

LESSON PLANS

CONNECTIONS TO ENVIRONMENT: TRADITIONS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLE

Recommended grades: 1 – 3

Time required: 4 – 30 minute class lessons

Materials: large paper, markers

INTRODUCTION

What is a “tradition”? How do you honour tradition in your culture or community? In this lesson, students will understand the traditions of the Coast Salish people. While exploring their own culture, students will learn about the different ways the Coast Salish people honour community, the land and story through art.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the term “tradition” and identify traditions in their own family as well as the tradition of the Coast Salish people.
- Understand the traditional way of life of the Coast Salish people and their connection to their environment.
- Identify natural resources common to the Coast Salish people by looking critically at artifacts.
- Create a Coast Salish-inspired work of art.

IMAGES

Please print for use in activity



Maynard, R.

Salish people camped at Hell's Gate, Fraser River, British Columbia

Photograph

Collection of Glenbow Museum NA-860-12



Salish women, British Columbia

Photograph

Collection of Glenbow Museum NA-2069-5

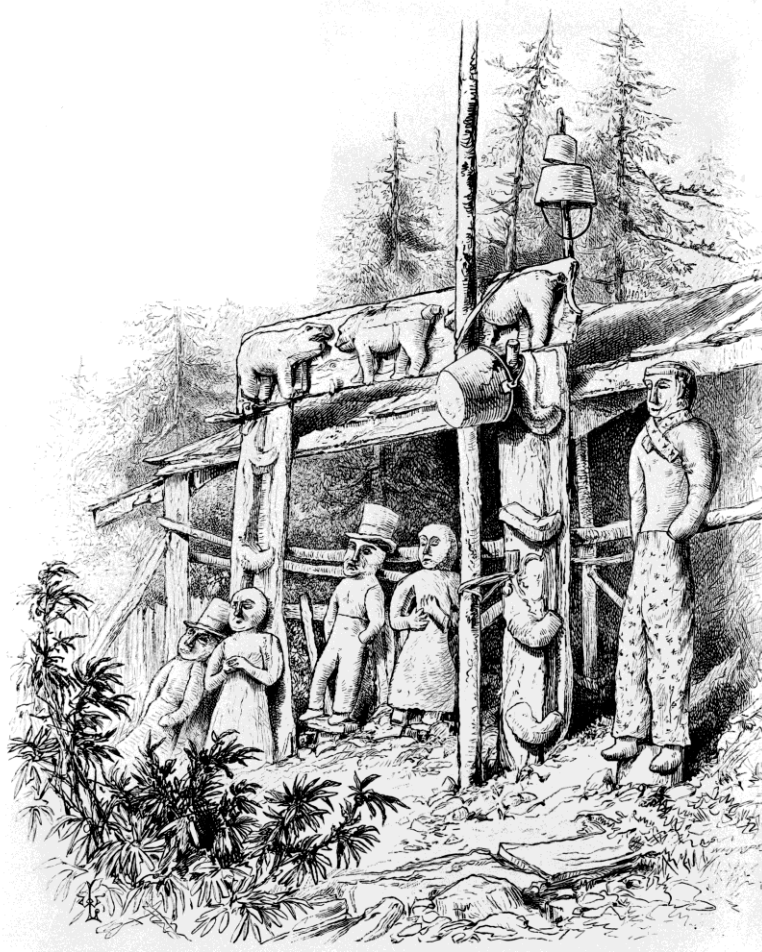


Curtis, Edward S

Salish canoes on Shoalwater bay, British Columbia

Photograph

Collection of Glenbow Museum NA-1700-163



Engraved by Edward Whymper

Salish graves, Chapman's Bar, British Columbia

Collection of Glenbow Museum NA-843-40

ACTIVITY PROCEDURES

WHAT IS OUR COMMUNITY?

Recommended grades: 1 – 3

Time required: 4 – 30 minute class lessons

Materials: large paper, markers

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As a class, discuss the term **community** using the following suggested questions:

*What is a **community**?*

What are the characteristics of your community? What jobs do people do? What types of houses do people live in? What is the landscape like where you live? (Geographic forms, historic buildings, natural resources, climate. etc.)

A community is made up of many different types of people. As a class, discuss the diversity within the classroom. What makes each of us unique? (Cultures, backgrounds, special skills, etc.) How do our differences work together to make our community unique? (Food, clothing, celebrations, holidays, etc.)

