

Salmon Spawn: Collaborative Mural Inspired by Bill Reid

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TOPICS: Using colour, shape, and texture to represent salmon and an underwater environment; Creating a collaborative mural using paint and paper collage; Learning about the artwork of Haida artist Bill Reid

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts, Science, Social Studies **GRADE(S):** K-3

UNIT DURATION: 4 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK:

In this activity, students will explore the works of Haida artist Bill Reid and will create a collaborative mural. Students will discuss Bill Reid's print *Haida Sockeye Salmon*, learn about the environment and life cycle of salmon, and create a mural using paint and paper collage.

Bill Reid (1920-1998) was an acclaimed master goldsmith, carver, sculptor, writer, broadcaster, mentor and community activist. Reid was born in Victoria, BC to a Haida mother and an American father with Scottish German roots. His career began, surprisingly, as a radio announcer. While he was working in Toronto for the CBC, he studied jewellery making at the Ryerson Institute of Technology and began to explore his cultural heritage. Soon after his return to BC, he was engaged to recreate a section of a Haida Village for UBC. He went on to produce intricate jewellery, large sculptures, drawings and silkscreen prints for more than 30 years. He has been described as an individual who has, through his work, "single-handedly revived the art of the Haida people". He died in Vancouver in 1998.

A NOTE ABOUT DISPLAYING STUDENT ARTWORK AND CREDITING

SOURCES:

Providing specific contextual information and acknowledgement of inspiration and source material is important when presenting and displaying student artwork. For example, when displaying students' finished mural in a hallway or classroom at the conclusion of this lesson sequence, the following caption would provide contextual information for viewers: "Spawning Salmon mural inspired by the artwork of Bill Reid and Haida formline design".



Bill Reid, *Haida Sockeye Salmon*, 1981, serigraph on paper, 22 x 30 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Learning about Indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity. (Social Studies 3)
- People connect to others and share ideas through the arts. (Arts Education 1)
- Living things have life cycles adapted to their environment. (Science 2)

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation and purposeful play
- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through creative works
- Experience and interpret the local environment

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Elements of visual art; line, shape, texture, colour, repetition
- Traditional and contemporary Indigenous arts and art making processes
- Relationship between humans and their environment

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- What shapes and textures can be used to represent salmon in a river environment?

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 embedded in memory, history, and story.

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- 36" x 8' white Kraft paper cut from a roll
- 18" x 20" cartridge paper or finger-painting paper (1 for every 2 students)
- 9" x 12" black construction paper (2 per student)
- plastic table cloths or garbage bags to cover tables
- 4" wide sponge brush and a stick to affix with tape to make a long-handled brush
- tempera paint: white, light blue, blue, green, black, and brown
- 5" diameter circle tracers
- oil pastels: red, orange, grey, white
- Bill Reid Eyes template (see end of document)
- Salmon Outline Templates (see end of document)
- glue
- scissors
- *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed-Jones, *My River* by Shari Halpern or other picture books about the life cycle of salmon

VOCABULARY:

shapes: circle, oval, ovoid; size: small, medium, large; salmon life cycle terms: cycle, environment, redd, spawn, egg, spawners; visual art and design terms: mural, formline design, collaborate, blend, texture, motion, movement, overlap

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Bill Reid bio and art: <https://www.billreidgallery.ca/pages/about-bill-reid>

- Bill Reid bio and art: <https://www3.gordonsmithgallery.ca/Artists4Kids/ArtistPatrons/BillReid/Pages/default.aspx>
- Art terms glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>
- Picture books about the life cycle of salmon: *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed-Jones (<https://dawnpub.com/our-books/salmon-stream/>), *My River* by Shari Halpern (<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/my-river-by-shari-halpern/>)
- Sealaska Heritage curriculum on Northwest Coast Formline Design: <https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/Sealaska%20Heritage%20Formline%20Art%20Kit%20ONLINE%20low%20res.pdf>

ADAPTATIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Students with difficulties using scissors may need support.

