

TO FISH AS FORMERLY

A STORY OF STRAITS SALISH RESURGENCE



Reef Net (2020) Chris Paul

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Fall 2020



University
of Victoria

Legacy Art Galleries



Salish Weave Collection

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About This Guide

This guide provides an introduction to the revitalization of the Reef Net Fishery by WSÁNEĆ people. It highlights the art and artists featured in the UVic Legacy Galleries exhibition *To Fish as Formerly* and engages with First Peoples Principles of Learning.

This guide is accompanied with a PowerPoint presentation to use in the classroom (see Reef_Net_School_Tour_PPT.pptx).

Students will come away with an understanding of:

- The significance of the Reef Net Fishery to Straits Salish peoples
- Straits Salish and WSÁNEĆ cultural revitalization
- The role of art in strengthening identity and sharing knowledge
- WSÁNEĆ environmental conservation and connection to salmon

Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

To start the lesson, please create your own territory acknowledgement based on where your school is located. See the “Resources” section on page 14 of this guide for more information on developing a territory acknowledgement if your school does not have one.

About the Exhibition

Show

Image 1: *To Fish as Formerly* installation view (PPT slide 3).



Discuss

To Fish as Formerly: A Story of Straits Salish Resurgence shares the story of the **SXOLE** (Reef Net Fishery) through contemporary art, traditional knowledge and historical documentation.

The name of the exhibition comes from the Douglas Treaties of 1852, which stated that the **WSÁNEĆ** would be able to “fish as formerly”. However, the **SXOLE** was systematically reduced by colonial systems for the next 50 years and finally was banned altogether in Canada in the early 19th Century. The exhibition shares the story of generations of **WSÁNEĆ** people who are revitalizing the practices, beliefs, ceremony, and knowledge inherent to the **SXOLE**.

Curators

XEMFOLTW Nicholas Claxton, UVic School of Child and Youth Care and
Katie Hughes, UVic Department of History graduate student.

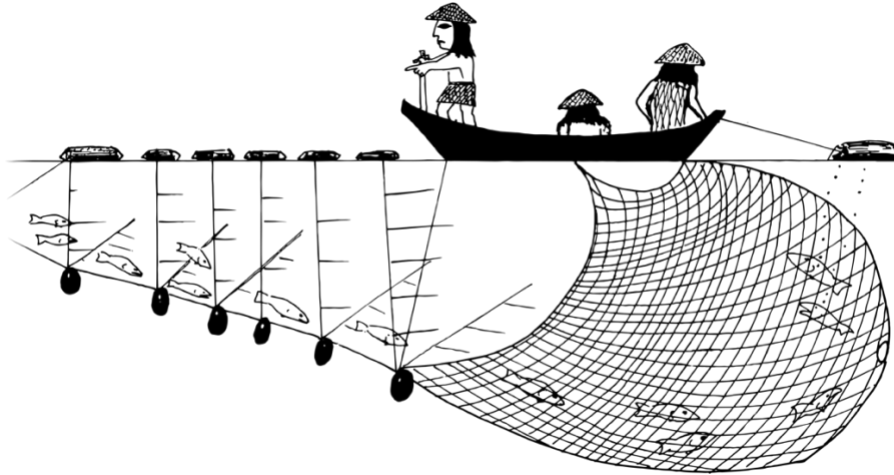
Artists

TEMOTEN Charles Elliott, J, SINTEN John Elliott, Chris Paul, Dylan Thomas, Sarah Jim,
Temoseng, aka Chasz Elliott and Colton Hash.

Introduction to the Reef Net Fishery

Show

Image 2: Reef Net illustration from *Reef Net Technology of the Saltwater People*, John Elliott, 1994 (PPT slide 4).



Discuss

The SXOLE is unique to the Straits Salish peoples and an important part of their cultural identity. Unlike neighbouring Coast Salish lands, no major salmon-bearing rivers pass through Straits Salish territories. Instead, Straits Salish peoples developed the sophisticated Reef Net technology that required a deep knowledge of salmon migration routes and ocean currents. Straits Salish peoples harvested salmon for thousands of years by intercepting them in the Salish Sea before they could return to large salmon spawning regions like the Fraser River.

