salmon runs. The first fall chinook in some 70 years returned to the Umatilla River in 1984 and today supports both a tribal fishery and non-tribal sports fishery.

In the Grande Ronde watershed, the Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes and state and federal agencies developed a state-of-the-art salmon habitat restoration plan for the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Other river basins in which the tribe has comanagement responsibilities are the Columbia, Snake, Walla Walla, Tucannon, Grande Ronde, John Day, and Imnaha. In



recent times, tribal fisheries have occurred only on the Umatilla and Columbia rivers.

The Umatilla are governed by the Board of Trustees composed of nine members elected by the General Council. Tribal headquarters are located in Mission, Oregon.

## **The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon**



A 640,000-acre reservation in north central Oregon is home to

a confederation of three tribes: the Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute tribes. The Warm Springs tribe is made up of the Upper Deschutes (Tygh), Lower Deschutes (Wyam), Tenino, and John Day (Dock-spus) bands. The Wasco tribe is made up of The Dalles (Ki-gal-twal-la) and Dog River bands. Several Paiute bands from southeastern Oregon were removed to the Warm Springs Reservation in 1869. In 1855 the Warm Springs and Wasco tribes treated with United States in the Treaty with the Middle Oregon Tribes of Oregon. In the treaty, 10 million acres of aboriginal lands were ceded to the United States. Today, the enrolled membership totals nearly 3,000. Most members reside on the reservation.

The reservation government is led by an 11-member tribal council. Three are chiefs who serve life terms, and the remaining eight are elected from reservation districts for 3-year terms. The Warm Springs tribe co-manages the Columbia, Deschutes, Fifteenmile Creek, John Day and Hood River watersheds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates a chinook hatchery on the reservation. Tribal headquarters are in Warm Springs, Oregon.

The Cascade Mountains flank the reservation on the west, and the Deschutes River forms its eastern border. The river now supports spring chinook, fall chinook, and steelhead. Tribal members still fish with dip nets and set nets from wooden scaffolding at the falls near Sherar's Bridge.

## **Yakama Nation**



Mount Adams, the Klickitat River and the Yakima River are among the defining features of the 1.2 million-acre Yakama Indian Reservation in south central Washington. In the 1855

Treaty with the Yakama, 14 bands and tribes ceded 11.5 million acres to the United States.

The bands and tribes in the Yakama confederation are the Kah-milt-pah, Klickitat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Ochechotes, Palouse, Pisuquose, Se-ap-cat, Shyiks, Skinpah, Wenatshapam, Wishram, and Yakama. Today, representatives of the 14 bands and tribes make up the Yakama Tribal Council. A general council includes all tribal members over 18 years of age.

The tribe, which uses an interdisciplinary and sustainable approach to care for the land and natural resources, operates a fisheries program with approximately 40 employees. The Yakama Indian Nation co-manages the Columbia, Wind, White Salmon, Klickitat, Yakima, Wenatchee, Methow, Entiat and Okanogan rivers.

The tribe has usual and accustomed fishing places in many locations in the Columbia River Basin—and some outside the basin. Salmon continue to be the lifeblood of the nearly 8,400 Yakama tribal members.



---

# “THE SACRED SALMON RUNS ARE IN DECLINE.”

---

Instructions: Write a 1-2 page response to the following passage which concluded the video *My Strength Is From the Fish*.

“The sacred salmon runs are in decline. It is the moral duty, therefore, of the Indian people of the Columbia River to see them restored. We have to take care of them so that they can take care of us. Entwined together inextricably, no less now than ever before, are the fates of both the salmon and the Indian people. The quest for salmon recovery is about restoring what is sacred to its sacred place.”