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro and creating painted water background):

- Prior to the lesson, cover a section of the classroom floor with plastic (this will be the designated painting area). Tape a wide sponge brush securely to a dowel, pointer, or other handle tool (i.e. children's broom). Lay down a sheet of 36" x 8' white Kraft paper on the plastic sheeting.
- Introduce the lesson by reading a picture book providing information on the life cycle of a salmon. Examples of such books include: *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed-Jones and *My River* by Shari Halpern.
- Introduce students to Bill Reid and his print *Haida Sockeye Salmon*. Project the artwork and pose the following discussion questions:
 - What shapes and colours has Bill Reid included in this print to make it look like the salmon are in water (blue background and wavy lines)?
 - Describe the colours and shapes that Bill Reid has used to create the salmon in his artwork (oval, ovoid, S-shape, U-shape, etc.).
- Share with students an image of real spawning salmon and ask:
 - Can you identify any similarities and differences between Reid's salmon and real-life salmon?
- Explain to students that Bill Reid drew upon elements of traditional Haida formline design in creating his artwork.

- The following is a brief introduction to the concept of formline design (adapted from the following curriculum document by Sealaska Heritage Institute:
<https://www.sealaskaheritage.org/sites/default/files/Sealaska%20Heritage%20Formline%20Art%20Kit%20ONLINE%20low%20res.pdf>):

Formline design is an artistic style used by Northwest Coast Indigenous groups including the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. Formlines vary in width and change in thickness as they flow around corners. An interconnected web of formlines is used to compose a creature image or design. They may represent stories of Raven and other creatures, historic events, clan crests, or other concepts including clouds or glaciers. Two-dimensional formline designs are depicted on objects such as bentwood boxes, clan hats, and house screens, and can also be adapted to embellish three-dimensional objects such as masks and totem poles. The core building-block shapes of formline design are the ovoid and U-shape.

- Explain to students that they will create a collaborative mural depicting spawning salmon and their eggs in a river environment. They will take inspiration from Bill Reid's print, *Haida Sockeye Salmon*.
- Explain to students that they will begin by creating a collaborative painted background to represent the moving water in the river.
- Squirt lines of blue, green, and white tempera paint onto the 36" x 8' white Kraft paper.
- Have students take turns dragging the extended paintbrush across the paper to create undulating lines of blended colour. This will represent the movement of water.
- Move the paper to a drying rack or drying area.

LESSON #2 (creating textured paper for river rocks):

- Explain to students that in this lesson they will create textured painted paper that will later be used to cut out rock shapes to create the riverbed and the red (spawning nest) where female salmon lay their eggs.
- Cover student tables with plastic.
- Squirt white, brown, and a small amount of black paint onto the plastic.
- Have students work in pairs to mix paint with their hands, creating texture on the plastic. Afterwards get students to dry their hands.
- Place an 18" x 24" piece of cartridge paper or finger painting paper on top of the painted plastic (1 sheet for every pair). Each pair should rub the back of the paper to take an



On the left: Sample of collaborative painted water background with rock shapes overlapped at bottom to create the river bed. On the right: Students covering black construction paper with red, orange, and white oil pastel in Lesson #2 to create salmon egg shapes.

- impression of the texture. They should then peel up their paper and place it on a drying rack or in a drying area.
- Students should then wash and dry hands.
 - When fully dried, cut each sheet of textured painted paper in half.

LESSON #3 (creating salmon eggs and salmon):

- Tape 9" x 12" sheets of black construction paper onto student desks or tables (1 sheet per student).
- Students should cover their sheet of black construction paper using red and orange oil pastels.
 - Students should then use circle tracers (approximately 4"-5" in diameter) and a white pastel to draw 4-5 circles on the construction paper. Students should use a finger or a small piece of paper towel to blend the white pastel in a little and then cut out the circle shapes. These circles will be the salmon eggs. Students should write their name on the back of each of their eggs with a pencil.
- Tape a second 9" x 12" sheet of black construction paper to student desks or tables (1 sheet per student). Have students cover the sheet of

paper with red and orange pastels, as they did with the previous sheet.

- Students should then use a grey oil pastel, adding some lines on top of the red that they then blend in. The grey represents the original silver of the salmon that is lost as they transform and become spawners in the final stage of their life cycle.
- Students should then use pencil to draw the outline of two salmons on their construction paper. Students can either observe images of salmon in profile or use tracers to create these outlines (see end of document for Salmon Outline Templates). The salmon outlines should take up much of the paper and should be at least 11" in length.
- Students should then cut out the salmon shapes and write their names on the back using pencil.
- Print copies of the Bill Reid Eyes Template (see end of document). Students will need to cut out 1 eye for each of their 4-5 salmon eggs and 1 eye for each of their 2 salmon shapes. Students should then glue down their eyes on their eggs and salmon.