Only a few Straits Salish communities have the knowledge of the SXOLE. This includes the Lekwungen peoples, Songhees and Xwespsum (Esquimalt), on whose traditional territories the *To Fish as Formerly* exhibition stands, the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'souke, Malahat, Semiahmoo, Xwelemi (Lummi), and WSÁNEĆ (Saanich). There are four nations that make up the WSÁNEĆ people: Tsawout, Tsartlip, Puaquachin, and Tseycum.

When the Reef Net Fishery bans were enacted in the early 19th century, only 50 years after fishing rights were guaranteed in the Douglas Treaties, Straits Salish peoples were cut off from their homelands, waters, and resources. This act compounded the loss of language, culture, and identity that many nations were already experiencing. Since then, generations of Straits Salish people have worked to keep the knowledge of the SXOLE alive and to return to Reef Netting once again. For the Straits Salish people, revitalizing the Reef Net is about so much more than fishing. The SXOLE forms the basis for the worldview of Straits Salish peoples like the WSÁNEĆ and Xwelemi.

We acknowledge that there are many other Straits Salish histories of the Reef Net Fishery that have yet to be told. The exhibition and this guide draw primarily from WSÁNEĆ perspectives.

Lesson 1: Revitalization and Community

45 - 60 minutes

Goals

- Learn about cultural revitalization
- Learn about the importance of the Reef Net Fishery to the WSÁNEĆ nation
- Discuss the importance of community to personal identity

Step 1: Introduction to the Video

The following video is about how Nick Claxton works with his community to revitalize the knowledge of the SXOLE.

Dr. Nick XEMFOLTW Claxton is WSÁNEĆ and Chief of the Tsawout First Nation. He was named ØWENÁLYEN, or Reef Net Captain through ceremony and led the first fishing of the SXOLE in Canadian waters since it was banned over 100 years ago.

Step 2: Watch

[To Fish As Formerly: WSÁNEĆ Nation Brings Reef Net Fishing Back After 100 Years](#) (PPT slide 5, 5 minutes and 35 seconds). When students watch the video, ask them to pay special attention to how the community works together and how everyone has a role to play.

Step 3: Respond

Discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.

- **What are some of the ways the WSÁNEĆ people are bringing back the SXOLE?**

WSÁNEĆ people are revitalizing the SXOLE through building a model together, teaching the children about the net in their Tribal School, and practicing traditional ceremonies.

- **Cultural revitalization is the process through which people regain a sense of identity through connecting with their culture. How do you see cultural revitalization happening in the video?**

Learning about the SXOLE is an example of cultural revitalization. Seeing members of the Tsawout nation being excited to fish again shows that they are connecting to their culture and the teachings of their ancestors.

- **Why are the WSÁNEĆ people called the Saltwater People?**

The WSÁNEĆ people are called the Saltwater People because so much of their territory is made up of the ocean. Their territory is almost as much water as it is land.

- **In the video, we see people of all ages coming together to revitalize the SXOLE. Why is it important for Nick to include all members of the community?**

It's important to include all members of the community because the Reef Net it is about cultural revitalization. It is important for the WSÁNEĆ children to learn more about their culture, language, practices so that their culture will continue to survive.

Step 4: Community Activity Drawing

Show

Image 3: Xwelemi Men with a Ceremonial Reef Net Model, Net Weights, Paddles and Drums at Village Point, Lummi Island, L.R. Corbertt, 1915 (PPT slide 7).



This photograph shows Xwelemi (Lummi) people with a ceremonial Reef Net model, net weights, paddles and drums at Lummi Island in 1915. Ceremony is an important component of the SXOLE. Notice how Xwelemi community members of all ages are taking part in the ceremony.

