

Visual and Performing Arts: Protocols for Cultural Belongings and Intellectual Properties



Photo Credits: Heidi Wood

K'uuna Llnagaay, Haida Gwaii – Frog Pole

Visual and Performing Arts: Protocols for Cultural Belongings and Intellectual Property

The following quote is from “Time Immemorial: The First Peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast” by Diane Silvey.

Aboriginal cultures have distinct conceptions about cultural ownership and have strict protocols to observe these values. According to our teachings, cultural property such as songs, crest designs, dances, masks and headdresses or names belong to families. This means that the family has inherited the right to sing the song, dance the mask or use the crest design of their clan or family. Not only do they have the right to use these objects but they are also responsible for preserving, for example, the songs and dance. We are taught that it is not acceptable to infringe upon another family’s rights to a song. If you want to use that song, you are to obtain permission from the family. Therefore, it is improper for educators to use local cultural property in the classroom without permission from the appropriate sources.

The curriculum redesign asks teachers to embed Indigenous perspectives around knowledge, culture and history into all areas of the curriculum. This has raised some interesting challenges. Understanding that songs, stories, crests, and dances belong to families is important. As Diane suggests, families are responsible for preserving these. This is where the difficult topic of protocol needs to be understood. How do teachers teach about Indigenous culture without breaking protocols? Let’s look at some examples:

Popular art projects have included making replicas of:

- button blankets
- poles
- masks
- crests
- drums
- dreamcatchers

It is only appropriate to do these activities after students have learned the significance of these items in relation to the Indigenous community from which those items come from. Students can make pieces of art as ‘a reflection of’ or “inspired by” but should not replicate.

Displays should include some kind of write up that explains that students have learned about its history and meaning.

It is important to understand that artifacts from Indigenous communities have significant meaning. It is perfectly alright to teach and learn about masks, button blankets, crests, and poles but teach the meaning first. If you are unsure about protocols, connect with Indigenous staff in your district. Do your own research too.

The same can be said about songs and stories. These too belong to families and communities. Part of your reconciliation journey can be learning about your local Indigenous community and protocols. It's not easy but it is important work.

Crest Protocols

Crests are the inherited cultural property of a person, family, clan or community. They are shared with permission and passed down from generation to generation. Many artists will incorporate various styles of crests into their work. Ceremonial regalia will often have the crest of the person, family or clan and should not be recreated. Crests are directly connected to the identity and history of the owner.

Crests are found in a number of places such as on regalia, headdresses, drums, panels, and poles. Sometimes these crests would be used to signify the status of a community member, like on a Chief's copper. Other times the crest is used as a way to identify who is present at a gathering.

When sharing crests with students, it is important to always acknowledge whose crest it is, what Nation the crest is from and what the crest represents. Crests found in published works, such as Roy Henry Vickers – The Storyteller, should always reference the published source. It is not okay to duplicate crests but instead have students create their own inspired by the crest of _____. Resources such as Learning by Doing, and Learning by Designing will provide information on the form line, shapes, colours and meaning of many animals found in crests. Using animals to develop student crests is a good way to ensure a respectful teaching.



Nisga'a Nation – crest and copper (A copper is a northwest symbol of wealth and power. It is often for matriarchs and chiefs. The copper should not be used or replicated in the classroom).

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Learning by Designing: Pacific Northwest Coast Native Indian Art

Crests of the Haida

Welcome Family and Friends to Our Bighouse and our Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch

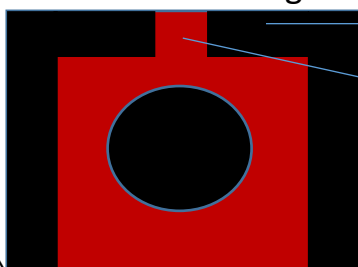
Understanding Northwest Coast Art: A Guide to Crests, Beings and Symbols

Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox

Button Blanket Protocols:

