

Musqueam First Nation 'People of the River Grass'

Name: _____



The Musqueam Nation is a Coast Salish First Nation located around the lower mainland of British Columbia, especially near what is now Vancouver.



Course	Topic
English Reading	<p>The Two-Headed Serpent – Creation Story</p> <p>Curricular Competencies: Comprehend and Connect: Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts</p>
Art	<p>Drawing of the Two-Headed Serpent</p> <p>Curricular Competency: Exploring and Creating - Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play</p>
Science	<p>Camosun Bog</p> <p>Curricular Competencies Communicating: Express and reflect on personal, shared, or others' experiences of place</p>
Core Competencies	Creative Thinking – Design a Bog
Math	<p>Components of a Bog – Bar Graphs</p> <p>Curricular Competencies: Reasoning and Analyzing: Model mathematics in contextualized experiences.</p>
English Writing	<p>Inside a Bog – Creative Responses</p> <p>Curricular Competency: Create and Communicate: Transform ideas and information to create original texts</p>
Social Studies	<p>Fishing on the Fraser River</p> <p>Curricular Competencies: Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective)</p> <p>Curricular Competencies: Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)</p>

Sinulhky: The Two-Headed Serpent

Long ago, in the times when the world was full of mysteries, people first encountered the fearsome creature known as Sinulhky. This giant serpent had immense power and was known by different names in various Coast Salish dialects: Siin'lqi (pronounced "suh-in-ul-kee") in Cowichan, sʔi:ɬqəy' (pronounced "s-EE-l-kay") in Musqueam, **Sinetlqi** (pronounced "sin-et-lee") in Lummi, and ayhus in Sliammon.

Sinulhky was a massive serpent with two heads that moved independently, each head scanning the surroundings with piercing eyes. Its scales glistened in the sunlight, and it possessed the ability to twist and break those who encountered it. This serpent could also shape-shift into different forms, such as a duck or a log, and it had the power to raise water levels. Here are some of the tales about Sinulhky, beginning with the first person to encounter the serpent.

Stutsun's Encounter with the Serpent

The first to meet the two-headed serpent was Stutsun, an ancestor of the Cowichan (pronounced "KOW-ih-chan") people. Stutsun went on a special journey called a vision quest. He fasted, bathed in cold waters, and stayed alone to prepare himself. One day, while bathing in a lake deep in the forest, he saw the Siin'lqi (pronounced "suh-in-ul-kee"), a giant two-headed serpent. The serpent was huge, with two heads that moved independently. Its scales sparkled in the sunlight, and it looked very scary. But Stutsun did not run away. He stood still, his heart steady and his mind clear. He remembered the teachings of his people, to always face challenges without fear. The Siin'lqi came closer, but instead of attacking, it sensed Stutsun's courage. The serpent acknowledged his bravery and slowly retreated into the lake. Stutsun returned to his people with a new sense of wisdom and strength. He shared his story, teaching his people about bravery and purity.

The Musqueam Tale

The Musqueam (pronounced "MUS-kwee-um") people tell a story of a two-headed serpent called sʔi:ɬqəy' (pronounced "s-EE-l-kay"). This serpent started in a small lake called xʷməmqʷəm (pronounced "x-w-m-m-q-we-m") and carved a path to the river, creating a creek. Everything in its path died, but from its droppings grew the flowering plant məθkʷəy' (pronounced "meth-kwee"), which gave the Musqueam people their name. The oral history of the Musqueam people speaks to the plant's cultural significance. The Musqueam origin story tells of an enormous double-headed serpent (sʔi:ɬqəy') which lived in Camosun Bog (xʷməmqʷəm). The serpent was so massive that its winding path created the Fraser River (stəl'əw). All living things that crossed the serpent's path were said to have died, and from the serpent's droppings bloomed new life – river grass – which grew abundantly around the serpent's home. The people of the area therefore named the land xʷməθkʷəy'əm.