Discuss

One aspect of cultural revitalization is learning together as a community, where everyone can share their knowledge and learn from each other. The Xwelemi, who live in what is now Washington State across the Strait of Georgia, have helped the WSÁNEĆ relearn the teachings of the Reef Net. This has been an important part of the Reef Net revitalization process for the WSÁNEĆ peoples.

Step 5: Create and Share

Ask students to think of an activity they participate in that connects them to their family or friends. It might be a game or sport they play, an event they attend with family, or a special meal they make with a parent.

Have students draw a picture of their activity that includes the lessons it teaches. Then, ask each student to show their drawings to a partner and to share their teachings.

Prompt students to reflect on the importance of their chosen activity to their identity as individuals and as part of a community. Questions may include:

- Who participates in your activity?
- What have you learned by taking part in your activity?
- What makes this activity special for you and your community?
- Did you learn anything new about your partner today?

Lesson 2: Conservation and Connection to the Land through Art

30 minutes

Goals

- Learn about traditional Straits Salish conservation practices and respect for the land and water
- See how artworks made today support WSÁNEĆ cultural values and knowledge

Step 1: Introduction to WSÁNEĆ Conservation

Show

Image 4: *SHELIS – Life*, Temoseng aka Chasz Elliott, 2020 (PPT slide 9).



Discuss

Conservation is built into WSÁNEĆ culture. Salmon are provided the same respect that WSÁNEĆ people provide to each other, and are a symbol of abundance and prosperity. When the Straits Salish people designed the Reef Net, they had the wellbeing of the salmon in mind so they built a hole in the net, called a SHELIS, that allows some salmon to escape capture. These salmon can keep swimming up to their home rivers and spawn, so salmon keep returning to Straits Salish territory year after year. They also took care of the water where they caught the salmon each year. Each family's SWÁLET, or Reef Net Fishing site, was cared for and passed down through generations.

These practices demonstrate how the values of conservation and respect are incorporated into the practice of Reef Net Fishing so the people could continue to catch fish every year and the salmon could continue to thrive.

Chasz Elliott, also known as Temoseng, is an emerging WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen artist from Tsartlip. He is inspired by the SHELIS and included this in his artwork called *SHELIS – Life*.

Step 2: Watch

[To Fish as Formerly | Artist Interview – Temoseng aka Chasz Elliott](#) (PPT slide 10, 8 minutes and 13 seconds). Before watching the video, ask students to pay attention to when Chasz talks about conservation and the importance of the SHELIS.

Step 3: Respond

Discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.

- **What did Chasz learn while creating his artwork?**

He learned about all of the work that goes into making a Reef Net, and about caring for the land and the salmon. He learned that the WSÁNEĆ harvested materials to make the SXOLE carefully and with respect.

- **What did Chasz say is the most important part of the SXOLE?**

Chasz said the SHELIS is the most important part of the SXOLE because it lets some salmon carry on their lives to keep feeding future generations.

- **What does SHELIS mean? Why did the WSÁNEĆ people build a SHELIS in their Reef Nets?**

SHELIS means “life”. The SHELIS is built into reef nets so that some salmon can escape and return to their home rivers to spawn. This means that there will be more salmon for future generations to catch.

- **What are some of the materials that Chasz’s artwork is made from? Why does Chasz say these materials are important?**

SHELIS – Life is made from red and yellow cedar, willow bark, willow branches, and silver. These are materials that the WSÁNEĆ have been using to make art and tools like the Reef Net for generations. He learned that each material has a meaning from his family members, and this is why he chose to use a material like silver instead of abalone.