LESSON #4 (glue, cut and finish):

- Hand out one texture impression paper from Lesson #2 to each student.
- Have students draw a small, medium, and large oval shape on the back of their paper. Cut out each oval.
- If there is extra paper, make more oval shapes.
- Students should put glue in the centre of each oval and glue it to the bottom edge of the painted water background created in Lesson #1. The ovals should be overlapped and built up to create a rocky bottom or 'redd' for the salmon eggs (see example of finished mural on following page).
- Students should then put glue on the back of each egg and tuck them slightly behind and between the rocks of the red.
- Put glue on the back of the salmon shapes and place them in the water above the eggs and rocks (see example of finished mural on following page).

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

This collaborative mural can be assessed through student participation and questioning about which step they like the best at the end of each lesson.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After students complete their collaborative art mural, create a discussion circle where the



Students cutting out salmon egg shapes, attaching eyes, and adding their shapes to the collaborative mural.

students can respond to their art piece. Pose the following questions:

- What was your favourite part of creating the mural?
- What phases of the life cycle of the salmon are represented in this mural?
- How has colour, shape, and texture been used to represent salmon in an underwater environment?
- What new art technique or word have you learned in this process?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

Connect the salmon art to a unit on the life cycle of a salmon. Explore the salmon's life and ecosystem. This unit can connect to the science curriculum (facts and environment) and social studies (caring for the environment and learning about Haida culture, art, and traditions).

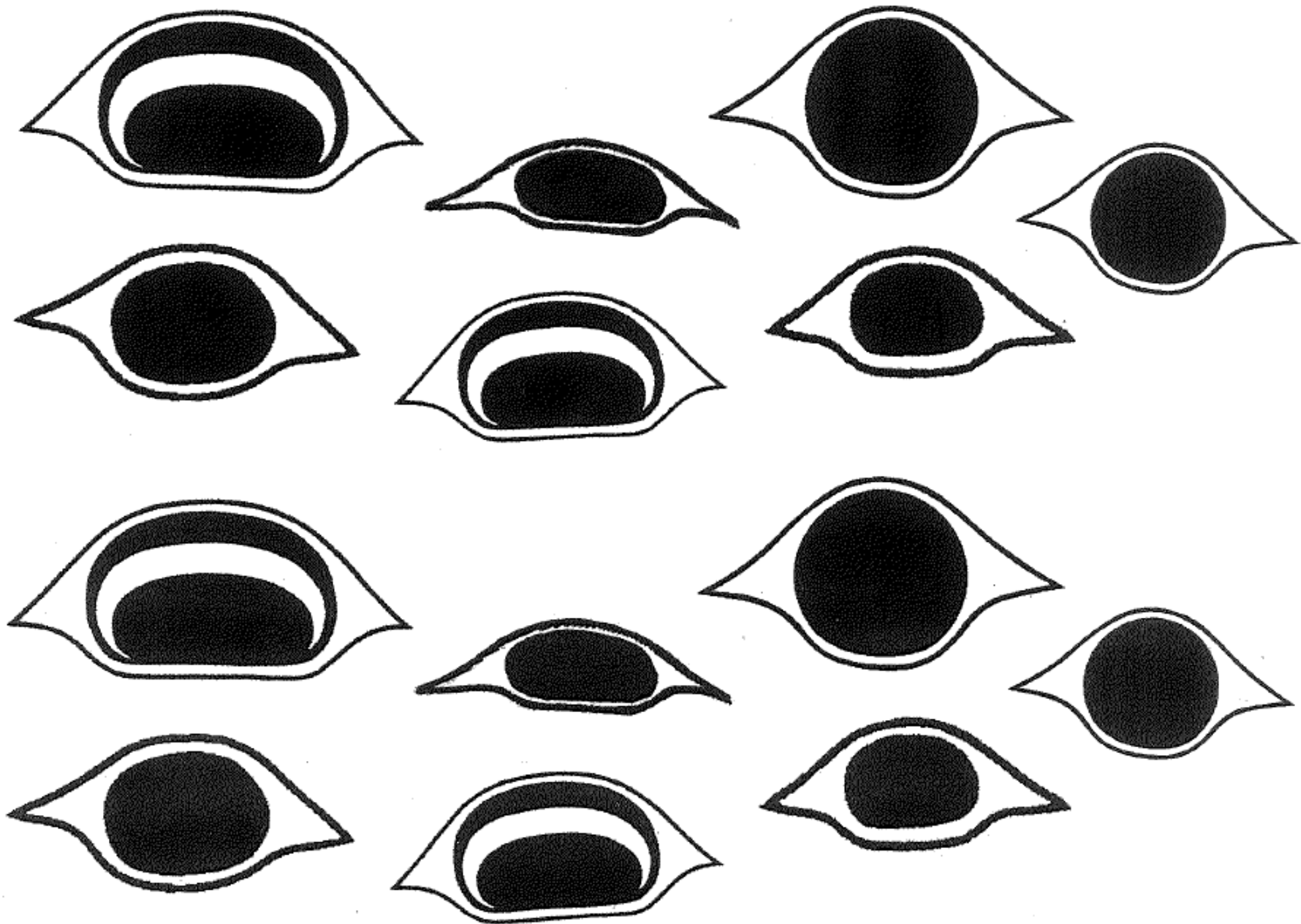
AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