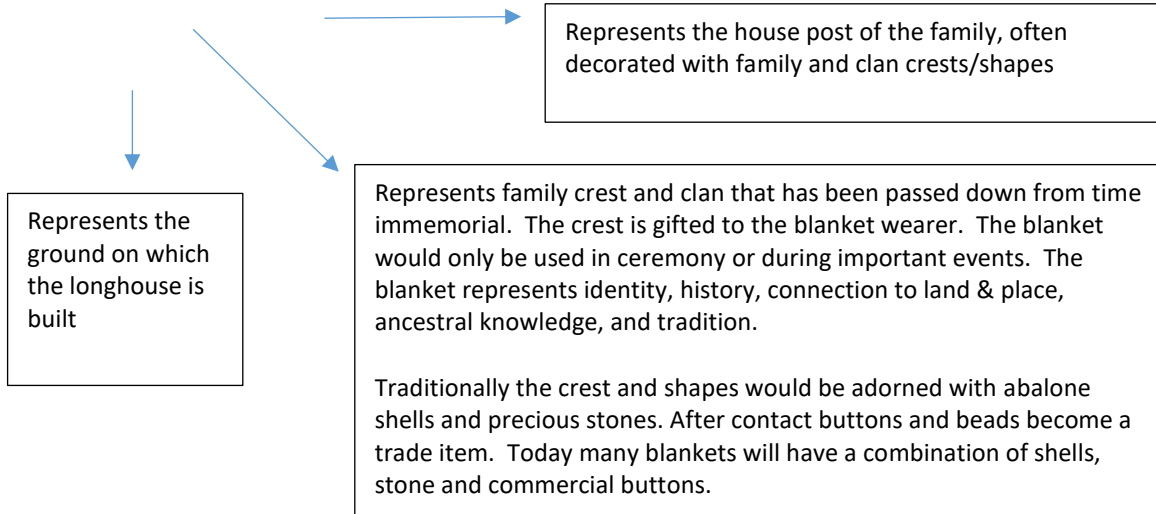
For example, many students have made button blankets as a math/art activity. Doing so ties into patterns, shapes, and symmetry. But if students don't understand the significance of the button blanket, then the intent of embedding Indigenous content has been lost. Button blankets are regalia. They are worn and danced in ceremony and only by some Indigenous communities. They were never intended to be decorative wall hangings. The designs and crests reflect the family and the dancer. The dancer is responsible to care for their regalia. So imagine if you are from a Northwest Coast Nation and walk into a school and see a display of button blankets with your family crest on it? Might you be offended? One way to continue the teachings respectful and connect to the curriculum would be to create a "button hanging in the style of _____". We encourage you to design the hanging using two or four borders but not the three as in the traditional regalia. When completed and put on display, ensure there is a write up about the teachings and the hangings were inspired by the traditional regalia of the Northwest Coast button blankets.

Traditional Teaching for a Button Blanket

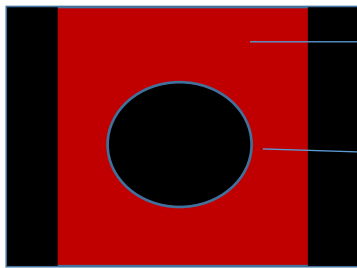


Represents the house beams of a longhouse

Represents the smoke hole in a longhouse



Classroom Connections to a Button Blanket



"This button hanging has been created in the style of traditional button blanket regalia of the _____."

"My crest represents _____ (should be something important about the student)."

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

- Welcome Family and Friends to Our Bighouse and our Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch
- The Chilkat Blanket
- Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth
- Understanding Northwest Coast Art: A Guide to Crests, Beings and Symbols
- Learning by Designing
- Learning by Doing

Pole Protocol:

The term totem pole is a colonial one. It was a term given by newcomers trying to explain and understand what they were seeing. Totems were actually important crests that represented family, communities and knowledge shared by carver. Many carvers continue to refer to our poles as totem poles as not everyone is able to identify the types or importance of each pole. To change this colonial

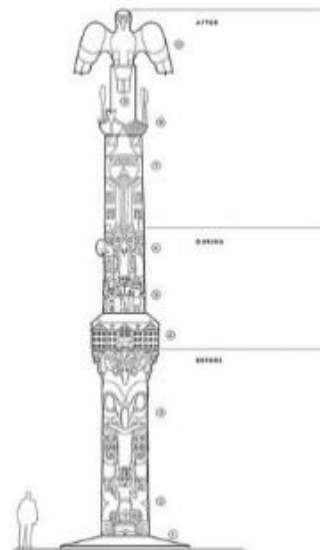
stereotype it is important to begin teaching the accurate names of each pole and what the crests represent. In many cases poles can be identified as either:

1. monumental (free standing poles that have many crests and tell an important narrative or history – often explained from the bottom to the top),
2. mortuary (often used to house the remains of an ancestor)
3. memorial (to honour an ancestor or someone who has passed),
4. frontal post (part of the longhouse or bighouse) , and
5. welcome post (at the front entrance of a longhouse or bighouse).

