



Grade 5–7

Many Factors Impact our siwłk^w Including:

- Increased population
- Urban growth and residential development (habitat loss)
- Flood control (loss of cottonwood trees, loss of foreshore habitat)
- Docks
- Agriculture (irrigation, pesticides, nutrient build-up)
- Hydroelectric dams
- Forestry practices
- Fishing practices
- Mining practices
- Recreational use (including in headwaters)
- Aquatic invasive species
- Wastewater treatment
- Climate change
- Illegal garbage dumping
- Pet feces and other pollutants



Urban development along the foreshore

Syilx Territory Watersheds

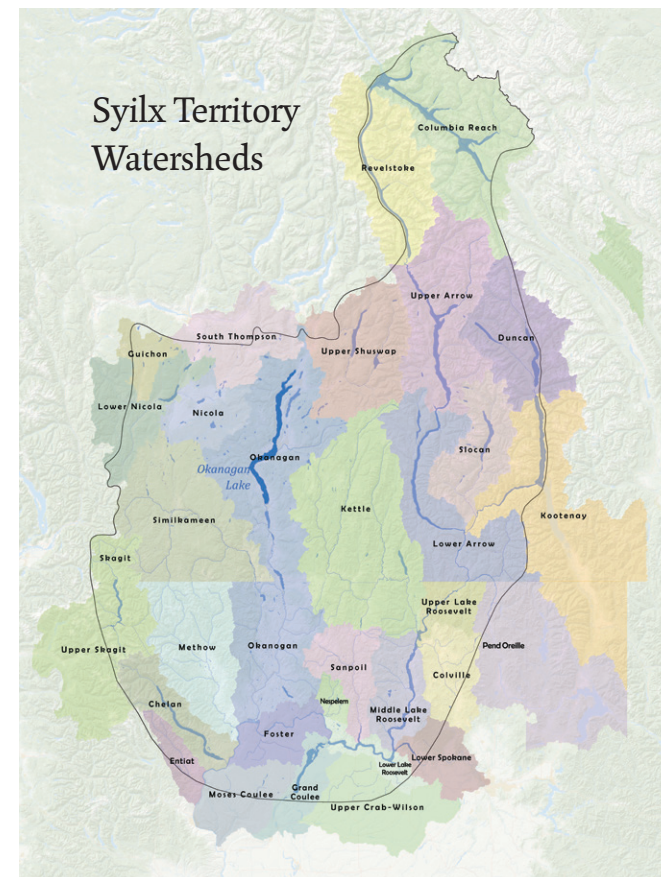
The Okanagan River sockeye population is one of only two remaining populations of sockeye salmon in the Canada-U.S. Columbia River Basin. Historically, chinook, coho, chum and steelhead were also indigenous salmon species in the Columbia River system, including the Okanagan Basin, but today they are either extinct or found in very low numbers.

There is an ongoing systematic effort to research, document and transmit the traditional knowledge that the communities still hold, while documenting Traditional Ecological Knowledge with new scientific methods and understandings. The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) has begun to receive regional and national recognition for their efforts to rehabilitate sockeye salmon stocks. As such, they are poised to play an integral role in contributing to various public dialogues including, but not limited to, Indigenous food sovereignty, food security, sustainable fisheries, and Indigenous grassroots development.

A significant amount of *siwłk^w* within Syilx Okanagan territory is controlled by dams that are predominantly used for the production of hydroelectricity and flood control. It is hard to find a river system within the territory that has not been dammed or subjected to a water control structure. There are over 21 watersheds within Syilx Okanagan Territory. Each of these have their own personality, needs, and ways of being.

The Syilx People recognize the personalities and needs of each of their *siwłk^w* relatives within the various landscapes that are under Syilx Okanagan responsibility. A place-based

approach has been used for thousands of years to ensure that those with the most knowledge and understanding of *siwłk^w* within a specific region of the territory, or watershed, are responsible for ensuring proper measures of respect and ceremony are employed if any requests are made of our *siwłk^w*.