Comprehension Questions (Literal Understanding)

1. What kind of creature is Sinulhky? Describe what it looks like. _____
2. What special abilities did the serpent have? List at least two. _____
3. Who was the first person to meet the serpent, and what was he doing at the time? _____
4. How did Stutsun prepare for his vision quest? _____
5. What did Stutsun do when he first saw the serpent? _____
6. Why did the serpent not attack Stutsun? _____
7. In the Musqueam story, what did the serpent create when it moved across the land? _____
8. What plant grew from the serpent's droppings, and why is it important to the Musqueam people? _____
9. What place did the serpent live in according to the Musqueam story? _____
10. How did the Musqueam get their name, according to the story? _____

Deeper Thinking Questions (Interpretation & Inference)

1. Why do you think Stutsun's bravery was important in the story? What lesson might this teach? _____

2. What might the two-headed serpent symbolize in these stories? _____

3. Why do you think many Indigenous stories explain the creation of rivers, plants, and landforms? _____

4. How does the serpent's ability to shape the land show the connection between people and nature? _____

5. Why do you think the serpent changed forms (like a duck or a log)? _____

6. Do you think the serpent is meant to be seen as "good," "bad," or something else? Explain your thinking. _____

7. How do the stories show respect for animals and natural forces? _____

8. If you met a creature like Sinulhky, what qualities would help you stay calm like Stutsun? _____

9. What do you think the stories are trying to teach about courage, respect, or community identity? _____

10. Why is it important for the Musqueam to remember the origin of their name and the plant? _____

Place-Based Thinking Questions (Connections to Land and Identity)

1. How do the stories help explain the history of places like Camosun Bog or the Fraser River? _____

2. Why do you think oral stories are important for understanding the land today? _____

3. How might hearing this story change the way you see local creeks, bogs, or forests? _____

4. How do these stories help us understand the relationship between Indigenous nations and their homelands? _____

Art - Two-Headed Serpent

What do you picture, when you think of the two-headed serpent, in the bog, or the Fraser River? Sketch your idea below, and then create your good copy on a separate piece of paper.

What Is Camosun Bog?

Camosun Bog is a special wetland located in Vancouver, in an area called Pacific Spirit Park.

A bog is a type of wetland that is wet, spongy, and full of mosses, especially sphagnum moss.

Bogs are rare and very delicate, which means they can be easily damaged.

Why Is It Important?

Camosun Bog is important because it is one of the **last remaining bogs** in the Lower Mainland. Long ago, bogs used to cover much more of the area, but many were destroyed or changed by development. This bog is home to **unique plants** that don't grow well in other places. Some of these plants include:

- **Sundews** (plants that trap insects)
- **Bog cranberries**
- **Sphagnum moss** (it holds a lot of water, makes it acidic, stores carbon, and creates a moist habitat for other plants to grow in)
- **Shore pine**

These plants live in very acidic, low-nutrient soil, which most regular plants cannot survive in.

What Happened to the Bog?

Over time, people built roads and houses around Camosun Bog. As the city grew, the bog began to dry out and became unhealthy. Some plants that didn't belong there started growing, and many bog plants began to disappear.

How Was It Saved?

In the 1990s, volunteers and the Musqueam community worked together to **restore the bog**. They removed unwanted plants, rebuilt the wetland, and helped water return to the area. Thanks to this work, many bog plants have come back, and the bog is much healthier today.

The wet, open, nutrient poor soil of a bog creates growing conditions similar to those in the Arctic. Several plants, normally found in the north, thrive in local bogs. Many bog plants have evolved special strategies to survive. Here are the most dominant bog plant species found in Camosun Bog.

Sundews (*Drosera*

rotundifolia) are small carnivorous plants which trap and digest small insects to provide nutrients. They have specialised leaves with hairs that have drops of sticky liquid at their ends. Insects stick to these and the plant then digests them.



Cloudberry (*Rubus*

chamaemorus) is a member of the rose family. It is an arctic plant occurring in northern Russia, Scandinavia and northern Canada. Camosun Bog and other bogs in the Lower Mainland are at its southern limit. It has both male and female flowers, although male ones are much more common. For the last few years several female plants in Camosun Bog have borne fruit.



