

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
ART MUSEUM

Artful Adventures

Pacific Northwest





Welcome to the Princeton University Art Museum. Our collection of art from the Northwest Coast of North America is on the lower level of the Museum, in the gallery of art of the ancient Americas. At the bottom of the stairs, turn right. Walk through the Greek gallery and turn right again, into the gallery of art of the ancient Americas.

Today we are going to take a journey to the Northwest Coast. Here is a map of North America. **Find the Northwest Coast and draw a circle around it.**



Totem Poles

At the far end of this gallery is a totem pole. The Tlingit and other indigenous people from the Northwest Coast have been making totem poles for hundreds of years. Sometimes they are decorations, attached to a house to identify the people who live there and demonstrate that they are wealthy. Other times they are freestanding, often created to honor someone who has died.

What do you use to decorate your house?

The raising of a new totem pole frequently took place during a large celebration called a potlatch. Relatives and friends would come from neighboring villages to attend large parties that would last for days.

When does your family have big parties?

Potlatch means “to give away.” The host of a potlatch would save money for years so that he could afford lavish food and the gifts he would give to his guests. Activities would include dancing, singing, and storytelling.

What activities do you have at your parties?



Originally, this totem pole was 60 feet tall—as tall as a six-story building! What you see now is only the top of the pole. The lower portion of the pole would have been carved with animals, symbols, and mythological creatures that represented the history and characteristics of the family who hired the artists who made this pole. It would have been painted with colors, like red, blue, and black. Because totem poles are placed outside, the paint washed away over time. If you look closely, you can still see traces of paint on this pole.

What colors do you see?

With your hands behind your back, take a peek at the back of this pole. Can you see the opening carved into it? This is a mortuary totem pole, which means that it was made to celebrate the life of someone who died. This totem pole was made for a woman, and the opening held her remains.

The carving on the front of the pole is a sculpture of the woman who died. We know that she must have been very important. Look carefully at the woman's lips. She is wearing a wooden plug, called a *labret*, in the same way that some people have pierced ears or lips. Only wealthy women had these ornaments.

Now look at her hat. Do you see the two rings that are carved into it? They tell us that during her lifetime she was wealthy enough to have hosted two potlatches.

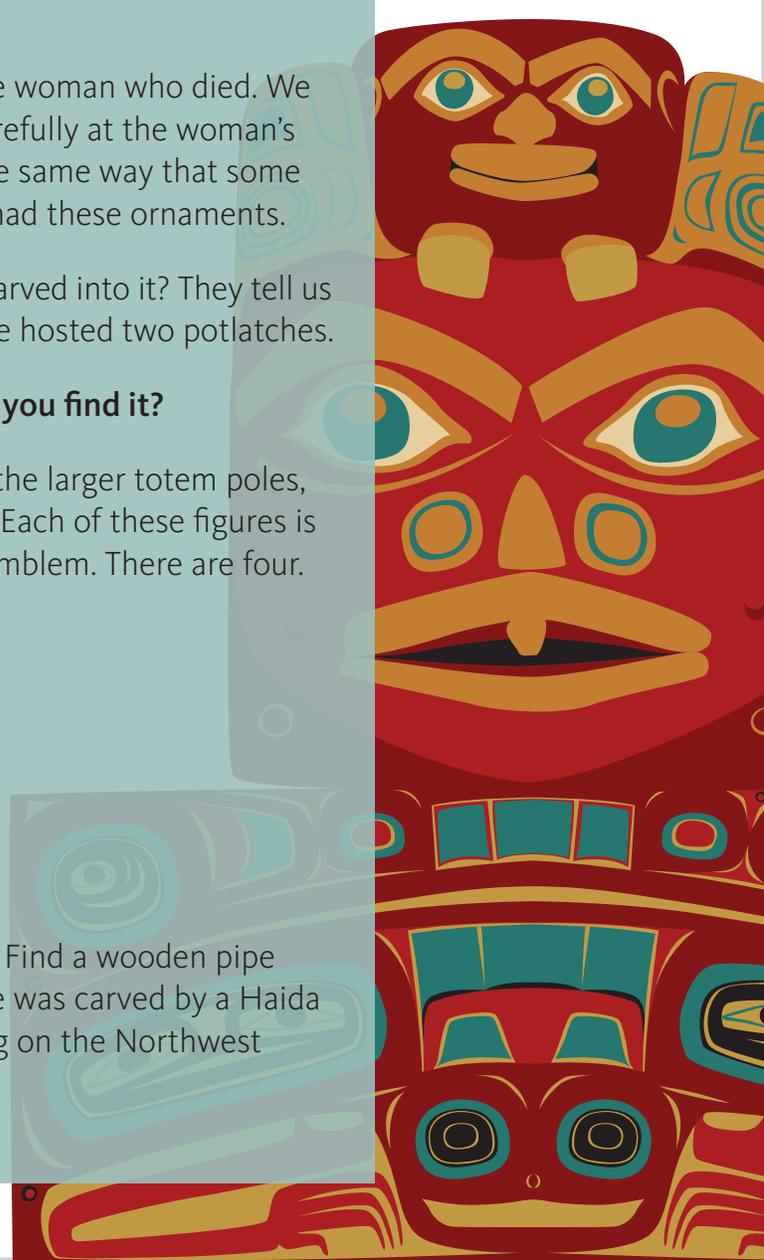
In the wall case to your right is a small totem pole. **Can you find it?**

