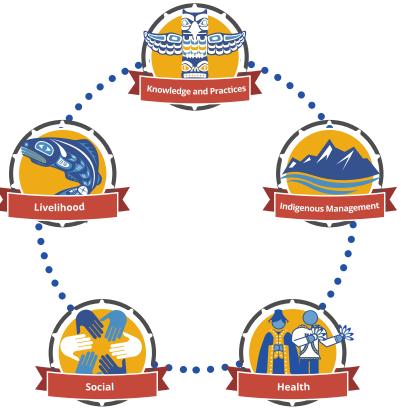
## The Sociocultural Value of Pacific Salmon to Tribes and First Nations Summary of Findings

Pacific salmon are a **cultural and ecological keystone species**, irreplaceable and core to the identities and ways of life of Indigenous communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. This flyer summarizes insights on the sociocultural significance of Pacific salmon learned from engagement with the Tribal and First Nations Caucuses to the Pacific Salmon Commission.

Centered around the well-being of Indigenous communities and salmon, this study organizes findings from a series of interviews into a framework of five intersecting areas: **social** cohesion, **health** of humans and ecosystems, **livelihoods**, Indigenous **management** systems, and cultural **knowledge and practices**. Interview participants shed light on the following common themes.

**Salmon is a Social Fabric:** Salmon are integral to family structures, community cohesion, gatherings and ceremonies, and practices of giving, trading, and sharing—all central to cultural identity. The



breadth and depth of participants' discussion around social gatherings highlighted the ways Indigenous families and Nations gather to cherish salmon. When salmon are scarce, Nations work hard to obtain salmon for ceremonial and subsistence needs in their communities and the communities of neighboring Nations. The exchange of salmon within and between communities strengthens the social fabric and cultural ties among Indigenous Nations.

**Losses of Salmon and Cultural Wealth:** Many salmon runs have declined significantly, and some salmon populations face extinction. Every participant in this study shared stories of the impacts of salmon decline on food, habitat and ecology, fishing, and physical health. Additionally, they discussed the roles of dams and non-Indigenous governance in this decline. The loss of salmon is a cultural crisis: without salmon, ceremonies, food security, traditions, learning, economies, and health all suffer. Indigenous communities feel a responsibility to stewardship that will ensure salmon are available for future generations.

**Healthy Salmon, Healthy Communities:** Indigenous communities need salmon for their mental and physical health. Losses in Tribal and First Nations salmon fisheries leave communities without fresh, dried, canned, or frozen salmon, increasing their dependence on commercially processed foods. Discussions around food and livelihoods frequently stressed the need for salmon for not only food and economic security, but also for sustaining human and ecosystem health and teaching traditions and cultural practices.

**Prioritizing Indigenous Management:** Cultural needs, knowledge systems, traditions, and practices are central to Indigenous salmon management approaches, but are rarely acknowledged in, much less incorporated into, non-Indigenous management decisions. For participants, the displacement of Indigenous Nations from salmon and habitat management evoked feelings of sadness, frustration, and anger. This was especially true for Canadian First Nations. Despite legal precedents and government commitments and policies, recreational and commercial sectors are often given priority over Indigenous fisheries, further eroding trust. Effective conservation of salmon will require co-management and increased collaboration between harvest sectors.

**Everything is Connected:** Salmon are the lifeblood of Tribes and First Nations. Beyond their vital roles in ecosystem health and larger food webs, salmon are essential to every aspect of Indigenous livelihood and culture. The inability to fish salmon within traditional Indigenous territories breaks this connection. Salmon are considered more than fish to be caught, eaten, or sold; they are family members who must be treated with respect to ensure they will continue to provide to people and ecosystems. These values instill a responsibility for salmon: "If you take care of salmon, they will take care of you."

## Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from common themes across the interviews.

 Shift the priority from salmon harvests to rebuilding salmon populations to ensure that Indigenous communities can meet their food, social, and ceremonial salmon needs now and in the future.



- Restore salmon ecosystems following holistic principles that draw on both Indigenous and Western science. This work will require additional funding and support for Indigenous fisheries and fisheries science programs.
- *Respect and incorporate Indigenous sociocultural values* alongside Indigenous science and technology in salmon management. Indigenous Nations and Councils should be supported and consulted to enhance opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and Indigenous participation and representation.
- *Co-manage salmon with Tribes and First Nations* to fulfill Indigenous rights.

## Access the Report

For the full text of the Special Report, *The Sociocultural Significance of Pacific Salmon to Tribes and First Nations*, visit the Pacific Salmon Commission website (psc.org/publications). To view an online summary of the project, visit the Earth Economics website (eartheconomics.org/psc).

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