Labrador tea (*Ledum*

groenlandicum) looks like a rhododendron and indeed it is— it has an alternate technical name, *Rhododendron groenlandicum*. The leaves can be brewed with water to make a refreshing drink. The underside of the leaves are brown and fuzzy. Because bog water is so acidic, plants absorb it very slowly. They need to hold on to this water, and the rolled leaves with fuzzy undersides help to minimise losses from evaporation.



Don't confuse bog laurel

(*Kalmia polifolia*) with Labrador tea! Bog laurel has shiny leaves which are poisonous, while Labrador tea leaves are dull with fuzzy undersides. The stamens are attached to little pockets at the centres of the petals. They are under tension, and if an insect touches them on its way to drink nectar, the stamen may spring out and deposit a load of pollen on the insect, causing pollination when it visits another plant.



Why is it important to protect wetlands like Camosun Bog?



Why do you think people feel connected to Camosun Bog? What makes it special?

How might the bog be different if it were left alone for 100 years?

How do Indigenous stories, like the Musqueam serpent story, help people understand this place?

How do the plants and animals in the bog depend on the bog being healthy?

Why do you think Camosun Bog is one of the last bogs left in Vancouver?
What happened to the others?

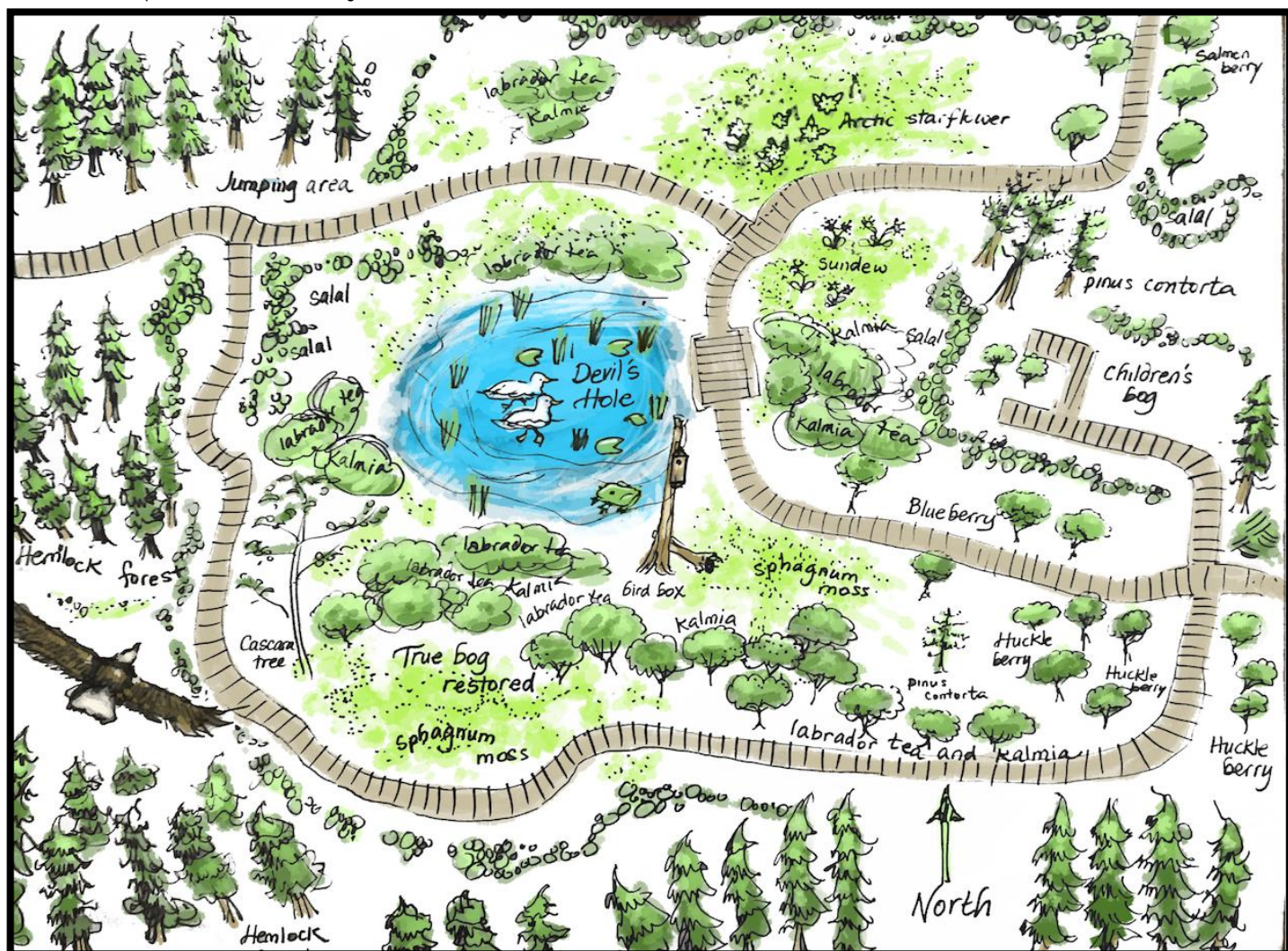
Why do you think bogs are important even if they are small and don't have many big animals?