Lesson 3: Honouring the Salmon

45 – 60 min

Goals

- Learn about Coast Salish design elements
- Design a salmon using Coast Salish design elements to honour the relationship of the Straits Salish peoples to the salmon

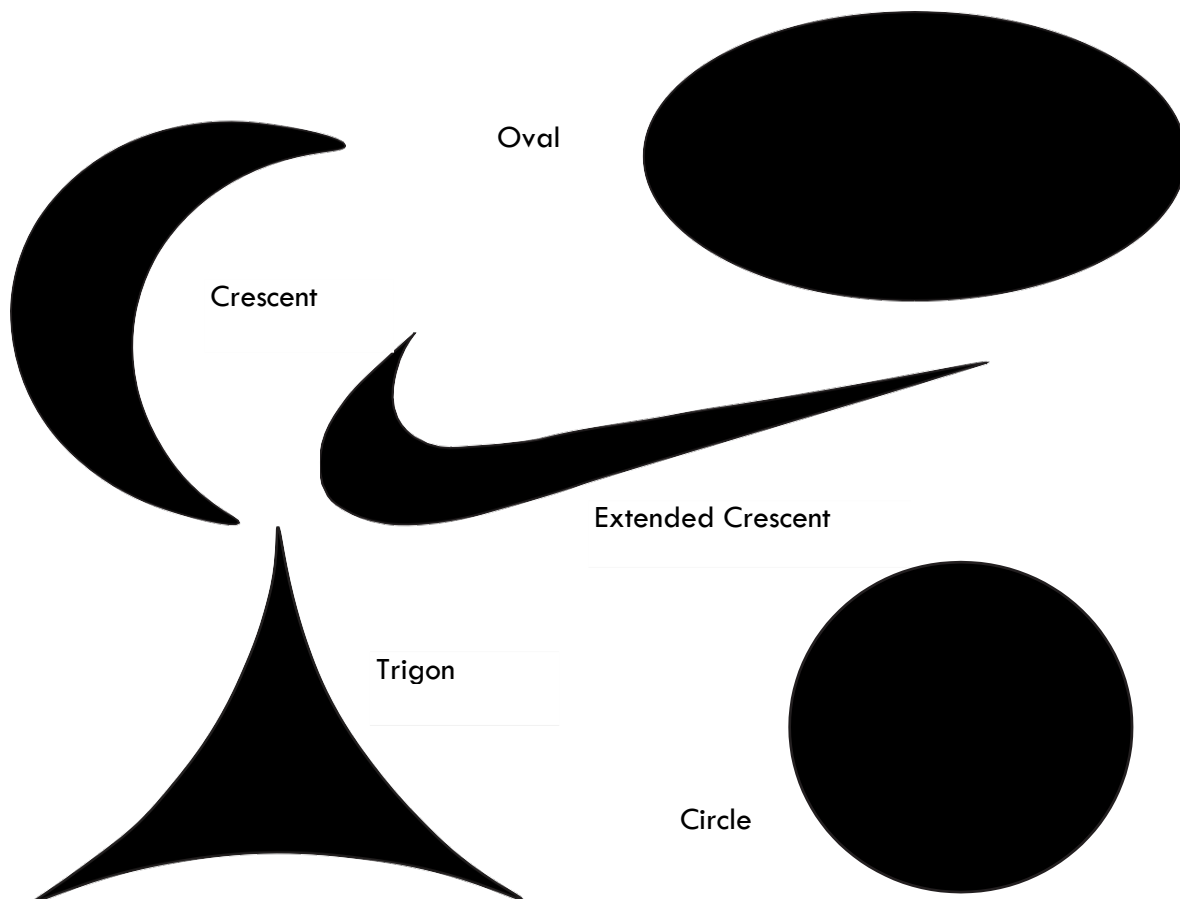
Supplies

- Option A: paper, three different coloured pencil crayons
- Option B: paper, scissors, glue, printed Coast Salish Design Activity Sheet (page 12)

Step 1: Introduction to Coast Salish Design Elements

Show

Image 5: Coast Salish Design Elements (PPT slide 12).



Discuss

The trigon, crescent, circle, oval, and the extended crescent are shapes that are used in traditional and contemporary Salish art. Salish artists use positive and negative space to create images and tell stories through their art. Historically, Coast Salish design elements were carved into wood and can be found on traditional tools like spindle whorls and canoe paddles. Today, artists often incorporate these design elements into prints and paintings.