2. Introduce the term **tradition** using the following suggested questions:

*Traditions are beliefs, values and ways of acting that are a part of a community for a long time. What are examples of **traditions** in your family? School? Community? (celebrations, special events, holidays)*

3. Using a large piece of paper, create a classroom mind-map. Place your community's name in the centre circle. On one side of the paper, brainstorm characteristics of your community. On the other side, list the values, beliefs, celebrations and other characteristics that define your community's traditions.

Thinking Further

Ask students to bring in an example of a family tradition (such as a recipe) or piece of clothing. Have a show-and-tell.

Research the origins of your community. Visit a local history museum or invite a local historian to visit your class.

WHO ARE THE COAST SALISH PEOPLE?

Materials: Mind map from previous activity, Map, large paper

1. Together as a group, introduce the Coast Salish people. Look at the map of the region included with this package.
2. The Coast Salish people live in the area now known as British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. For thousands of years, the Pacific Ocean provided the Coast Salish people with food. The climate is moderate, rarely getting very warm or very cold. This area has an abundance of natural resources including fish, forests and minerals.
3. Explain that students are going to look carefully at art and other images to learn about the **traditional** Coast Salish community. Explain the term **traditional** versus tradition.

4. Tradition is a way of acting that remains the same over time.
Traditional, when describing First Nations and other indigenous groups, refers to the values and practices that developed long ago, before contact with other groups, especially Europeans.
5. Looking at the classroom mind-map created in *Part One* recap the characteristics of your community (food, clothing, houses, buildings, jobs, environment, natural resources, etc.).
6. Divide students into small groups and give each group a copy of the images. Ask the groups look critically at the images to find evidence of the Coast Salish community's characteristics. Look for evidence of food, clothing, shelter, jobs, transportation, climate and natural resources.

IMAGES

Please print in colour if possible



Basket

Coast Salish

mid 20th century

cedar root, cherry bark

AA 448

This wedge-shaped basket is made of cedar root splints wrapped in split cedar roots. Cherry bark is imbricated on the sides. The inside is blackened. What might make the inside of this basket black? This basket may have been used as a cooking basket to steam clams, to cook a fish soup or to prepare plant foods.



Creasers

Coast Salish

mid 20th century

cedar wood, alder wood, paint

AA 980

Can you see the groove along one side? Women pulled this tool across the surface of the fibrous leaves of cattail plants to crush the fibres, making the leaves more pliable. The material was then easier to weave into mats that were hung along house walls to provide insulation.

Cattails grow in marshy areas that are also home to ducks, gulls and shorebirds. When Salish women gathered and processed the plant materials, it seemed as though the birds were accompanying them. Were the birds helping the women in their work?

The entire creaser seems to be a figure. What animal does it remind you of? Could this be a bird? Creasers were often carved into bird figures.

**Coat**

Musqueam First Nation (Coast Salish)

1985

Made by Robyn Sparrow

sheep wool

AA 2134

This coat was woven using a twining technique. Twining is when two strips are twisted around each other between each pair of warp threads. Dark brown and grey triangles enhance the sleeves and back.

This coat is unique because it shows how men and women worked together to make it. Joe Becker made one of the looms on which the coat was woven and the buttons were carved by Jim Kew. The buttons are carved to look like two animals. One is a plumed bird in flight. The other is a wolf.

The design of this coat is based on traditional coats that can be seen in historic photographs of the Musqueam people. It was made by Robyn Sparrow and woven on an upright Salish loom. Her weaving technique is the same that was used to make the wool blankets.

7. Gather groups together to share their findings. Create another mind-map on a large piece of paper. This time, put “Coast Salish” in the centre. On one side of the mind-map, ask students to share their evidence about the Coast Salish community. Leave the other side, for traditions, blank for now.

Thinking Further

Track the weather in Victoria, BC for several days. Look at the annual precipitation and average temperatures. How is it the same or different from where you live?

Fishing provided the Coast Salish people with an abundance of food. Research the fishing industry in this area today. How has it changed? How is it still a part of today's community?

WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONS OF THE COAST SALISH?

Materials: mind maps from previous activities, Images

Among Northwest Coast people the cedar is considered sacred because it provides all the essentials for daily life. In the central coast area one of the most important dance ceremonies is centered on the Red Cedar.