What does sphagnum moss do in the bog? Why is it important?













Core Competency - Creative Thinking

"I can get new ideas or reinterpret others' ideas in novel ways."

Look at the map of the Camosun Bog.



Imagine that you work for the government, and you are in charge of demolishing an old factory that used to be on the site of a bog, and you get to help restore a bog to its natural state. Once you take out the factory, which plants would you re-introduce? Where would the walkways lead? Design the bog on the following page. Use the legend below to help you add a variety of elements:

			
Walkway	Sphagnum moss	Wild huckleberry	Pond
			
Labrador tea	Wild blueberry	Wild cranberry	Hemlock tree
			
Pine tree	Bog laurel	Sundew	Cloudberry

Sketch your bog design here:

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for sketching a bog design. The box occupies the majority of the page below the instruction text.

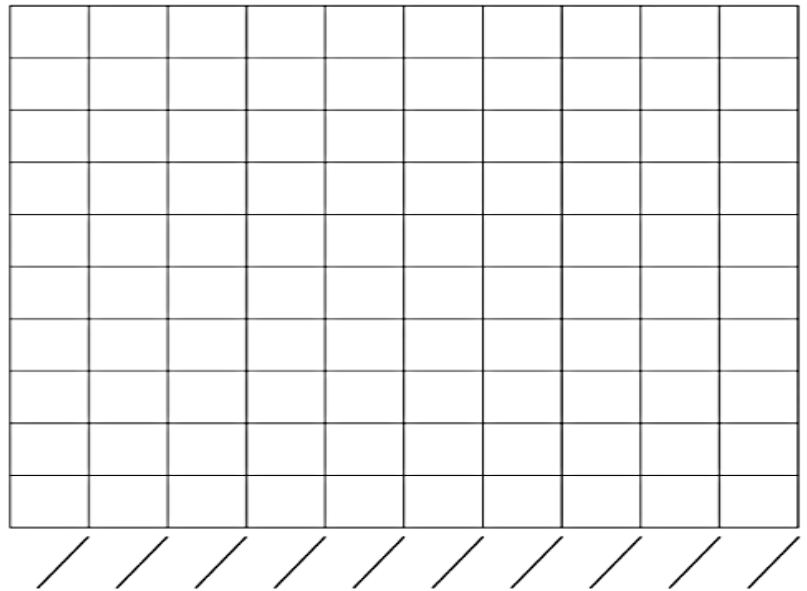
Math - Bar Graphs – Camosun Bog

In the Camosun Bog, there are a variety of plants. Use the table below to help you create a bar graph. Remember to include a scale on the left, labels on the bottom, and a title at the top:

Plant Presence in a Bog (Approximate % of Ground Coverage)

Plant Type	Percentage (%)
Sphagnum moss	45%
Bog cranberry	10%
Labrador tea	8%
Shore pine	7%
Cloudberry	5%
Bog laurel	6%
Sundew (carnivorous plant)	4%
Kinnikinnick	3%
Cotton grass	9%
Other mosses & lichens	3%