Show

Image 6: *Net Work*, Dylan Thomas, 2018 (PPT slide 10).



Salish artists today use the Coast Salish design elements. In his artwork, Dylan Thomas uses traditional Coast Salish design elements to create a row of salmon.

Salmon were one of the main food sources for people who live on the coast, and Dylan's design honours the salmon as a symbol of abundance and prosperity. Capturing salmon with the SXOLE involves a great amount of cooperation between fishers, families, and different nations. In *Net Work*, Dylan shows the necessity of cooperation by representing the salmon as interlinked.

Prompt students to reflect on the Coast Salish design element they see in *Net Work*.

Questions may include:

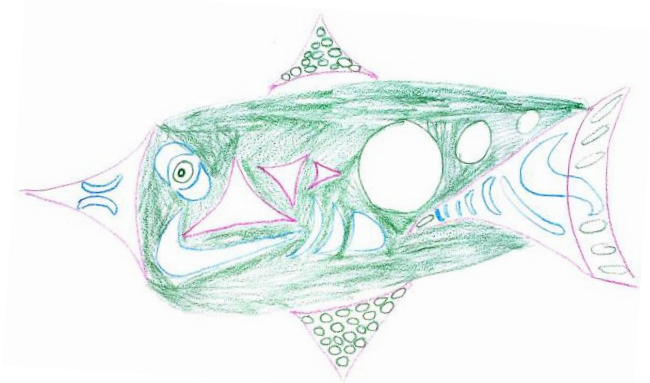
- How many salmon do you see?
- What else do you see? (*waves, salmon eyes, scales, mouths, fins*)
- What Coast Salish design elements do you see?
- How many circles, ovals, or trigons do you see?

Step 2: Create a Salmon with Coast Salish Design Elements

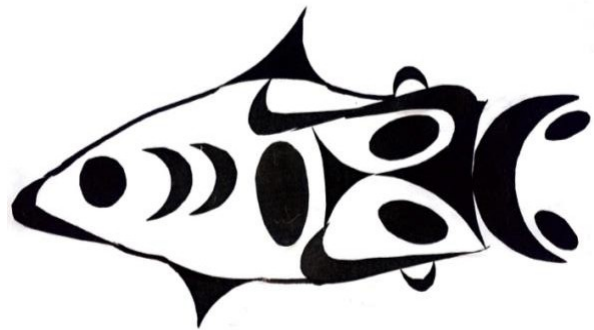
Tell students that they are going to honour the salmon by creating their own salmon using only the Coast Salish design elements they have just learned about.

There are two options for creating the salmon. In Option A, students can draw each Coast Salish design element using a different coloured pencil crayon to create their salmon. In Option B, students can cut and paste together a unique salmon using the worksheet found on page 12. Option B requires more dexterity with scissors, and may be better suited for an older class.

Students may reference Dylan Thomas's artwork for ideas, but they should create an original piece. Once the Coast Salish design elements have been drawn or positioned, the students can fill in colour and add other details.



Option A: Salmon created with 3 coloured pencil crayons.



Option B: Salmon created with cut and pasted shapes from the worksheet.

