

WE CARRY OUR ANCESTORS



Ulli Steltzer, *Alice Paul*, 1975, Gift of Ulli Steltzer.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Fall 2019

The University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional and unceded territories we live, learn and work



University
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Legacy Art Galleries



Salish Weave Collection

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide provides activities to facilitate classroom discussion before your Gallery visit. These activities will reinforce ideas presented in the tour and build continuity between the Gallery and classroom experience. This guide engages with First Peoples Principles of Learning, and meets several prescribed learning outcomes in the British Columbia curriculum.

Students will engage in critical thinking strategies by visually examining the medium and materials used in basket making and come away with an understanding of how the artists' connections to land and their cultural teachings have influenced their current artistic practices.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the significance of cedar and weaving to Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth **cultures**
2. To understand the impacts of **colonization** on Indigenous peoples - specifically women and their cultural practices
3. To decolonize ideas of art, and honour Indigenous women as artists
4. To address issues of climate change that threaten the environment, cedar trees, and cultural practices
5. To experience and learn about Indigenous worldviews and lifeways

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

We Carry Our Ancestors: Cedar, Baskets, and Our Relationships with the Land
(September to December, 2019)

Curated by Lorilee Wastasecoot

For the first time ever, we are displaying Nuu-chah-nulth and Salish historical and **contemporary** baskets from the University of Victoria art collection alongside portraits of weavers. Through new and intensive community research, this exhibition honours the resilience of women who have carried their **cultures** forward by passing down the art of cedar basketry to future **generations**. It highlights the importance of cedar to Indigenous peoples, and demonstrates the intimate relationships the weavers have with their baskets. Artists featured in this exhibition include:

- Jeanie Pielle Dominic - Angela Marston - Josephine Thompson
- Annie Chapman - Katherine Dominique - Liz Happynook
- Brenda Crabtree - Elsie Peters - Matilda Jim
- Luisa Johnson - Ellen Jumbo - Alice Paul
- Agnes Nicolaye - Juliana Williams - Mary Jackson

However, many artists in this exhibition go uncredited. When baskets were collected, the names of the women who created them were conspicuously left out of the historical record. This exhibition acknowledges and honours these unnamed women.

ACTIVITY 1

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LAND

Connections, Story and Reflection

45 min – 60 min

Goals

- Gain multi-sensory knowledge about the environment
- Gain Indigenous cultural perspectives about cedar

Discussion

Tell students that for many Indigenous communities along the BC coast, cedar is “the tree of life”. Tiffany Joseph, SENĆOŦEN Language & Cultural Revitalist, told us that for many Coast Salish people, cedar is sacred. It is sacred because it not only provides materials for shelter, transportation, clothing and baskets, but it is also a kind of medicine – one that can help heal your body and your spirit.

Explain to students that in the SENĆOŦEN language, the word for “tree” is **SŦELÁLŦEWŦ**. Use www.firstvoices.com as a resource for pronouncing: [SENĆOŦEN: tree](#). This word comes from a creation story, and translates to “bad people put away.” Tell students that Tiffany Joseph, from Coast Salish territories, shared a version of the story with us.

Ask students what they think a cedar tree looks like. Tell students they will get to try to identify a cedar tree outside and listen to Tiffany Joseph’s Coast Salish story about cedar trees.

Steps

1. Take your class outside, and try to identify a cedar tree (or bring cedar branches if possible).
2. Help students identify a cedar tree outside by describing some of their characteristics (images on page 8). If no cedar trees are present, find another tree and talk about the differences in identifying trees (leaves, needles, bark, shape).
 - Cedars have drooping branches, and can grow very large, up to 60 metres
 - Their leaves are green, scaly, (not like needles) and arranged on the twigs in flat, fan-like sprays (not in bundles)
 - The leaves have a very strong smell
 - The bark is reddish-brown, stringy, and tears off in strips.

- Cedars need moist soils, and thrive in cool, mild, moist environments and often moss grows on their roots.
3. If you can find a cedar, explore it with all the senses. Feel the rough, stringy bark and smell the flat, scaly leaves. Notice what the soil is like where the roots are growing, is there grass, moss, or dirt under the tree? If no cedar trees are present, find any other tree and do the same. Encourage the students to just take a moment to think and be present with their environment and notice any other details in the environment. Ask them to think quietly about what the land provides them with that they are grateful for.
 4. Prepare students to listen to a story, followed by a discussion about it. Students can lay down and close their eyes outside or if back in the classroom, turn the lights off to help students focus on listening.
 5. **Read aloud Tiffany Joseph's story about cedar** (on next page) or have the students read the story aloud.

Conclusion – Promote a Discussion

Either outside or back in the classroom, ask students to consider the Coast Salish story and their own personal connection to the land. Ask students to answer these questions either together as a class or paired up with a buddy:

- Try to recall the details of the story. Who were the giants? Why was the Creator upset with them? What do the giants do now?
- After hearing this story, how do you think differently about cedar?
- Is there a lesson in this story? What do you think the story is trying to tell?
- How did it feel to be outside, spending time with a tree? How do you and your family experience nature in everyday life?

TIFFANY JOSEPH, Sᑲᑲᑲwᑲmesh and WᑲSÁNEĆ:

“There was a time in our territory where the trees were like giant people, and the Creator really had an affinity towards them, so He gave them all the teachings of how to treat people well, and then He left the territory. And he came back and recognized that the trees were mistreating the humans.

He gave them an opportunity to change their behavior and He told them, ‘I told you how to treat people.’

And they said, ‘We’re bigger, we’re stronger, we’re more powerful than them. We can do whatever we want.’