---

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SALMON TO THE TRIBES

---

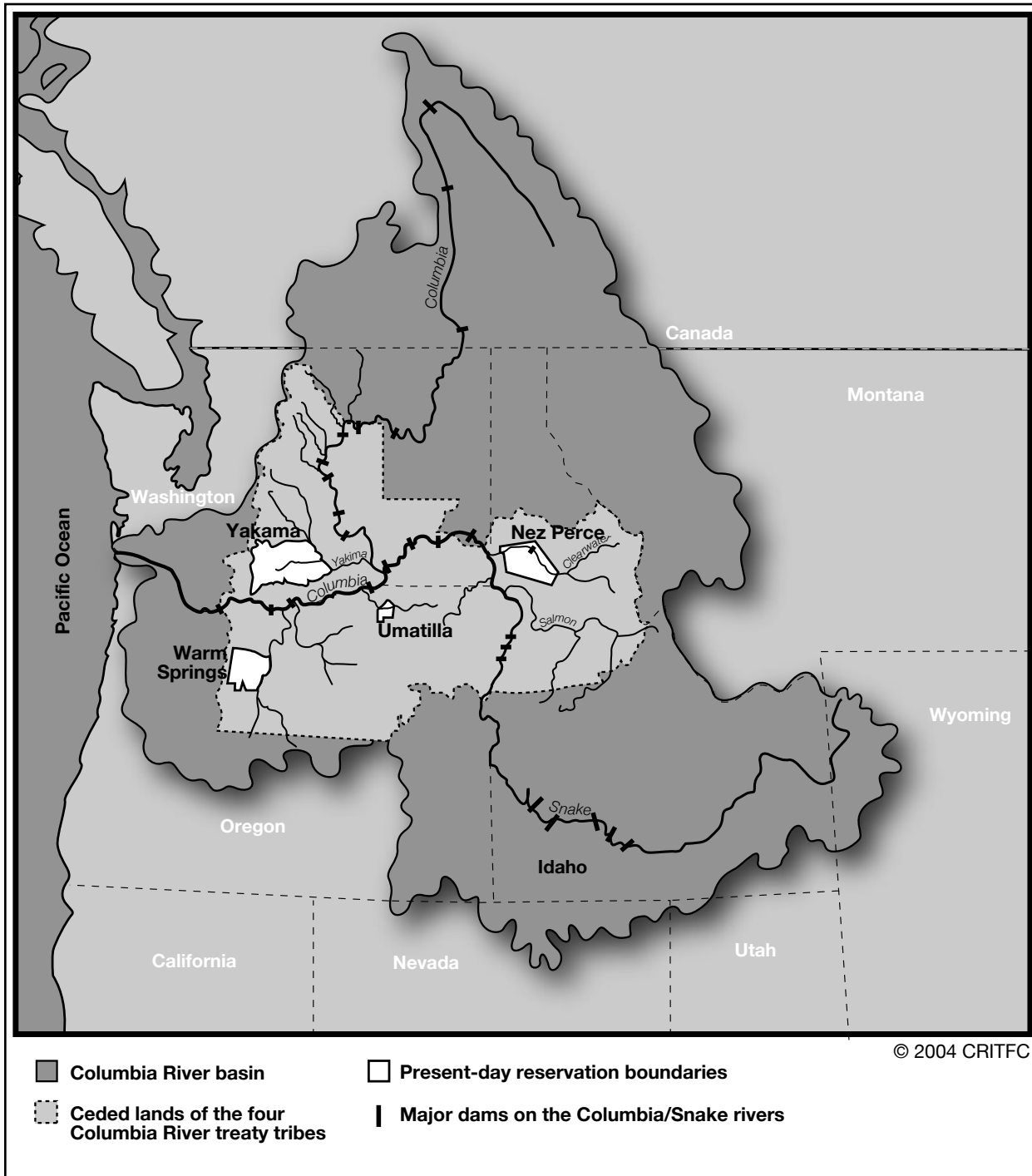
- Salmon are part of our spiritual and cultural identity.
- Over a dozen longhouses and churches on the reservations and in ceded areas rely on salmon for their religious services.
- The annual salmon return and its celebration by our peoples assures the renewal and continuation of human and all other life.
- Historically, we were wealthy peoples because of a flourishing trade economy based on salmon.
- For many tribal members, fishing is still the preferred livelihood.
- Salmon and the rivers they use are part of our sense of place. The Creator put us here where the salmon return. We are obliged to remain and to protect this place.
- Salmon are indicator species: As water becomes degraded and fish populations decline, so too will the elk, deer, roots, berries and medicines that sustain us.
- As primary food source for thousands of years, salmon continue to be an essential aspect of our nutritional health.
- Because our tribal populations are growing (returning to pre-1855 levels), the needs for salmon are more important than ever.
- The annual return of the salmon allows the transfer of traditional values from generation to generation.
- Without salmon returning to our rivers and streams, we would cease to be Indian people.



---

# THE COLUMBIA BASIN

---



---

# RESOURCE GUIDE

---

## INDIAN TRIBES AND THE SALMON CRISIS

*Crossing the Next Meridian.*

"The River Was Crowded with Salmon," Wilkinson, Charles F. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1992.

"Status Quo Hurts Columbia Basin Salmon." Strong, Ted. *Capital Press* (Salem, Oregon). September 22, 1995, pg. 11.

The Chinook Trilogy. "My Strength is From the Fish; Empty Promises, Empty Nets; Matter of Trust." Video Series. Produced by Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Distributed by Wild Hare Media. (Visit [www.critfc.org](http://www.critfc.org) for ordering information.)

*Treaties On Trial: The Continuing Controversy over Northwest Indian Rights.* Cohen, Fay. Seattle.: University of Washington Press, 1986.

"Treaties With Indians Might Save Salmon." Ulrich, Roberta. *The Oregonian*. April 16, 1995, pgs. A1, A14.

"Tribes Seek To Rescue Salmon." Modie, Neil. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. June 16, 1995, pgs. B1, B2.

*Uncommon Controversy.* American Friends Service Committee. Seattle.:

University of Washington Press, 1970.

*Wana Chinook Tymoo.* Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. (To receive, write: Wana Chinook Tymoo, 729 NE Oregon, Suite 200, Portland, OR., 97232.)

*Wana Chinook Tymoo Special Edition: Wy Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit.* Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Issue Two and Three 1995.

*Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit—Spirit of the Salmon: The Columbia River Anadromous Fish Plan of the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Yakama Tribes.* Executive Summary. Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, October 1995. (To receive, write: Public Information Department, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, 729 NE Oregon, Suite 200, Portland, OR., 97232.)

## COLUMBIA RIVER TRIBES

*Bridge of the Gods, Mountains of Fire.* Williams, Chuck. San Francisco.: Friends of the Earth, 1980. (To obtain, write: Elephant Mountain Arts, PO Box 902, White Salmon, WA., 98672 or Columbia Gorge Environmental Center, PO Box 266, Hood River, OR., 97031.)

Canyon Records. 4143 North 16th St., Phoenix, AZ., 85016. (Canyon's catalog includes both song and storytelling from members of the Columbia River Treaty Tribes. Please write for a complete list of titles.)

*Come To Our Salmon Feast.* McKeown, Martha Ferguson. Portland, OR.: Binfords & Mort., 1959.

*Faces of a Reservation: A Portrait of a Warm Springs Indian Reservation.* Stowell, Cynthia D., Portland, OR.: Oregon Historical Society, 1989

*Ka-Mi-Akin.* Splawn, A.J., Caldwell, ID.: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1980.

*Nch'i-Wana, "The Big River," Mid-Columbia Indians and Their Land.* Hunn, E.S., Seattle.: University of Washington Press, 1990.

*Northwest Chiefs.* Nicandri, David L., Tacoma, WA.: Washington State Historical Society, 1986.

*Oregon Indians: Culture, History, & Current Affairs.* Zucker, Jeff and B.H. Hummel. Portland, OR.: Oregon Historical Society, 1983.



*The Columbia Gorge.* Gregory, Joan. ed., Seattle, WA.: Sasquatch Books, 1992. (Picture Book, to order, contact: Sasquatch Books at 206-467-4300.)

*The First Oregonians.* Oregon Council for the Humanities. Portland, OR.: Oregon Council for the Humanities, 1991.

*The Forgotten Tribes.* Hines, Donald M., Issaquah, WA.: Great Eagle Publishing, Inc., 1991.

*Treaties & Agreements of the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest.* Institute for the Development of Indian Law. Vienna, VA.: Institute for the Development of Indian Law. (To obtain, contact: Institute for the Development of Indian Law, 1104 Glyndon St., S.E., Vienna, VA., 22180, (703) 938-7822.)

*Yellow Wolf.* McWhorter, L.V., Rev. ed. Caldwell, ID.: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1991.

#### **INDIAN LAW**

*Felix S. Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law.* Strickland, Rennard and Charles F. Wilkinson. Bobbs-Merrill, 1982

*Indian Treaties and the Law An Oregon Curriculum.* Rev ed., Oregon Law-Related Education Program. Portland, OR.: Oregon Law-Related Education Program, 1989.

"Let Them Do As They Have Promised: A History of U.S. v. Oregon and Four Tribes Fight for Columbia River Salmon." Berg, Laura. *Hastings West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and Policy.* Volume 3, Number 1, Fall 1995. (To obtain a reprint, contact: Hastings West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and Policy at the University of California, Hastings College of Law.)

#### **COLUMBIA BASIN SALMON**

*Compilation of Information on Salmon and Steelhead Losses in the Columbia River Basin.* Northwest Power Planning Council. Portland, OR.: Northwest Power Planning Council, 1986. (To receive, call: Northwest Power Planning Council at 1-800-222-3355.)

*Salmon Fishers of the Columbia.* Smith, Courtland. Corvallis, OR.: Oregon State University Press, 1979.

*Salmon Story.* Guiberson, Brenda Z., New York, NY.: Henry Holt & Co., 1993. (Designed for grade levels 6-8.)

*The Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Trout.* Netboy, Anthony. Seattle.: University of Washington Press, 1980. (While the Author has an anti-Indian bias, his presentation of other historical information is useful.)

"Where Have All the Salmon Gone?" Winninghoff, Ellie.

*Forbes.* November 21, 1994, pgs. 104-116.

#### **THE SCIENCE OF SALMON**

*Pacific Salmon.* Childerhose, R.J. and Marj Trim. Seattle.: University of Washington Press, 1979.

*Pacific Salmon Life Histories.* Groot, C and L. Margolis. eds., Vancouver.: University of British Columbia Press, 1991.

Pacific Salmon Lifecycle. Poster. Washington Department of Fisheries. (To obtain, write the Washington Department of Fisheries at PO Box 43136, Olympia, WA., 98504-3136)

*Salmon.* Netboy. Anthony. London.: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1980.

*The Pacific Salmon Fisheries.* Crutchfield, James and Giulio Pontecorvo. John Hopkins Press, 1969.

#### **OTHER**

Northwest Environmental Advocates. Columbia River-Troubled Waters. Map. Produced by Columbia/Willamette RiverWatch Program. 1992. (To obtain, contact: Northwest Environmental Advocates, 133 S.W. 2nd, Suite 302, Portland, OR., 97204-3526)

Ness Adventures, Inc. Salmon Quest. Boardgame. 1994. (Call 503-520-0854 for ordering information.)