Monumental poles or welcome posts are the most common form of pole we see along the coast. These are the two types of poles we would recommend working with in the classroom if you are connecting an activity with the curriculum. It would not be appropriate to use a mortuary or memorial pole.

When in doubt on the correct term for a pole, it is respectful to refer to one as a “name of the Nation pole” ie: Haida pole, or a carved pole from the “name of Nation”.

UBC – Reconciliation Pole by master carver, 7idansuu (Edenshaw) Jim Hart (Haida) – monumental pole



WHAT STORY DOES RECONCILIATION POLE TELL?

Haida poles are read from bottom to top.

1. At the bottom the base of the pole we witness something life and its cycle.
2. At the top the legs of Bear Mother to change (Haida), after stands on top of Salmon House and means a ritual to ensure their return.
3. Bear Mother holds her two sons, Raven built out from between Bear Mother's Ears.
4. A Canadian Indian residential school house, a government institution system designed to assimilate and strip so all Indigenous cultures across Canada.
5. The children smiling and supporting one another are wearing their school uniforms and numbers by which each child was identified. Their hair are not depicted, as they were cut/groomed during those times.
6. Four Spirit Figures like whale, moose, bear, eagle, etc. These animals are supernatural. They symbolize the ancestors, environment, worldly reality, and the cultures in which they are rooted, that each child came from.
7. The mother, father, and their children symbolize the family unit and are dressed in traditional high ranking of the symbolizing revitalization and strength of Haida.
8. Above the family is the canoe and longhouse (shown traveling forward), side by side. The canoe represents the First Nations and governments across Canada. The longhouse represents Canada's governments and Canadian people. This symbolizes respectfully because differences, but most importantly dialogues of traveling forward together side by side.
9. Four Cannons, cannons to represent the position of the war, symbolize and celebrate cultural diversity.
10. Eagle represents power, leadership, determination, and speaks to a undeniable direction forward.

The upper half covering parts of the pole is a representation of the many children who attend Canada's Indian Residential Schools – each represents one child.



UVic First Peoples House– Wife/Mother – by Doug Lafortune (Coast Salish) – Welcome Post

This post shows how the families accept the visitors and welcome them to sit and share a meal, news and stories.

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Spirit Transformed: A Journey from Tree to Totem

The First Totem Pole

Totem Pole Carving: Bringing a Log to Life

The Making of a Haida Totem Pole

Tree of Life Kit

Understanding Northwest Coast Art: A Guide to Crests, Beings and Symbols

Learning by Designing

Learning by Doing

Masks

Masks represent an important ceremonial tradition for many First Nations cultures. Masks would traditional only be used in sacred dances or for community members of highest esteem. Ceremonial masks would “display animals, humans, forces of nature and supernatural beings.” (Bill Reid Centre) Today masks are a popular form of “visual art” that is hung on the wall. There are two types of masks: those that are used in ceremony and those that are made for commercial enterprise. When working with masks in the classroom it is important to distinguish between sacred masks for ceremony and those that are created for the purpose of decorative art. To avoid confusion, we encourage you to only create masks that are connected to the land around you, for example animal masks. We know that crests are the cultural inherited property of the person, family or clan so have students create their own interpretation of what the animal may look like. Focus on key characteristics such as raven has a straight beak with proportional wings, eagle has a curved beak with large strong wings, hummingbird has a long beak with tiny delicate wings, etc. Students can learn

about the form line and shapes that are used in Westcoast art and create their own inspired work of art.

Remember to always include the write up that acknowledges where the inspiration came from and that the masks created are inspired by and an interpretation of _____.



Raven Hamat'sa Headdress – Henry Speck Jr.
(Kwakwaka'wakw)

Used during winter ceremonies (T'seka), one of the two sacred ceremonies of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

The masks of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast are powerful objects that assist us in defining our place in the cosmos. In a world of endless change and complexity, masks offer a continuum for Native people to acknowledge our connection to the universe.