And He was very upset, and He walked away because He didn’t want to get too angry. And then he came back, and he saw that they were mistreating the people still, so he was starting to get really angry, and everyone – the giants and the people – could sense that.

So the giants started running away, and the Creator yelled ‘Stop!’ And all the giants were stopped in their tracks, and their feet became rooted.

So He told the trees, ‘It’s your duty from now onwards to take care of these people like I asked you to in the beginning.’ So that’s why they provide for us through the cedar bark, through all the medicines of all the trees.”



Photo credit: Nicole Achtymichuk, 2019.

ACTIVITY 2

CEDAR HARVESTING

Video and Discussion

45 min – 60 min

Goals

- Explore artistic practices rooted in the land

Discussion

Explain to students that Indigenous **cultures** are rooted in the landscape. Ask students to give examples of the ways Indigenous peoples traditionally relied on their environment to live (food, medicine, shelter, clothing, etc.). Explain how Indigenous peoples still practice customary **traditions** and use **contemporary** art practices to creatively express their cultural connections to the land.

Tell students that traditionally, Indigenous peoples' art was a part of everyday life. The learning and teaching around the creation of art was an important way to pass down knowledge about the land and **culture** to future **generations**. When Europeans **colonized** Canada, they created laws that forbade Indigenous peoples from continuing their traditional and artistic practices. The sharing of knowledge, culture, and language between generations was interrupted and broken. Today, artists are **revitalizing** traditional practices. Ask students to list examples of these traditional practices (carving, basket weaving, regalia, songs, dances, language, etc.).

Steps

1. Show students the video *Story of Cedar, Cedar Hat Weaving and Bark Pulling Cowichan Coast Salish* (29 min long). **Follow this Link:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95rPwCDHOCE>



Story of Cedar, Cedar Hat Weaving & Bark Pulling Cowichan Coast Salish

103,383 views

LIKE DISLIKE SHARE SAVE ...

2. After the video, ask students about their reactions to the video.
 - How might harvesting cedar and weaving relate to the artists' community and their connection to land?
 - What kinds of knowledge are needed in order to weave a basket? Ecology, math, geometry, artistic, etc...
 - What are the responsibilities of receiving teachings like how to weave?
 - Why is it important for Indigenous people to continue to pass knowledge on to the next **generation**?

Conclusion – Journal Entry

Ask students to write a journal entry about knowledge, teachings, or **traditions** that have been passed to them from parents, family members, and teachers. Ask students to share their journal entries in small groups. Then ask members from each group to share with the class any new traditions they learned about from their classmates.

ACTIVITY 3

PAPER BASKET WEAVING

Creative Art Activity

45 min – 60 min

Goals

- *Learn the basics of weaving*
- *Develop hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills*

Discussion

In this activity, students will weave their own paper baskets. Give students a short introduction to weaving techniques: There are typically two basic components of a woven object: the **warp**, and the **weft**. The warps are the vertical elements of the weave. The wefts are the horizontal elements of the weave. The students will create a basket using a **plaiting** technique. Plaiting, also known as checker weave, is a straightforward technique in which the weft crosses over and under one warp at a time.

Required Materials

- *Scissors*
- *Stick Glue*
- *Ruler*
- *Two sheets of different coloured 12 inch x 9 inch construction paper*



Steps

1. Watch the videos for the technique to weave a similar paper basket. **Follow this link:** <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Basket>
2. Prepare materials for basket weaving. Cut 6 strips of the same colour the width of a ruler (about 1 inch) lengthwise of the construction paper. Cut 3 strips of the other coloured paper the same way.
3. Line up 3 strips of the same colour vertically side by side.
4. Take the other 3 strips in the same colour and horizontally weave one at a time through the strips lain out. Alternate the weaving pattern by weaving over one and under, then weaving the next strip under and over. When all the strips are woven ensure they are centred and all the edges lined up evenly. They should make a plus '+' sign shape. Glue each corner so the plaits stay in place.
5. Use a ruler to bend all 4 sides up to make the sides of the plaited basket.
6. Take the 3 strips of the other colour and cut one strip in half. Glue 1.5 strips together and create a square frame the same size as the plaited square base. Place this square frame over the basket base and weave every other side strip inside the frame. Glue in place as you weave. Repeat by making another frame with the other 1.5 strips and alternate the weaving to make a checkered pattern.
7. Cut or fold the excess length along the top edge and glue in place. Optionally, you can cut an additional paper strip to glue inside the basket to make a handle.

Conclusion – Promote a Discussion

Ask students to share their finished baskets and discuss their experience weaving, either as a class or in pairs. How did this activity give you a better understanding or appreciation of weaving? Was it challenging? How did you overcome the challenges?

VOCABULARY

Plaiting – A basketry weaving technique in which the weft strand cross over and under one warp strand at a time.

Warp – In twined weaving, warps are the vertical elements. In coiling, warp refers to the foundation of the coils.

Weft – The horizontal element which crosses over warps in twined weaving. In coiling, weft refers to the sewing element.

Tradition – Traditions are longstanding customs and practices of a society

Contemporary – Describes things that are happening in the present-day

Colonize – When a country takes control of land outside its borders

Revitalize – To restore life or give newness and strength

Culture – The knowledge and values shared by a society

Generation – Your grandparents, parents, and you all belong to different generations but descend from a common ancestor

RESOURCES

["Connections and Complexity" article by Gerald T. Conaty](#)

["Images and Reality of First Nations Women" article by Dr. Jacky Moore](#)

["That's My Dinner on Display": A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture"](#) article by Gloria Jean Frank

[Promising Practices in Indigenous Teacher Education \(ebook\)](#)

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