Captik^{wł} Teaching Opportunity

How Coyote Broke the Salmon Dam provides an opportunity to understand and discuss the living land, and to teach each generation how to become a “part of it.” This lesson is the only way Syilx People have survived on these lands for thousands of years.

SOURCE You can purchase the book and find the nsyilxcən audio at:

www.syilx.org

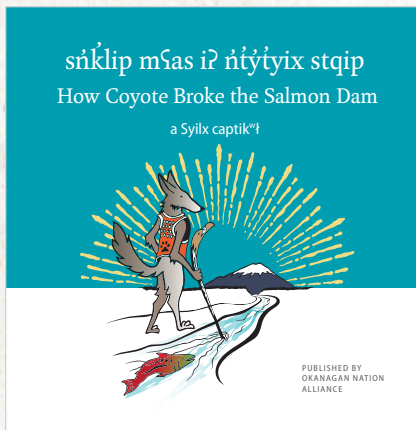


Illustration:
Spirit Peoples



ACTIVITY Taking Care of Water and the Meaning Behind “Ogopogo”

Grades: 5–7 (Adaptable for K–Gr. 9)

Subjects: Language Arts/Social Studies

This activity emphasizes the Syilx people’s sacred relationship with water. Students will gain a respect for Syilx ways of knowing, specifically regarding what has been culturally appropriated. Discuss the name “Ogopogo.”

ńxaʔx̣ʔitk^w is the spirit of the lake

ńxaʔx̣ʔitk^w (in-ha-ha-itk-hoo) is considered sacred by the Syilx People and is, in fact, translated as “Sacred Being of the Water.”

Broken down, ńxaʔx̣ʔ means sacred, and itk^w is for water. But European settlers misappropriated ńxaʔx̣ʔitk^w and renamed the being “Ogopogo.” The being has been demonized as a monster, but has also been made a mascot for the Okanagan and commodified.

To the Syilx ńxaʔx̣ʔitk^w is the spirit of the lake and represents sustainability. We are nothing without the water. If we treat it with respect and in the right way, the spirit of the lake will thrive on and provide for future generations.

Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the term used to describe the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices from one cultural group by another. Generally it is used to describe Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance (Oxford dictionary, 2020).

WATCH “The Real Story of the Ogopogo”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjCGLSMiT6g>



kłusxnitk^w, Okanagan Lake



Illustration: Spirit Peoples

Big Ideas

- Stories and other texts connect us to ourselves, our families, and our communities. (K– Gr. 3)
- We shape the local environment, and the local environment shapes who we are and how we live. (Gr. 1)
- Learning about Indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity. (Gr. 3)
- Interactions between First Peoples and Europeans led to conflict and co-operation, which continue to shape Canada’s identity. (Gr. 4)
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world. (Gr. 4–9)
- Exploration, expansion, and colonization had varying consequences for different groups. (Gr. 8)

Grade 5–7

Curricular Competencies

- Recognize and appreciate the role of story, narrative, and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples perspectives, values, beliefs, and points of view. (Gr. 6–9)

- Social and community health

- Explain why people, events, or places are significant to various individuals and groups.

- Explore different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events in their lives. (K–Gr. 3)

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

- Learning is holistic, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Content

- Relationship between humans and their environment (K–3)

- Cultural and social awareness: achieved by exploring self-identity, acknowledging cultural differences, honouring Indigenous traditions, etc. (K–5)

Materials

- White paper and drawing utensils

- Plastic shopping bags for garbage collection

- Plastic/rubber gloves (enough for every student to have a pair)

- Paper

- Graphic organizer (optional)

What to Do

- Ask students what they know about “Ogopogo”. Where did the name come from? Where does it live? Can you see Ogopogo? Is it scary? Ask students to draw what they think the Ogopogo looks like and share with a partner. Note how similar drawings are to one another. Why do we think that is? Could it be because that’s what we have been told? How would anyone actually know for sure?

- Tell students the history of Ogopogo (see above).

