Climate Change, Salmon, and Indigenous Culture

Salmon and Indigenous Culture
- Salmon are part of traditional cultural stories
- Salmon stories promote sustainable values
- Salmon health considered indication of environmental health
- Indigenous salmon ceremonies represent relationships between human groups and animals and important to indigenous culture
- Many tribes rely on salmon for subsistence

Climate Impacts on Pacific Salmon
- Warm ocean periods have coincided with relatively low abundances of salmon
- Salmon productivity in the Pacific Northwest is sensitive to climate-related changes in stream, estuary, and ocean conditions
- Pacific salmon thrive in periods having high precipitation, deep mountain snowpack, cool air and water temperatures, and cool coastal ocean temperatures
- Rising stream temperatures will likely decrease the quality of freshwater salmon habitat
- Periods that cause thermal stress and migration barriers to salmon are projected to increase
- These effects can be seen currently in the Fraser River

Responses to Salmon Depletion
- Salmon depletion leads to dependence on fish hatcheries
- Columbia River fish hatcheries alone produce 200 million fish per year
- Fish hatcheries create issues such as increased chance of disease, loss of diversity, and dependence
- Tribes collaborate with local governments for restoration efforts

Main Sources

Platform for Indigenous Rights
- Pacific Northwest tribes have used treaty rights to get a seat at the table to decide resource policy that covers treaty resources such as salmon
- The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and tribal resource departments use the treaty powers to protect habitat and in doing so already deal with issues affected by climate change

Conclusions
- Climate change negatively impacts Pacific salmon populations
- Pacific salmon are an integral part of indigenous cultures and important for subsistence
- Decreasing salmon populations are supplemented with fisheries
- Fisheries may have long-term negative impacts on salmon species
- Tribes initiate and collaborate with local government for recovery efforts
- Salmon depletion provide indigenous cultures with opportunity to exercise treaty rights as a means of protecting the environment