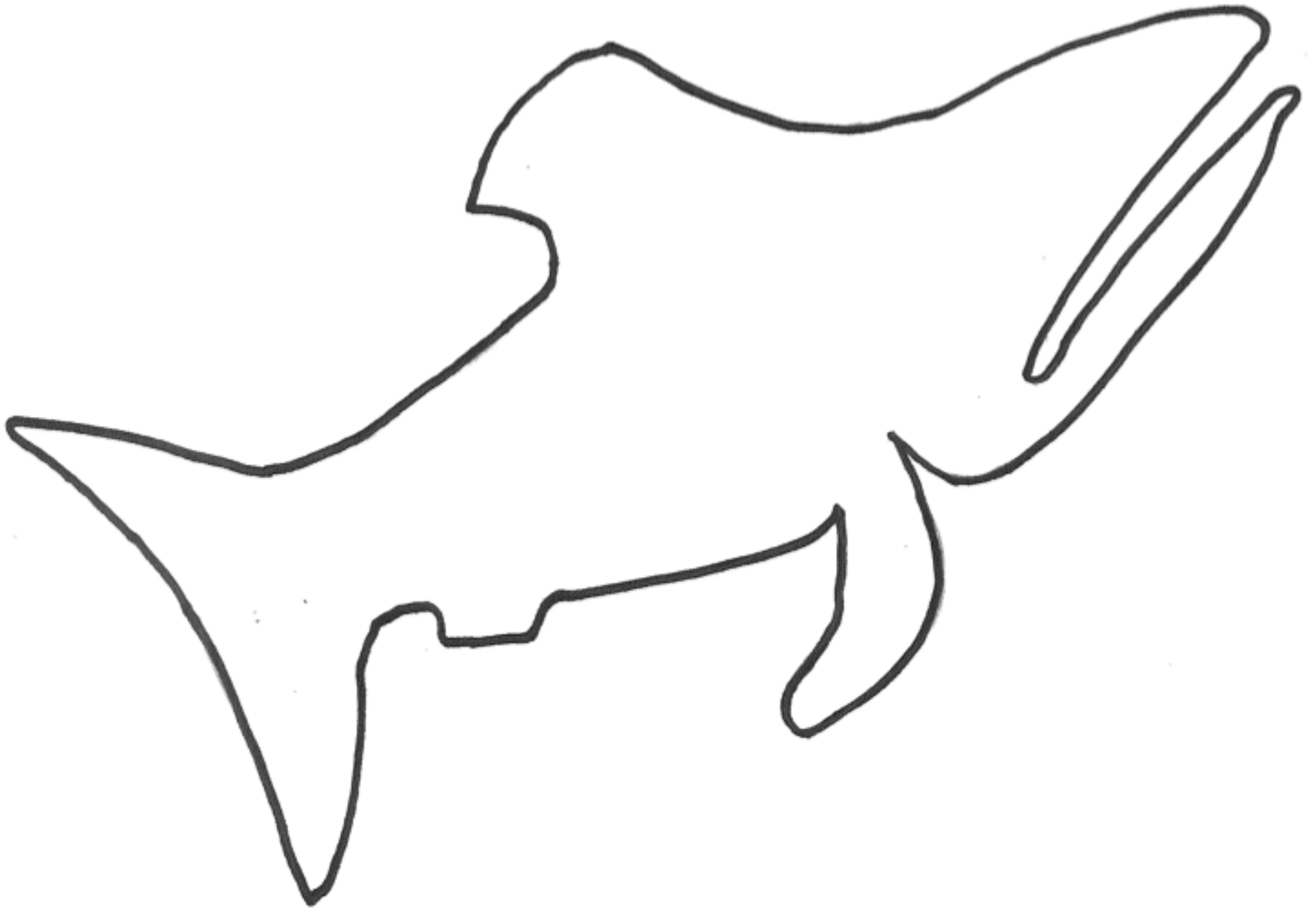
<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