Total = 100%

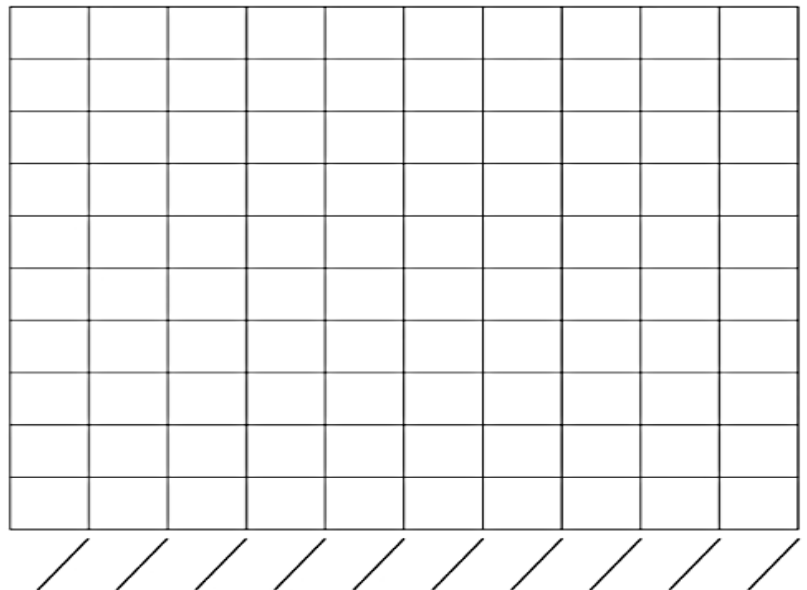


Bird Species in a Bog (Approximate % of Sightings)

(Fictional, but realistic data. Approximate data)

Bird Species	Percentage of Sightings (%)
Song Sparrow	20%
Black-capped Chickadee	18%
Pacific Wren	12%
Steller's Jay	10%
Northern Flicker	8%
Varied Thrush	7%
Anna's Hummingbird	6%
Common Raven	5%
Red-winged Blackbird	9%
Dark-eyed Junco	5%

Total = 100%



Insect Species in Camosun Bog (Approximate % of Sightings) *(Fictional classroom data, totals 100%)*

Insect Species	Percentage of Sightings (%)
Mosquitoes	22%
Dragonflies	15%
Damselflies	10%
Bog Craneflies	8%
Beetles	12%
Spiders	9%
Butterflies	7%
Moths	6%
Ants	6%
Bumblebees	5%