- Listen to the $n'xa\lambda'x'itk^w$ song:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXRI8pnJSiA>

- Touch on what cultural appropriation is. Accommodate the depth you go with this depending on how old the students are. Make sure it is student-friendly/comprehensive. Ask students if they can think of any examples of cultural appropriation.

- As a sign of respect to what has come to be known as “Ogopogo,” plan for a beach clean up with students (or pond, or marsh – whatever is accessible for students, depending on where your school is located).

- Give gloves and garbage bags to each student.

- Review all safety protocols and bring a first aid kit.



Metal sculpture depicting $n'xa\lambda'x'itk^w$ was created by Syilx Nation's artist Clint George. The sculpture is located on the Westbank First Nation Reserve.

Safety Protocols

- Walk in pairs/have a “buddy.”

- Do not walk on the road. Stay on the sidewalk.
If you need to cross the road, wait until the teacher has given the go-ahead and everyone has checked the road in both directions.

- Remain close to teacher/supervisor.
Do not stray, do not walk ahead.

- Do not throw sticks or rocks.

- Do not disrupt any plants or animals, or their habitat.

- Do not approach other people or their animals (e.g. dogs).

- Do not walk in the water.

- Do not touch glass or needles. If you see something that you are unsure of, ask the teacher for assistance.

- Keep gloves on.

Assignment

- Discuss how this beach cleanup is helping keep our *siwłk^w* clean and how it benefits *ńxaʔxłʔitk^w* (in-ha-ha-itk-hoo), us, the salmon, and all other life.

- Students could be rewarded based on how much garbage they are able to collect as further incentive.

Possible Extensions

- Lesson on appropriation versus appreciation



Youth touring the mulx (black cottonwood) riparian forest in Penticton



ACTIVITY Watershed Threats

Grades: 6–7

Subjects: ADST/Science

Number of lessons/time: 3 lessons



Private property owners can make a positive change to land and water management.

When Syilx think of a watershed, there is no separation between creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, aquifers, headwaters and snowpack, which we understand are all connected. If one is impacted they all feel a ripple of effect. So, when managing a watershed, focus and deep consideration needs to be given to the whole system (Syilx Water Responsibility and Planning Methodology, 2017).

There are many threats our watersheds face, and many are within our control. This activity allows students an opportunity to look at what threats our local watersheds face, the extent of harm, and what can be done about it.



Topographical contours within a watershed

With a Few Simple Steps We Can All Protect Our Water

1. Hard Surfaces = Big Consequences

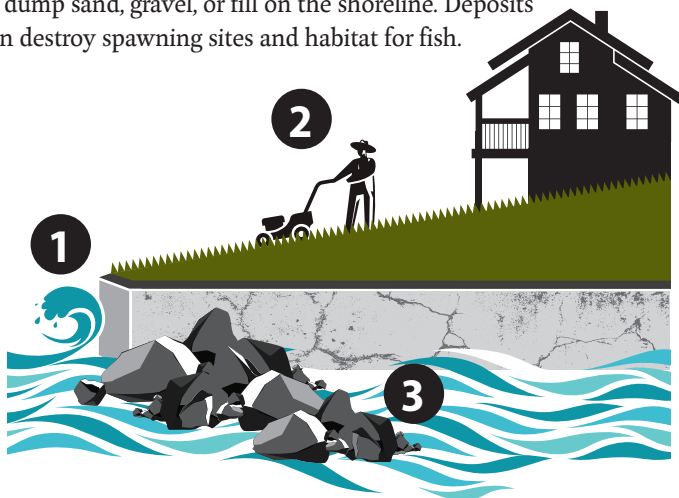
Retaining walls (rock, wood or concrete) increase erosion in adjacent areas. Walls break down over time and are expensive to maintain. Soften your shoreline by replacing hard surfacing with native rocks, gravel and plants to decrease erosion.

2. Filter instead of Fertilize

Manicured lawns allow water and pollutants to move quickly into the lake. Fertilizer causes excessive weed and algae growth. Planting and retaining native vegetation naturally filters storm water and protects water quality from pollution.