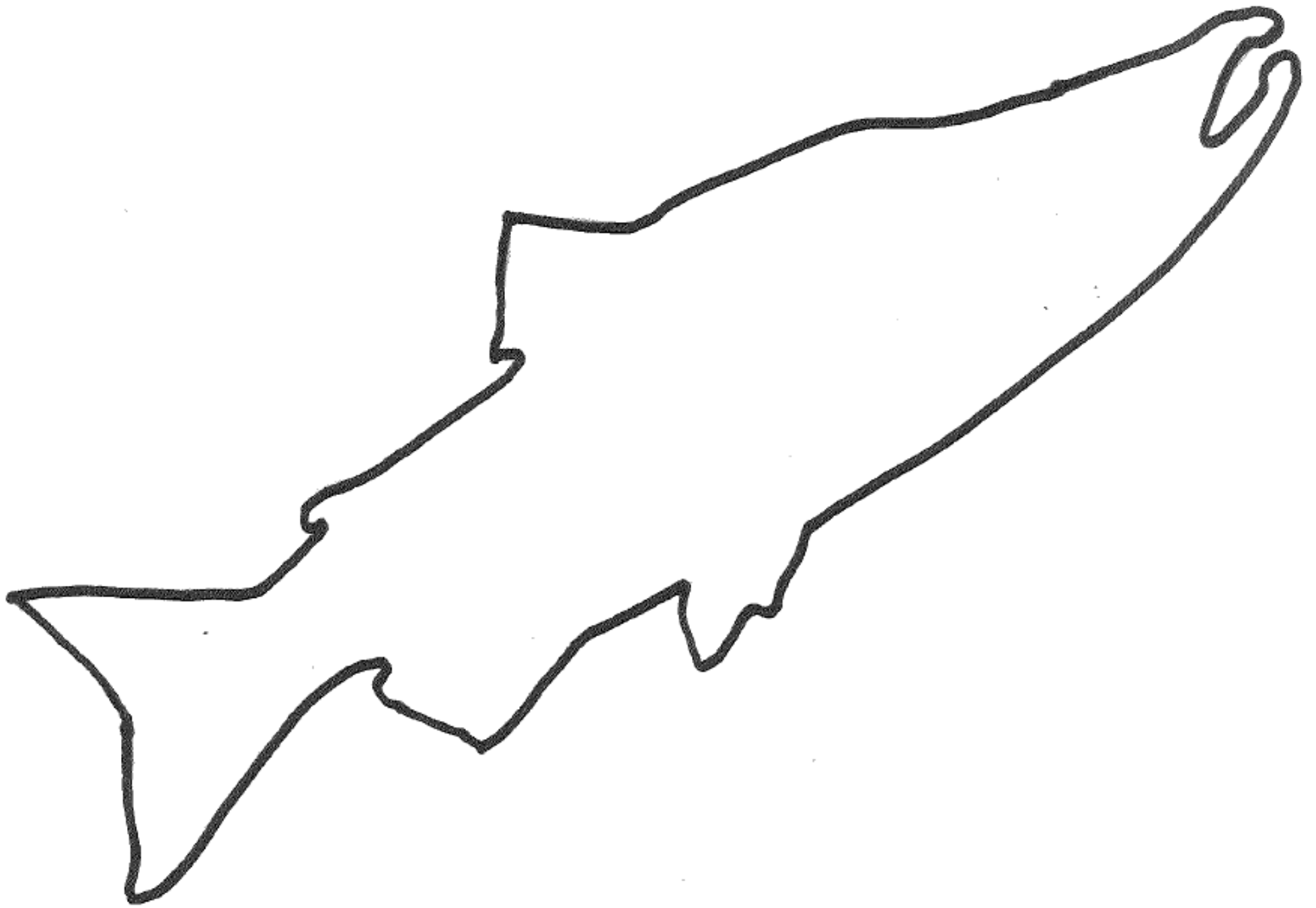
Example of finished mural.

