



## SOCIAL SCIENCES

# Oregon Tribal Governments Working Together for Salmon

### ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

- **Tribal Governments**

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will understand

- that tribal governments make important decisions for their communities,
- ways different Oregon Tribes work to protect salmon, and
- tribal governments work with other governments (state and federal) to solve problems.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How do Oregon tribal governments help protect salmon?

### REQUIRED TIME

- 35 minutes

### Overview

This lesson introduces students to tribal governments in Oregon, focusing on how multiple Oregon Tribes work to protect salmon — a culturally significant resource. Students will explore how tribal governments collaborate with state and federal authorities to manage salmon populations, demonstrating the government-to-government relationship described in the Essential Understanding, Tribal Governments.

### Background for Teachers

Since time immemorial, Native American Tribes in Oregon have fished, hunted, and gathered foods like salmon, elk, and berries — practices that continue to nourish communities and preserve culture today.

Treaties and federal policies like the Dawes Act of 1887 were used to restrict these Native lifeways by breaking up tribal lands and forcibly removing Native peoples from their homelands.



This disrupted traditional ways of living and limited access to natural food sources. Despite this, many Tribes adapted, continuing cultural traditions and connections to the land. Tribes have also used treaties to assert their rights to hunt, fish, and gather in their ancestral territories. This lesson addresses these issues through a close look at tribal governments' efforts to protect salmon on their ancestral homelands.

## Considerations for Teachers

### Instructional Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students.

- Be sensitive to learner's needs and comfort levels. Some students might be sensitive to sharing personal family knowledge and should not be required to do so.
- Focus on teaching the Essential Understanding through an exploration of today's salmon protection efforts.
- When sharing content with students, address the "why" not just the "what".
- Highlight the strengths and struggles of Oregon's Indigenous peoples today while also acknowledging their history and tradition.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students.

## STANDARDS

### Oregon Social Sciences Standards

- Identify how people or other living things might be affected by an event, issue, or problem.
- Identify possible options or responses; then make a choice or express an opinion.
- Describe how individual rights and responsibilities relate to the common good.

## Key WORDS and IDEAS

- **Tribal Government** - A group of leaders from a Tribe who help make decisions for their people, land, and water.
- **Pollution** - Anything that makes the land, air, or water dirty and unsafe.
- **Restoration** - Fixing or healing nature so it can be healthy again.
- **Dam** - A wall built across a river to stop or slow down the water.



## Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work to determine how their learning is progressing. Actively monitor student discussion and intervene when there are misconceptions or biases that could inhibit authentic engagement with this topic.

Write down what you notice about what students say, do and make in relation to the success criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a self-assessment. Students can indicate their level of learning in relation to specific success criteria. They can also write out an explanation of why they believe they are at that learning stage.

## Success Criteria

- Students can describe ways Oregon Tribes protect salmon.
- Students can explain why salmon are important to Oregon Tribes.

## Lesson Activities

### Opener

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**Time: 5 minutes**

#### Step 1:

Introduce the lesson topic to students. Share that salmon are very special to Native people in Oregon. They are food, culture, family, and tradition. Ask if anyone has ever eaten or fished for salmon.

Show students a picture of salmon swimming upstream. There is one at the end of this lesson for you to use. Ask students what they notice about the salmon.

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## MATERIALS

**What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?**

- Slide deck
- White Board
- Writing materials
- Student self-assessment



Explain to students that today they are going to learn about what salmon need to stay healthy and how tribal governments are working to protect salmon because they are important to their culture and ways of life.

Ask students if they are familiar with Native American Tribes in Oregon. If they are not, explain that Oregon has nine federally recognized Tribes that are made up of the first peoples of Oregon. Share that Tribes have been here since time immemorial, that is, since before anyone can remember.

Show students a map of Oregon with the names and locations of the Tribes identified. Ask students if they can find the Tribe nearest to them.

### Step 2:

Review the learning outcomes, success criteria and essential question with students.

## Main Activity

**Time: 20 minutes**

### Step 1:

Say to students, "Salmon have a big job! They swim all the way from the ocean to their home river to lay eggs. But along the way, they face problems. Today, we'll learn what those problems are—and how Oregon Tribes help fix them. For Tribes in Oregon, salmon are very important and special to them."

### Step 2:

Ask the class:

- "Does anyone have an idea of a problem salmon or fish face in rivers?"
- "What do you think salmon need to live and grow?"

