**BACKGROUND**

Food Web Activity (~20 min)

A food chain is a way to model the order in which living things are consumed in an ecosystem. Phytoplankton feed zooplankton, which feed juvenile salmon. This is an example of a food chain that includes three living things. Phytoplankton are also eaten by clams and oysters, which are eaten by snails, shorebirds, and people. Every food chain is connected to other ones. The combination of many food chains together is called a *food web*.

In this activity, the class will build a web using yarn. The yarn will symbolize how energy transfers from one type of matter to another when living things are consumed.

**MATERIALS**

* Killer whale plush toy
* Large ball of sturdy yarn
* Salish Sea organism cards: a set of cards with an intertidal organism and facts about its habitat, its foods and its predators.
* Print single-sided, in color on 8.5 x 11” (letter size) card-stock then fold in half and tape or glue. Hole-punch each each side of the top of each folded card to attach lanyards (yarn works fine) for wearing the cards to display during play.

**HOW TO PLAY**

1. Bring students, ball of yarn, killer whale plush toy, and food web cards outside.

2. Form a circle, and hand out food web cards (making sure to put predators across the circle from prey).

3. Have students read the back of their cards to learn about where their organisms obtain energy, and what predators they need to look out for.

4. Build the story that creates the food web, having student 1 state a connection they have to another organism in the circle. Then, throw the yarn ball across to the other organism (student 2), keeping student 1’s part of the web in their hand. Keep the yard at belly button height and keep it taught.

5. When the web is complete (all organisms have been connected and are holding yarn), balance the killer whale toy in the middle atop of the yarn. Ask, “Who would be affected if a disturbance to the ecosystem made it so zooplankton could not survive? Have zooplankton drop their part of the yarn. Ask, “And if those organisms cannot survive?” Allow the food web to unravel organism by organism until the orca drops.

6. Hold a brief discussion about the meaning of the game and how every living thing is connected to every other AND to its environment.