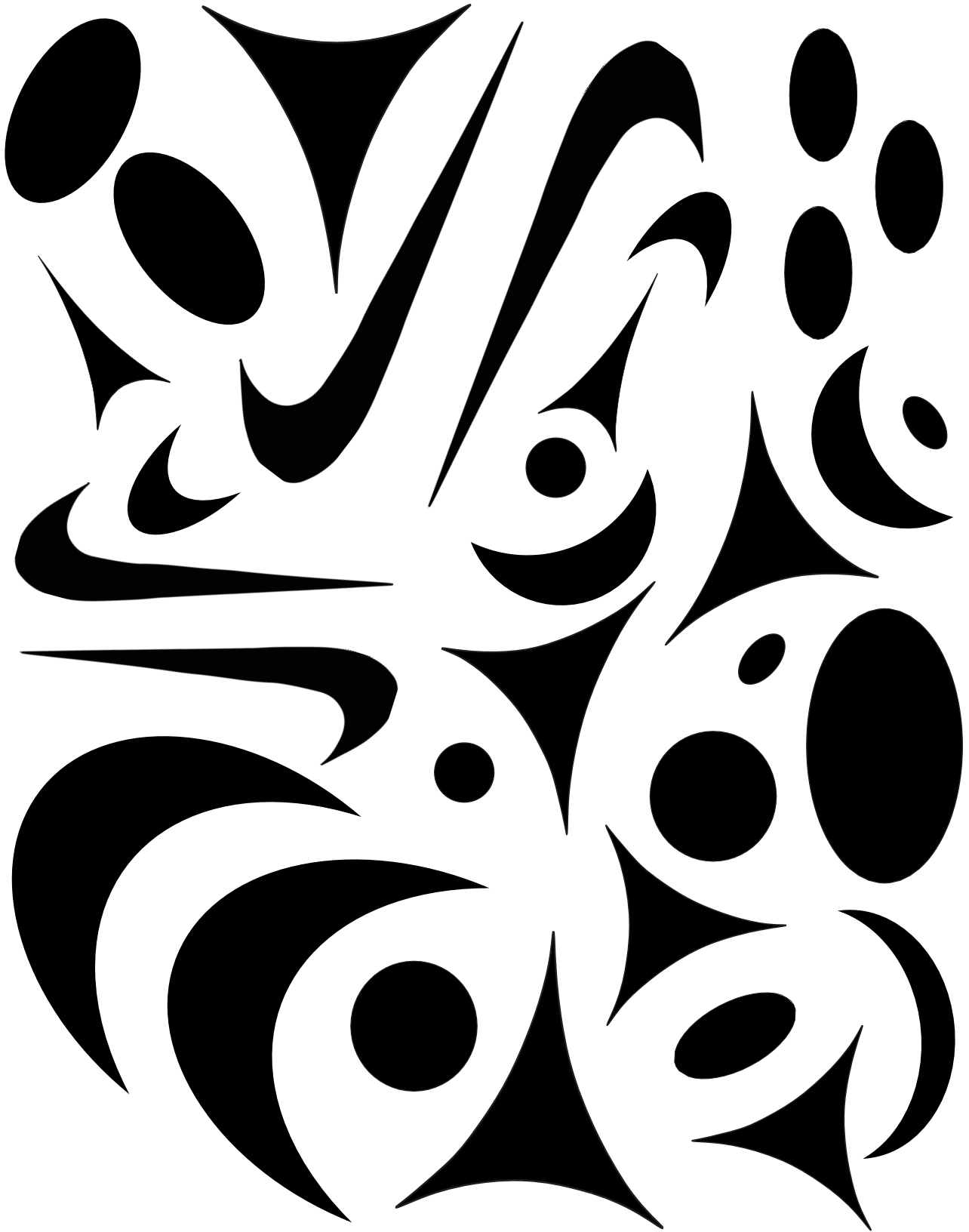
Step 3: Respond

Prompt students to reflect on their experience working with the Coast Salish design elements to create a salmon. Questions may include:

- How did you like working with the Coast Salish design elements to create a salmon?
- What was your favourite part of only using the circle, oval, crescent, and trigon shapes?
- Did you encounter any challenges when using the Coast Salish design elements?
- Did this activity make you think differently about the salmon?

Coast Salish Design Worksheet

Trace or cut out these shapes to create your salmon. Try experimenting with the shapes. What happens when you make them bigger or smaller? Do the shapes fit together?