Carvers like the wood because of its softness, straight grain, light weight and built in fungicide (Thujaplicin) which make it perfect for carving.

There are two types of cedar, red and yellow, both of which are aromatic woods. Of the two types, red cedar is the more popular choice because of its warm colour and rich inviting scent. Both types of cedars are long lived with the oldest ones being around a thousand years old.

For the Coast Salish peoples, red cedar is the traditional choice of wood. It is known as the “tree of life”. Historically, the Coastal Salish people of Vancouver Island make everything from the various parts of this tree. For that reason, the cedar has been of the utmost importance to the people of the Cowichan Valley.

Canoes, paddles, bailers, houses and other structures were all made of cedar. Even clothing such as hats and capes were made from the inner bark of the cedar tree. The bark of the cedar tree was also used for mats and baskets to carry many foodstuffs such as berries, dried clams or roots and tubers.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Refer back to the classroom mind-map of your community. What are traditions? What are traditions within your community? The Coast Salish people had many traditions within their community. Looking back on what students learned in the previous activity about the Coast Salish community, show the following images and discuss the questions below:

What do you see?

How would you use this?

What do you think this is made of?

Why is this object important to the Coast Salish way of life?

2. Explain that students will look closely at other Coast Salish objects using these same questions to learn about traditions within their culture. Allow time for students to look carefully at the artifacts. Ask each group to present their findings. While students are sharing the information they learned about the objects, return to mind map of the Coast Salish. On the “traditions” area, begin listing some of the findings.



Bailer

Coast Salish

early 20th century

cedar bark, cedar wood, fish cord

AA 1317

Canoes were used to travel along the coast, as well as up the many inlets and rivers. Water always spilled into the vessels so it was important to bail the water to keep the boat afloat and the paddlers dry.

Can you see the cord that ties the bailer together? This is the same type of cord that was woven into gill nets used in commercial fishing. There are no metal parts in this bailer.



Frog Bowl

Capilano First Nation (Coast Salish)

2003

cedar wood, bronze, abalone shell fragments

Made by "Tyee" or Floyd Joseph from the Capilano First Nation

AA 2182

The shape of this bowl is adapted from a traditional feast dish that would have held eulachon oil. Eulachon is a very fatty fish and its oil is considered a delicacy by people living in the Pacific Northwest. The oil was highly valued and traded amongst all the people living along the coast and interior. This bowl was carved for sale as a work of art, rather than as a functional utensil.

Though small and peaceful, Frog is very important. Frog's singing in the spring announces the start of a new cycle of life. Frog tells us to put aside the things of winter, such as winter dancing and potlatching, and to begin preparing for next winter's activities. Frog's job is as important as the arrival of *Centeki*, the first salmon (sockeye) or *Pekelanew*, the moon which turns the leaves white. As the keeper of the sacred seasons, Frog is often honoured in Coast Salish legends and stories, and appears in art works, totem poles and house posts.

Can you see the vibrant blues and greens in the eyes? These are made of abalone shells, which are full of vibrant colours. They make the figure come alive!

Staff

Coast Salish
early 20th century
wood, paint
AA 245

Can you see dragons, griffins, serpents that appear as salamanders and various fish on this staff? These represent the spirit protectors of a ceremonial dancer.

The dancer instructed the carver which animals were his spirit protectors. The carver often portrayed these figures in a vague, amorphous way so that they could not be readily recognized by the people watching the dance.

Look closely at the edges of the staff. Can you see some rings? This is where deer hooves were attached. As a dancer waited his turn, he would shake the staff back and forth to make the hooves rattle.

These staffs are called *quitsuline* in the Salish language.





Paddle

Coast Salish
mid 20th century
yellow cedar, paint
AA 1131

This small paddle is made from a single piece of yellow cedar. Can you see figures painted onto the surface? These represent bears and whales.

Why would these animal figures be portrayed on a paddle? They have significant meaning to Coast Salish people. These animals appear in the ancient stories of the Salish, bringing them important ceremonies, teaching them the proper ways to behave and forming kinship relationships between the humans and non-human people of the Salish world.

Small paddles such as this were probably carved by men for sale to non-Native tourists and art collectors.