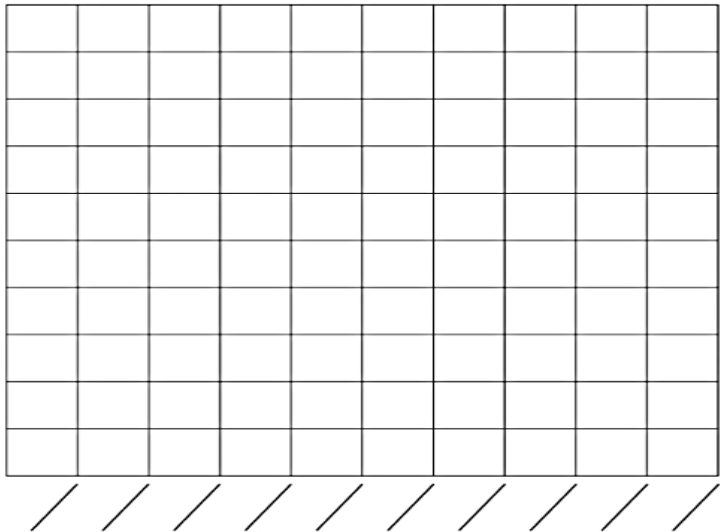
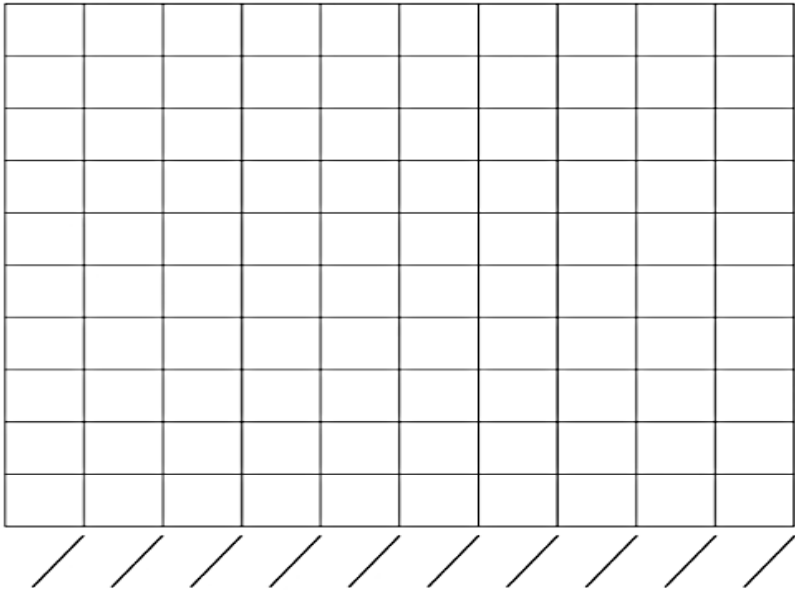
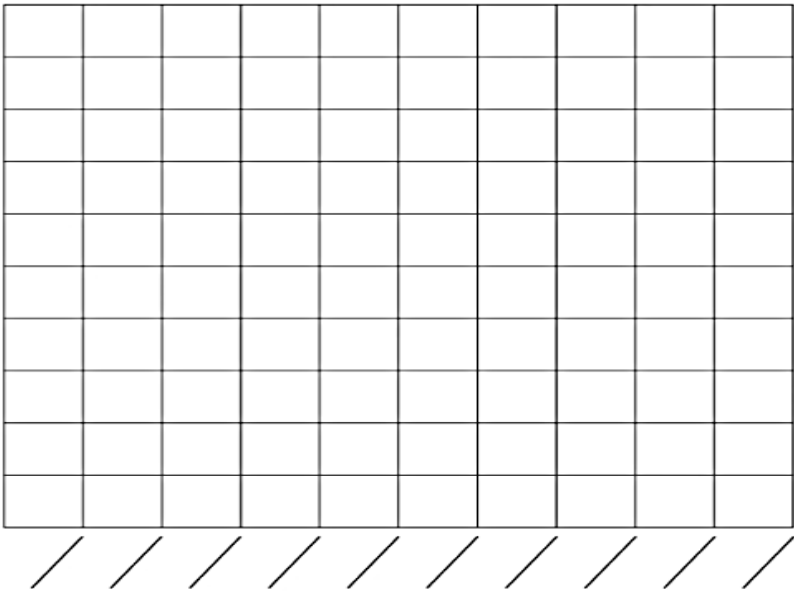
Total = 100%

These are the closest **bogs near or around the Vancouver / Lower Mainland region**, and their approximate size:

Bog / Wetland Name	Approximate Size
Burns Bog	~ 3,000 ha
Blaney Bog Regional Reserve	~ 124 ha
Camosun Bog	~ 20 ha
Rithet's Bog	~ 38 ha
Richmond Bog-Forest (Richmond Nature Park)	~ 81 ha

These are the **approximate decomposition rates of different natural materials in a bog**. Bogs are cold, wet, and acidic, so things break down much more slowly than in a regular forest.