This totem pole also was carved by a Tlingit artist. Like the larger totem poles, it includes several figures stacked on top of each other. Each of these figures is called a totem, which is an animal or plant used as an emblem. There are four.

Can you tell what they are?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Now turn around and look in the case on the back wall. Find a wooden pipe that has been carved to look like a totem pole. This pipe was carved by a Haida artist. The Haida are a group of indigenous people living on the Northwest Coast of North America, near the Tlingit.



ACTIVITY

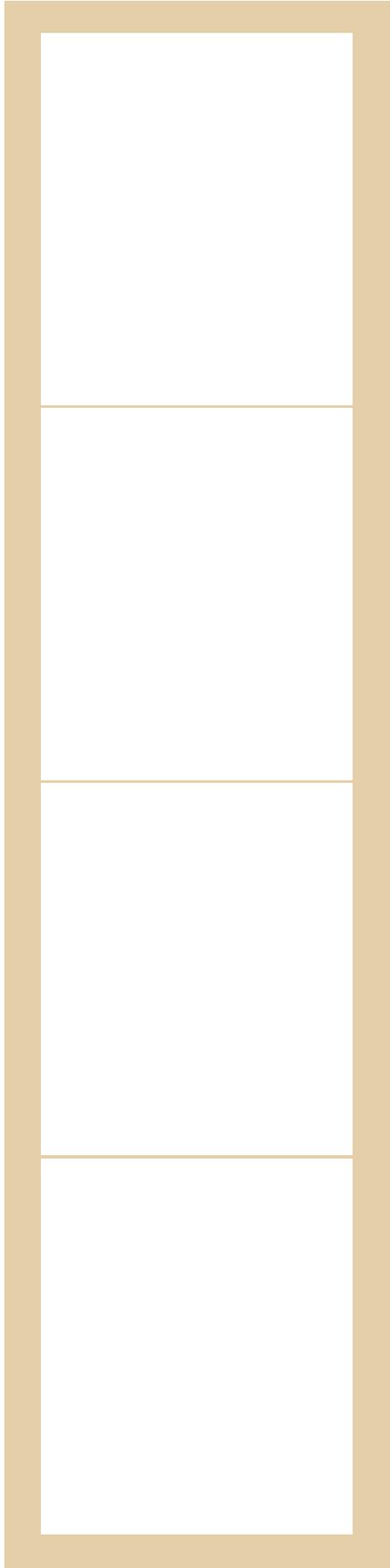
Follow the instructions below to draw a totem pole that reveals something about you and your family.

In the top box, draw a picture of yourself or a special person you would like to celebrate.

In the second box, draw the first letter of your last name.

In the third box, draw something that represents your family, like your pet or a special country's flag.

In the bottom box, draw your favorite animal.

A vertical rectangular frame with a gold border, divided into four equal horizontal sections by three horizontal lines. This frame is intended for drawing a totem pole.