Basket

Quinalt First Nation (Coast Salish)
mid 20th century
spruce root, cherry bark, leather, cord
AA 546

Can you see how three different colours have been used on this basket? To make it, the woman artist split pieces of brown cedar root and wrapped them around a splint foundation. She then coiled these strands in a concentric circle, starting at the centre of the bottom. Red and white cherry bark has been added using a technique called *imbrication* on top of the cedar root.

As a result of this process, it looks like two different coloured backgrounds were used with the red bark making a pattern. This technique required a great deal of planning and skill. The artist used both positive and negative space to create this stunning effect.

There are leather thongs and cord loops that are tied through holes along the top edge of the basket. Why would these cords be attached to a basket? They may have been used to suspend the basket for cooking. Notice how blackened the inside is. This may be a result of its use for cooking.

But how do you cook with a basket? They probably can't be held over a fire, but the very tight weave makes the vessel watertight. The basket could then be filled with liquid and/or food and heated rocks were then added to make the contents hot.



Hat

Coast Salish
late 19th century
cedar bark
AA 549

Hats made from woven cedar bark were common on the Northwest Coast of North America. The bark is closely woven, using a twined technique. Notice how a separate band has been woven and then sewn into the inner band. Can you see the reinforcing strips of bark on the crown? These hats are so skillfully woven that they are watertight.

Thinking Further

Research indigenous trees in your community. Collect leaves from different trees and identify them. Discuss ways trees are important to your community for people, animals and the environment.

ART ACTIVITY

WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONS OF THE COAST SALISH?

Recommended Grades: 1 – 3

Time Required: 3 – 30 minute classes

Materials: Newspaper, Masking tape, Paper maché (see recipes below), Trays for paper maché mixture, Paint, Brushes, Sponges for clean Up

PAPER MACHÉ RECIPES:

Recipe #1 – Flour, water

- Stir three parts water into one part flour until the mixture is smooth and creamy.
- To make the paste last longer, add a few drops of oil or Wintergreen (optional).

Recipe #2 – Wallpaper paste, water

- Mix one part wallpaper paste with three parts water (available at any hardware store).
- Stir well.

Recipe #3 – Glue, water, paper

- Mix two parts white glue with one part warm water.
- Stir well.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Reflect on the community and traditions of the Coast Salish people. As a class, discuss the connections between community and traditions. How are traditions shaped by a community's people, environment and values? How are communities known by their traditions? An example of this is shown in the following images. What do you see? How would this be used? What is this made of?
2. One tradition of the Coast Salish people is the carving of figures on house posts. Winter villages were built near the water so they would be close to the canoes. The most common winter house was a shed-roof house made of a framework of posts and beams with a removable roof and wall planks. Often, these removable pieces would be used in the summer shelters. House posts were structurally important to the houses of the Coast Salish, but they were also culturally important. House posts supported the beams that were the basic framework of the house, but they were often decorated with stories or the long-ago history of the house owners or protective "*spirit beings*" that guarded the people in that house. Show Appendix, this is a drawing of a Coast Salish home. Can you find the different carvings and house posts?
3. Discuss the designs and ask students to think about an animal that is important to them. If students had a house post in their home, what animal would be on it? Sketch the animal on a scrap piece of paper for practice. If desired, look at how the Coast Salish artists represented animals through formlines and shapes.

4. Rip newspaper into thin strips and place paper maché mixture into shallow trays (meat Styrofoam trays work well).
5. Demonstrate how to create a form from newspaper and masking tape. Once the form is complete, demonstrate how to cover the form with layers of newspaper dipped in the paper maché mixture. Make sure the paper is wet, but not dripping. Cover the entire form with several layers and allow to dry completely. Once dry (a few days), using tempera or acrylic paints, paint your paper maché animal. You could use colours and lines as in Coast Salish design.



Post

Coast Salish
early 20th century
cedar, paint
AA 214

This post portrays a moon symbol framing a human figure. It is a very unusual item. While some cultures on the Northwest Coast have stories about women who were pulled up to the moon, there is no indication that the figure on this post represents a woman.

Salish people lived in houses made of cedar planks that were attached to large house posts made of cedar tree trunks. These posts, both inside and outside the house, supported the roof beams and were often carved with figures that represented ancient stories recalling the history of the family living within the house. We do not know the story that is reflected by this figure.