### Step 3:

Define the following key words for students:

- **Pollution** – Anything that makes land, air, or water dirty and unsafe.
- **Dam** – A big wall built across a river that stops or slows down the water.

Explain that salmon are strong swimmers, but they need clean, cool water. Pollution from trash, oil, or chemicals can make them sick. Dams block the way when they're trying to swim back home to lay eggs. If salmon can't lay eggs, there won't be more salmon in the future.

#### Step 4:

Share with students the handout, *What's Healthy for Salmon?*. It has pictures of different objects that could be found in a river. Have students cross out the objects that aren't healthy for salmon or rivers. Then have the students share aloud what objects do and don't belong in a healthy river. Make a list on chart paper of student responses.

#### Step 5:

Explain to students that, "A long time ago, Oregon Tribes fished for salmon in the rivers for food and ceremony. But later, the U.S. government made laws that told Native people they couldn't fish in the same places anymore. Dams were built, and pollution made it hard for salmon to survive. The Tribes never gave up. They worked together to take care of the salmon and to keep fishing in their traditional ways."

Share the definition:

- **Tribal Government** - A group of leaders from a Tribe who help make decisions for their people, land, and water.

#### Step 6:

Read aloud to students each example of Tribal governments supporting salmon. After each, pause to ask a question or make a connection.

##### 1. Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

- They raise over 750,000 baby salmon every year in a fish hatchery. A fish hatchery is like a nursery for baby salmon.
- They have fish scientists who study how to help rivers.
- They protect land and water for the fish to live in.

Ask students: "Why do you think raising baby fish helps the salmon population?"

##### 2. Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

- They study fish to make sure they are healthy.

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- They gave money to fix rivers.
- They help remove dams that block fish from getting home.

Ask students: "Have you ever helped fix something that was broken? Why is it important to fix rivers?"

### 3. Klamath Tribes

- They are protecting special fish called *c'waam* and *koptu*.
- They build ponds for baby fish and release them into the lake.
- Their stories say these fish are part of who they are.

Ask students: "What might happen if those special fish disappeared? How would that make their community feel?"

### Step 7:

Have students stand up. Tell students that today they get to be salmon.

Say to students: "Imagine you are salmon swimming from the ocean back to your home river in Oregon. But there are many problems in your way!"

Have students "swim" in place while you name obstacles:

- When you say, "dam", you jump (like the fish in the video)
- "The water is too warm!" (students fan themselves).
- "There's pollution in the water!" (students hold their noses).
- Ask: "If you were in charge, what would you do to help the salmon?" Take 2-3 student ideas.

## Closing

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**Time: Approximately 5 minutes**

**Step 1:**

Make the connection between caring for salmon and protecting culture.

Share that even though salmon face many problems, Oregon Tribes are still working hard to protect them. Helping salmon is one way Tribes take care of their traditions, their lands, and their future.

Invite students to turn and talk and:

- describe ways Oregon Tribes protect salmon, and
- explain why salmon are important to Oregon Tribes.

## Additional Resources

2nd grade lessons and supporting material by The Confederated Tribes of the Klamath

Lesson plans: [C'waam and Koptu](#)

Presentations:

- [Klamath lakes Habitat](#)
- [Changes in the Klamath Basin](#)
- [Solutions to the Problem of the Unhealthy Lake](#)

Video: [Saving the C'Waam](#)



Image of salmon



Image source: Bureau of Land Management Oregon and Washington, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, [Coho Spawning on the Salmon River](#)



## Handout: Oregon Map with 9 Federally Recognized Tribes

Which Tribe is Closest to You?

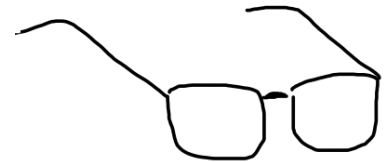
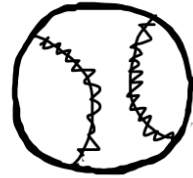


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## Handout: What's Healthy for Salmon and Rivers?

**Name:**



**Directions:** Cross out the objects that aren't healthy for salmon and don't belong in rivers.



## Handout: Student Self-Assessment

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read the lesson success criteria in the first column. Then decide, can I do this now or not yet. If you chose Not Yet, share one thing you can do as a next step. If you chose Yes, share what you did well.

Success Criteria	Not Yet	Yes
		
I can describe ways Oregon Tribes protect salmon.		
I can explain why salmon are important to Oregon Tribes.		