Animals

Animals are very important to the Northwest Coast peoples. They believe that animals and people are closely related. In their stories, animals often have human characteristics, and people and animals frequently change form from one species to another. The Haida and Tlingit are hunters and fishers. Although they depend on animals for food, they follow strict rituals when killing animals, including asking for forgiveness and thanking the animal for giving its life.

ACTIVITY

If you could design animal masks based on your life,

- Which animals would be important?

- Do you rely on these animals for survival or companionship?

- Which colors, patterns, or shapes would you use?

- What materials would you use to make the mask?





Masks

Storytelling, along with traditional song and dance ceremonies, plays an important role in Tlingit and Haida culture. The storytellers, dancers, and singers wear elaborate costumes and masks. There are two masks in this case that could have been used to represent characters in the story you just read: Raven and the moon. Can you find them?

The Raven mask, made of wood and metal, has a large beak with a moveable jaw. It's painted blue, red, black, and white. Imagine someone wearing this mask along with an elaborate costume consisting of a tunic, or long shirt, leggings, and magnificently woven blankets, embellished with painted animal hide, embroidery, shells, beads, fur, feathers, and animal teeth.

The moon mask is a little more difficult to recognize. The face is round, like the moon, and it is painted blue with a red border. The eyebrows are heavy and the eyes are half-closed, as if the moon is falling asleep.



Dance Rattles

The Tlingit, Haida, and other Northwest Coast clans also used musical instruments like rattles and drums in ceremonies. There are several rattles in the first wall case, the one with the totem pole of a man standing on a killer whale. They are elaborately carved and painted to look like animals or combinations of animals. Can you find them?

I spy:

- > a pair of wooden rattles, one carved and painted to look like the heads of five frogs and the other a chiton (a small marine animal with an oval shell)
- > an oyster catcher (a bird with a long beak) with two people on its back, sitting between the horns of a mountain goat
- > a raven's body with a hawk's face and a reclining man on its back (unpainted)
- > a raven's body with a hawk's face and a reclining man on its back (painted)

Thank you for joining us today to explore the art of the Northwest Coast. Don't forget to stop at the Information Desk to collect the Northwest Coast sticker for your Artful Adventures passport. We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Princeton University Art Museum and that you will join us for another Artful Adventure.

ART PROJECT: MAKE YOUR OWN TOTEM POLE!

You will need:

A cardboard paper towel tube
Construction paper of different colors, including brown
Scissors
Tape or glue
Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Directions:

1. Cut a piece of brown construction paper long enough to wrap around the paper towel tube.
2. Tape or glue the construction paper around the paper towel tube.
3. Draw four animal faces on the colored construction paper. Each animal should be about 2.5–3 inches tall. It is a good idea to have some pictures of totem poles to look at. You might use different colors of construction paper to make three-dimensional features, like a bird's beak.
4. Tape or glue the faces to the paper towel tube, one on top of the other. It is ok if the one on the top sticks out above the top of the tube.
5. If you made a bird, cut a pair of wings and glue or tape them to the back of your pole.



SUGGESTED READING

Mama, Do You Love Me?

by Barbara M. Joosse; illustrated by Barbara Lavallee

A child living in the Arctic learns that a mother's love is unconditional.

(Preschool–Gr 1)

Salmon Summer

by Bruce McMillan

A photo essay describes a young Alaskan boy fishing for salmon on Kodiak Island, as his ancestors have done for generations.

(Gr 2–5)

Children of the Midnight Sun: Young Native Voices of Alaska

by Tricia Brown; photographs by Roy Corral

Photographs and text present the experiences and ways of life of Tlingit, Athabascan, Yupik, and other Native American children in the villages, cities, and bush areas of Alaska.

(Gr 3–7)

Island of the Blue Dolphins

by Scott O'Dell; illustrated by Ted Lewin

Left alone on a beautiful, isolated island off the coast of California, a young Native American girl spends eighteen years not only surviving but also finding a measure of happiness in her solitary life.

(Gr 5–8)

Thunder Rolling in the Mountains

by Scott O'Dell and Elizabeth Hall

In the late nineteenth century, a young Nez Perce girl describes her people being driven off their land by the U.S. Army and forced to retreat north until their eventual surrender.

(Gr 5–8)