-Chief Robert Joseph (Down from the Shimmering Sky, 1998)

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

The Cedar Plank Mask

Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast

Learning by Designing

Drums

Drums for many Nations represent a form of medicine. It is the heartbeat of our ancestors and the connection between the spiritual and physical. Drumming protocols will vary for each Nation. In some communities only the men drum, while in other communities both men and women participate in different drumming ceremonies and song. When making a drum it is important to have a knowledge keeper or cultural teacher lead the learning. Drum making should not be taken lightly. Following protocols, the first drum should be given away, as is the protocol when making something for the first time.

Drumming in the classroom should come with appropriate teachings around who made the drum, what Nation the drum is from, and the drumming protocols of that Nation. Always acknowledge that the drumming is your own interpretation. Never try to recreate a song with drumming unless you have been given specific permissions and teachings as each song is the cultural property of a person, family, community or Nation.

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

The Drum Calls Softly

Canoe Kids – vol. 1

Grandfather Why Do We Use the Drum?

Dreamcatchers

Dreamcatchers have been used for many years as the check box “craft” that uses First Nations connections. What is not always known is that dreamcatchers are not from BC First Nations. The teachings have been shared from the Ojibwe and Anishinabek. Dreamcatchers were not actually to keep away bad dreams. They were actually made to help a person on a healing journey. The making of the dreamcatcher required spiritual teachings and community involvement. Each of the materials used had special meaning. The process could take seasons or even years. Each stone that was added or adornment represented a part of the healing. When the journey was complete, the dreamcatcher was burned to carry away the pain the person was seeking healing for.

Contemporary teachings are shared through an Ojibwe story of Asibikaasi (Spider Women). The story tells of how the Ojibwe went to each of the four corners of the land. Asibikaasi needed help weaving webs for all the new babies in all four corners and so mothers, sisters and grandmothers all helped. The circle was to represent how gilizis (sun) would travel each day across the sky. The small hole in the centre is where the good thoughts or dreams stay and the bad ones are able to pass through.

When making a dream catcher ensure you share whose teachings it is from and that this is your interpretation of a dream catcher.

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Grandmother, What is a dreamcatcher?

Dreamcatcher

Medicine Bags

Medicine bags are considered sacred. They should not be made in classrooms without proper instruction, protocols and teachings. Medicine bags will often carry the four medicines (sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar) as well as sacred items to help guide the wearer through their life. Medicine bags are often worn around the neck. Not all Nations use medicine bags. Instead each Nation will have its own teaching of the medicines and follow protocols on when, where and who uses them.



Traditional Medicines and Bag

Variations of medicine bags that can be used in the classroom may include identity bags/boxes or memory bags. Students can create their own example of a bag that holds special items, such as photos or objects. These items help share who what is important to the child.



Identity Box example

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Grandfather, what is a medicine wheel?

Visual Arts: Artist replications (dot art, FN art, beading)

As with any art, learning about the style, the artist, the medium and the story behind the piece, is extremely important. This is no different when looking at First Nations, Inuit or Metis visual arts. Art can be created in the style of the artist or the Nation, such as using shapes from west coast art like ovoids, split- U, etc. When using specific styles, colours there should always be a teaching around what the shape means, why the colours were used, and how the images were created. Students are able to create their own interpretation or be inspired by the art but should not copy or recreate a piece specifically. When displayed the finished visual should have an information card that acknowledges the original art, Nation and story.

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Storyteller: The Art of Roy Henry Vickers

Wapikwaniy: A beginner's guide to Metis floral beadwork

The Flower Beadwork People

Learning by Designing: Pacific Northwest Coast Native Indian Art

Smudging

"Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations, which involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth. The four sacred medicines used in First Nations' ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. The most common medicines used in a smudge are sweetgrass, sage and cedar.

Smudging has been passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is done. Historically, Métis and Inuit people did not smudge; however, today many Métis and Inuit people have incorporated smudging into their lives.