Material	Approximate Time to Decompose in a Bog
Leaf litter (e.g., maple or cedar leaves)	5–10 years
Pine needles	10–20 years
Twigs / small branches	10–30 years
Dead moss (sphagnum)	20–100+ years
Animal bones	50–100+ years
Fruits / berries	2–5 years
Feathers	5–10 years
Wood logs (hardwood)	50–200 years



English - Writing - Inside the Bog

Here are some **writing prompts** about Camosun Bog. Choose a prompt, and write your thoughts below:

1. **Describe a Day in the Bog** – Imagine you are walking through Camosun Bog. Write a story about what you see, hear, and smell.
2. **Bog Explorer** – Pretend you are a scientist studying the bog. What plants, birds, and insects would you discover, and what would you write in your notebook?
3. **A Bird's-eye View** – Imagine you are a bird flying over Camosun Bog. Describe what the bog looks like from above and what animals you notice.
4. **Bog Adventure** – Create a story where you get lost in the bog but discover something amazing about nature.
5. **The Bog's Wisdom** – Imagine the bog could talk. What would it tell humans about taking care of nature?
6. **Insect Life** – Pick one insect that lives in the bog and write a diary entry from its perspective for one full day.
7. **Protecting the Bog** – Write a persuasive letter to a local mayor or council explaining why Camosun Bog should be protected and cared for.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal black lines running across the width of the page. The lines are thin and consistent in thickness. There are no margins, text, or other markings present on the paper.

Social Studies - Fishing Rights in the Fraser River – Perspective and Ethical Judgement

The **Fraser River** is the longest river in British Columbia, stretching over 1,300 kilometers from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. It flows through forests, mountains, and cities, including Vancouver. The river is very important for salmon, which travel upriver to spawn, and it has been a home and a food source for many Indigenous peoples, including the Musqueam First Nation, for thousands of years. People also use the Fraser River for transportation, fishing, and recreation, making it an important part of both nature and human life in B.C.



Musqueam Fishing Rights

The Musqueam First Nation has special **fishing rights** in the Fraser River. These rights were officially recognized in a famous court case called **R. v. Sparrow** (in 1990). Musqueam people have the right to fish for **food, social, and ceremonial purposes** in the Fraser River.

Why this is important:

- **R. v. Sparrow (1990):** A Musqueam man named Ronald Sparrow went to court to protect his right to fish. The Supreme Court of Canada said that Musqueam people have a right to fish that cannot be taken away by government rules.
- **Protected by the Constitution:** This means the government must respect Musqueam fishing rights.
- **An ancient right:** Musqueam people have fished in their traditional territory for thousands of years.

Recent challenges:

- In August of 2025, a court gave the **Cowichan Nation** some fishing rights in the south arm of the Fraser River, which has always been Musqueam territory.
- Musqueam leaders were worried this could affect their own fishing rights and said they would **appeal** the decision to protect their land.
- Musqueam is also working with other First Nations, like the Tsawwassen, to make sure that all communities **respect each other's fishing areas**.

The Cowichan Nation was given fishing rights in the south arm of the Fraser River because the court recognized that they also have **Aboriginal title and rights** in that area. The Musqueam had **historically fished there**, but the court found that the Cowichan also had traditional connections to the land and water. This doesn't mean Musqueam lost their rights, but it **creates a conflict** because both nations claim the same area. Musqueam is appealing the decision because they want to **protect their long-established fishing rights** in their traditional territory.



For each perspective, write down what you think that they would think, and then say why:

Musqueam elder

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Cowichan elder

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Judge hearing the case

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Non-Indigenous Fisher

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Elementary Teacher

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Tourist

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Environmentalist

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

An Indigenous Person from a neighbouring territory

What do you think they would think about this?

Why is that?

Ethical Judgement

Which perspective do you think is the one you think is the most reasonable? Discuss your ideas.

Ethical Judgement

How would you solve this, if you worked for the government, and the decision were up to you?

Create a mini comic strip that summarizes this conflict:

The comic strip template consists of two columns, each with three panels. The panels are empty, with various speech bubble and thought bubble icons placed around them for storytelling.

- Top-left panel: A lightning bolt icon pointing down to the panel.
- Top-right panel: A lightning bolt icon pointing down to the panel.
- Middle-left panel: A thought bubble icon above the panel.
- Middle-right panel: A thought bubble icon above the panel.
- Bottom-left panel: A speech bubble icon pointing to the panel.
- Bottom-right panel: A speech bubble icon pointing to the panel.