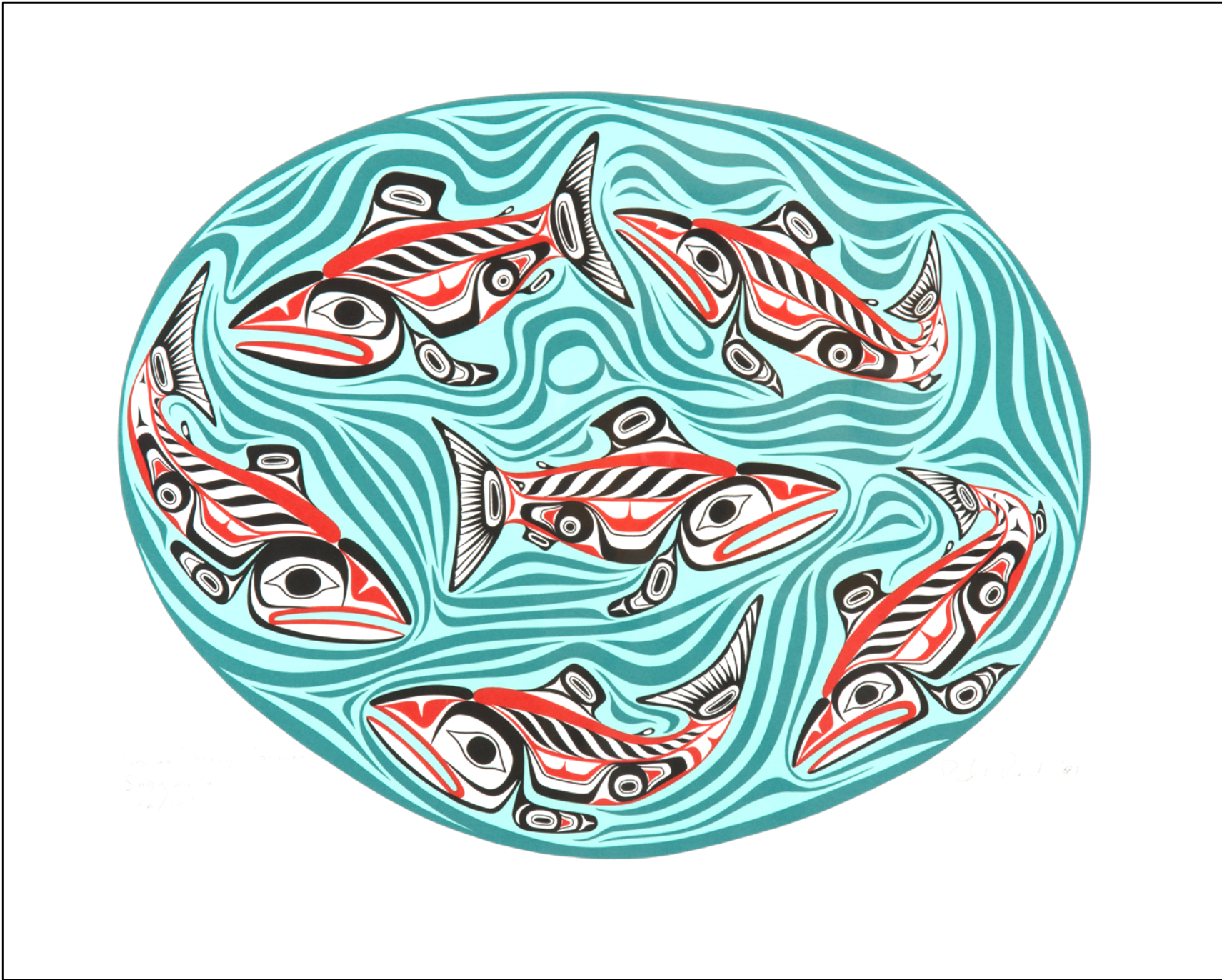


Bill Reid Eyes Template. Note: Eye shapes taken from the following artworks by Bill Reid: *Haida Sockeye Salmon*, 1981, serigraph on paper, 22 x 30 inches; *Xhuwaji/Haida Grizzly*, 1990, serigraph on paper, 22 x 22 inches; *Tsing/Haida Beaver*, 1978, serigraph on paper, 30 x 22 inches



Salmon Outline Template # 1 to optionally use in Lesson #3. Outline traced from salmon design in Bill Reid's print *Haida Sockeye Salmon*, 1981.





Bill Reid, *Haida Sockeye Salmon*, 1981, serigraph on paper, 22 x 30 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.