A community Grandmother presented the following as the steps and rationale for this cleansing process we call smudge to Niji Mahkwa School in Winnipeg:

- *We smudge to clear the air around us.*
- *We smudge to clean our minds so that we will have good thoughts of others.*
- *We smudge our eyes so that we will only see the good in others.*

- *We smudge our ears so that we will only listen to positive things about others.*
- *We smudge our mouths so that we will only speak of well of others.*
- *We smudge our whole being so we will portray only the good part of our self through our actions.*

Smudging allows people to stop, slow down, become mindful and centred. This allows people to remember, connect and be grounded in the event, task or purpose at hand. Smudging also allows people to let go of something negative. Letting go of things that inhibit a person from being balanced and focused comes from the feeling of being calm and safe while smudging. The forms of smudging will vary from nation to nation but are considered by all to be a way of cleansing oneself. Smudging is part of “the way things are done” and is part of living a good life.”

~Manitoba Aboriginal Education and Advanced Learning 2014
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/publications/pdf/smudging_guidelines.pdf

Smudging should not be done without the presence and teaching from a First Nations cultural teacher.



Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

Grandmother, What is smudging?

Cedar Brushing

Cedar is often called the “tree of life”. It is used for homes, tools, clothing, technology, and medicine. As medicine it is often used among some Coastal Nations as a way to cleanse or brush away negative energy. Keeping cedar in the classroom or hanging it above the doorway is a respectful way in which to acknowledge the power and importance of cedar medicine. It is not appropriate to brush students or have a cedar cleansing or brushing ceremony without an elder’s teachings and presence.

Seven Teachings

Often called the Seven Sacred Teachings or the Grandfather Teachings, the seven teachings are the cultural protocols of how we act and work with others. They include: honesty, wisdom, courage, humility, love, truth, and respect.

Traditionally the seven teachings are from sacred knowledge of the Anishinabek. As sacred teachings or 'grandfather' teachings, they are the cultural property of the Anishinabek. However, the "virtues" that are shared are common among all people. When referring to the teachings, acknowledge the Anishinabek and refer to them as the Seven Teachings. When using the term Seven Teachings it indicates that these are your understanding of the teachings.



Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

The Seven Teaching Stories

Grandmother, What are the seven teachings?

The Seven Sacred Teachings of White Buffalo Calf Women

Stories, Songs and Dance

Stories, Songs and dance are the cultural property of individuals, families or Nations. Permission to perform or share unpublished representations are required. Published resources in the Aboriginal Resource Centre have been vetted for authenticity and upon publication assume the story or video will be shared. Replication of songs and dance must be done only with permission. A variety of songs, and resources have been approved for District use and can be retaught and performed. Those songs are on the Fine Arts home page or the Aboriginal Education Teacher Weebly.

Classroom activities to support song and dance can include writing to a piece of music, creating an artist interpretation to a dance or choreographing a dance to a published and authentic story.



Hannah – Show Us The Way



Hide & Seek

Aboriginal Resource Centre suggested titles:

www.bit.ly/sd36weebly - Aboriginal Learning Teacher Weebly (District Videos: Show Us the Way, Hide & Seek, lyrics and instrumentals)

Secret of the Dance
Let's Dance
Music and Dance
Steps in Time II: Metis Dance and Instruction

Sample write-up for display

This _____ has been created in the style of _____. We/I were/was influenced by the teachings from the _____ Nation. We/I have learned _____.

Inviting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper into your classroom

Most communities have protocols in place when working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This may include showing respect by offering a gift or honorarium to compensate them for their knowledge and time. Please contact Paula James for specific information on honorariums. You do not need to compensate district staff but a card thanking them for their gift of knowledge is appropriate.

On the day you are expecting your guest speaker, please ensure to follow these procedures.

- Have a student greet your speaker at the office and walk him/her down to your classroom. Have multiple students available if your guest is bringing in objects to share with the classroom.
- Ensure there is a comfortable chair for your guest to sit on and ensure to have a glass of water.
- Ask your guest how they would like to be introduced. Many will say they will introduce themselves.

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- At the end of the presentation, please make time to thank your guest speaker. This is the time you would gift them a card or honorarium. It is appropriate to ask a student to do this.
- Have a student(s) escort your guest from the classroom and provide help if he/she needs it carrying materials back to their car.

Be sure that you have allotted adequate time for your guest speaker. Prepare your students for the visit. Make sure your students have some background knowledge relating to the topic being shared and remind them that elders and knowledge keepers should be treated with respect. Ask them to be mindful of their questions.

Although many resource guides suggest contacting your local First Nation communities for names of guest speakers and presenters. Know that our local communities may not have the resources to support you in this way. Please contact Paula James or your Aboriginal Enhancement staff for support in contacting First Nation communities.