3. Protecting the Shore

Clearing rocks on the beach and creating rock piles into the water is known as a 'groyne'. Groynes force young fish to swim into deeper water where they are in greater risk of being preyed upon. It is prohibited to dump sand, gravel, or fill on the shoreline. Deposits can destroy spawning sites and habitat for fish.



4. Maintain your Septic System

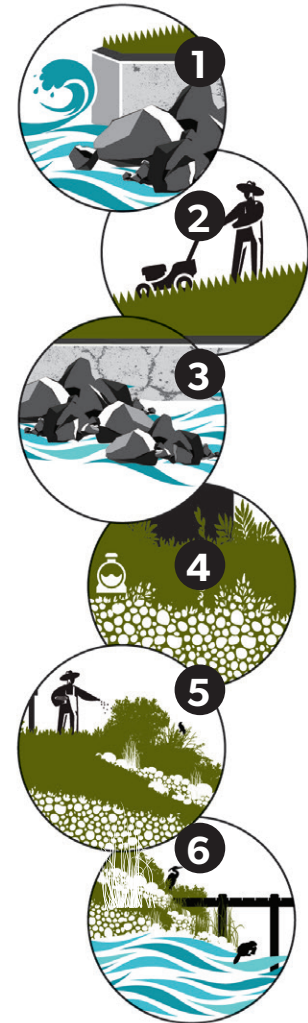
A properly designed septic system can keep your water safe for drinking and swimming. Need an inspection or maintenance? Contact Interior Health Authority.

5. Use the Power of Plants to Combat Erosion

Frame your view with trees, and retain as many native plants as possible. Deep plant roots are great for holding soil together and stabilizing the shoreline. Trees and plants also provide food and shade for fish.

6. A Dock Dilemma

Docks are easily damaged with high water levels and can cause harm to fish and fish habitat. Construct a pile-supported dock following provincial regulations or consider sharing a dock with your neighbour. Want to learn more? Contact FrontCounter BC.





Grade 5–7

Big Ideas

- Design can be responsive to identified needs.
- Earth and its climate have changed over geological time.

Curricular Competencies

- Collaboratively and individually plan, select and use appropriate investigation methods, including fieldwork and lab experiments to collect reliable data.
- Evaluate personal, social, and environmental impacts and ethical considerations.

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning involves patience and time.

Content

- Internet safety
- Legal and ethical considerations including creative credit and copyright, and cyberbullying.
- Search techniques. How search results are selected and ranked, and criteria for evaluating search results.
- First Peoples knowledge of changes in biodiversity over time

Materials

- Computers/ipads
- Library/books
- Camera, if desired
- List of watershed threats
- Poster board

Potential Topics to Explore

- Agriculture and agricultural run-off

- Boat traffic

- Global warming

- Liquid waste disposal and sewage

- Logging and deforestation

- Multi-point source pollution

- Non-native vegetation

- Poor land and water management

- Recreation

- Residential, commercial and urban development

- Over-consumption of resources

- Sale of water

What to Do

- Access a map of Okanagan watersheds and look it over with students. Define watershed and discuss the connectivity of all water.

- Provide students with a list of local watershed threats.

- Ask students to research and explore one of the listed threats to local watersheds.

- To ensure that there is a variety of presentations, encourage students not to double up on a topic if it has already been chosen by someone else. Use a sign-up sheet and choose a manner that works for your class so that students can alternate selecting at random.

- Review what are the appropriate websites to be looking at, and discuss how to tell if websites are credible.

- Review copyright and plagiarism. Request that students submit a reference page of links to where they found their information.

- Allow students a research class: why is their chosen topic considered a threat to our watershed? What can be done about it, if anything? What species is this impacting?

What to Do, continued

- Show learning through a PowerPoint, skit, poster, presentation, or short film regarding the chosen threat.
- Bring awareness to fellow classmates by presenting to each other.
- Create a personal “pledge for change” relevant to the chosen threat and include it at the end of the presentation.