SENĆOŦEN Vocabulary and Pronunciations

SENĆOŦEN Word	SENĆOŦEN Pronunciation	English Meaning
ØWENÁLYEN	qwah-naye-lyahn	Reef Net Captain
SENĆOŦEN	sun-chah-thun	The language spoken by the WSÁNEĆ peoples
SHELIS	shah-lease	The willow branch escapement hole in the Reef Net; SHELIS means “life”
SWÁLET	swey-laht	Reef Net Fishing site. Different families own different fishing sites
SXOLE	shw-wall-ah	Reef Net
WSÁNEĆ	wh-say-nuch	The SENĆOŦEN version of the English “Saanich” translation

English Vocabulary

Ceremony	An act or series of acts performed according to fixed rules.
Community	A group of people who share common attitudes, interests, and goals.
Conservation	Practices and attitudes performed with the goal of ensuring there are enough resources for future generations.
Culture	The knowledge and values shared by a society.
Cultural Revitalization	The process through which people regain a sense of identity through connecting with their culture.
Tradition	Longstanding customs and practices of a society.
Treaty	A sacred promise between two distinct groups.

References

Bibliography

Claxton, Earl, and John Elliott Sr. *Reef Net Technology of the Saltwater People*.
Saanich Indian School Board, Brentwood Bay, B.C., 1994.

Claxton, Nicholas XEMTOLTW. *To Fish as Formerly: A Resurgent Journey Back to the
Saanich Reef Net Fishery*. University of Victoria, British Columbia, 2015.

Multimedia

Becker, Amy and Wiebe, Sarah Marie. "To Fish As Formerly: WSÁNEĆ Nation Brings Reef
Net Fishing Back After 100 Years." *YouTube*, 11 Oct. 2014,
<https://youtu.be/vTQk1IR9ibc>.

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. "To Fish as Formerly | Artist Interview –
Temoseng aka Chasz Elliott." *YouTube*, 11 Sept. 2020, <https://youtu.be/simwd0GBc5I>.

Artworks and Images

Cecil, Holly. *SHELIS – Life installation view*. 2020. University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries,
Victoria, B.C.

Cecil, Holly. *To Fish as Formerly installation view*. 2020. University of Victoria Legacy Art
Galleries, Victoria, B.C.

Corbertt, L.R. *Xwelemi Men with a Ceremonial Reef Net Model, Net Weights, Paddles and
Drums at Village Point, Lummi Island*. 1915. Center for Pacific Northwest Studies,
Western Libraries Heritage Resources, Western Washington University, WA.

Elliott, John. *Reef Net illustration*. 1994. Saanich Indian School Board, Brentwood Bay, B.C.

Paul, Chris. *Reef Net*. 2020.

Thomas, Dylan. *Net Work*. 2018.

Additional Resources

Territory Acknowledgement

Amnesty International – Activism Skills: Land and Territory Acknowledgement.

<https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/activism-skills-land-and-territory-acknowledgement>

Native Land – Territory Acknowledgement.

<https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. “Territory Acknowledgement from Songhees Elder Frank Bangus George | To Fish As Formerly.” *YouTube*, 21 Aug. 2020,

<https://youtu.be/YKprC2cRQuA>.

Artist Interview Series

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. “To Fish as Formerly | Artist Interview – Colton Hash.” *YouTube*, 29 Aug. 2020, <https://youtu.be/P8jQxYURI4Y>.

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. “To Fish as Formerly | Artist Interview – Sarah Jim.” *YouTube*, 22 Aug. 2020, <https://youtu.be/tDEGMn5Q02Q>.

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. “To Fish as Formerly | Artist Interview – Temoseng aka Chasz Elliott.” *YouTube*, 11 Sept. 2020, <https://youtu.be/simwd0GBc5I>.

Coast Salish Design Elements

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries - Coast Salish Design Elements.

<https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/salishcurriculum/coast-salish-design-elements/>

SENĆOŦEN

First Voices - SENĆOŦEN

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data/THE%20SEN%C4%86O%C5%A6EN%20LANGUAGE/SEN%C4%86O%C5%A6EN/SEN%C4%86O%C5%A6EN>

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<http://saanich.montler.net/>