

THE KWAKWAKA'WAKW POTLATCH

Elementary Education Program for Grades 3 – 5

Teacher's Notes



Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch Program in Progress, MOA



Kwakwaka'wakw Button Blanket, MOA

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Planning Your Visit

Booking Information

Please access our online bookings guide, ***Booking Education Programs: What You Need to Know***, available on the MOA website at www.moa.ubc.ca/programs/resources.php.

Class Guidelines and Requirements

All Educational Programs are led by trained Volunteer Associates (VAs). Accompanying adults and teachers are responsible to supervise their group **at all times**. We require a ratio of 1 adult per 7 students and recommend that students wear name-tags. Upon arrival, please check in with the Admissions desk and make arrangements for payment. The Volunteer Associate responsible for your group will meet you in the Museum lobby.

Teachers are asked to review and communicate the guidelines for supervising adults available in our online bookings guide, ***Booking Education Programs: What You Need to Know***, at www.moa.ubc.ca/programs/resources.php.

Program Description and Objectives

The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch is a two hour program designed to introduce students to the sights, sounds and ceremony of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch through video, object exploration, discussion, and drawing. This program aims to develop an awareness of and respect for the Kwakwaka'wakw people and culture through exposure to the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch. Students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the themes of transformation and ancestry, and practice their listening and reporting skills.

Note: ***The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch*** is a Volunteer Associate (VA) guided program and does not include a full tour of the Museum. We welcome you to extend your visit before or after your scheduled program.

Curriculum Relevance

The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch is designed to complement the BC Grade 4 Social Studies Curriculum, though can be adapted to other age groups. Skills that students practice during the program are: observation, identification, and cultural sensitivity, as well as critical and creative thinking. The content of the program relates to the following subject areas: First Nations Studies, BC History, Language Arts, and Visual Arts.

Program Outline

Meet and Greet in the Lobby

The class is greeted in the Museum lobby by an Education Volunteer Associate (VA) who provides a brief introduction to the program and associated activities. Students are then introduced to a map of First Nations people and communities, before proceeding into the Museum galleries.

Presentation Circle Discussion

In the presentation circle, Kwakwaka'wakw Chief Robert Joseph speaks to the ongoing significance of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch through a short introductory video. Students are then introduced to key themes of transformation and ancestry, before being split into two groups for the Presentation Circle and Multiversity Galleries activities.

Presentation Circle Activity

During the Presentation Circle activity, students experience hands-on interaction with the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch teaching collection. They are divided into small groups to discuss specific questions related to the objects, and are then given the opportunity to report their discoveries to the class.

Multiversity Galleries Activity

In the Multiversity Galleries, students look at the Museum's collection of Kwakwaka'wakw objects and are asked to draw one object. Once they finish drawing, they lead their own tour, reporting back to their peers on what they found to be most interesting about the object they drew. Throughout the tour, background information on the potlatch and the collection is offered by the Volunteer Associate.

Wrap up Video

Students return to the Presentation Circle to watch a short film and review key themes introduced throughout the program. Teachers, students, and supervising adults are encouraged to visit the Museum galleries again before returning to school.

Pre or Post Visit Activities

Questions to stimulate discussion:

- What do museums do?
- What is a museum of anthropology?
- Why do museums have the objects they have?
- How does the environment influence what an artist creates?
- What can be learned about people by studying objects they make?

Introduce your students to the Northwest Coast (NWC). Using the “First Nations in British Columbia” map (<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>), show students the Kwakwaka'wakw territory.

Create a project that encourages students to explore celebrations from their own cultures and other cultures such as Christmas, Chanukah, Diwali, Eid, etc. What is celebrated? How do you celebrate?

Ask students to consider modern ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and birthdays. Compare these events with the cultural celebrations.

Explore the students' family histories. Begin with a family tree activity. Ask the students to consider how far back they can trace their family. Encourage students to think about where their first ancestor may have come from.

Box of Treasures Art Project. Lead the students in a project that creates personal boxes of treasures, so that they can come to understand the important role of family treasures in representing their family history. Students compile a collection based upon their family tree, or images and objects from home. Encourage students to share their Box of Treasures with their classmates. The Boxes of Treasures can be displayed in the classroom – like a mini exhibit.

Read Aloud: *Secret of the Dance*, by Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow

This book is a story of a potlatch. In addition to containing First Nations historical content, it also introduces some of the terms and concepts that are addressed in the potlatch program.

Drawing. Use the student drawings from the Museum activity for inspiration for a legend, folk tale, or origin story. Have the students use their drawings to create their own supernatural transformation stories.

Additional Teacher Resources

The list of books provided here will help students understand some of the concepts addressed in the ***The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch*** program. The books are organized by theme. (Note: all these books are readily available at local book stores and libraries.)

Theme: Family, Ancestry, and Tradition

Secret of the Dance, by Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow

The Canoe He Called Loo Taas, by Amanda Reid-Stevens

The Keeping Quilt, by Patricia Polacco

Secret of the Dance is a great way to encourage interest in the potlatch. It covers many aspects of the potlatch, including the government ban, and how the potlatch survived through the years. *The Canoe He Called Loo Taas* tells about the importance of the canoe and the journeys canoes take us on. *The Keeping Quilt* is a great way to begin a family tree exercise.

Theme: Difference, Acceptance, Transformation and Understanding

Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace, by Shelley Moore Thomas

Zero, by Katheryn Otoshi

City Dog, *Country Frog*, by Mo Willems

These books focus on being different, and the importance of understanding and respecting difference. Encourage discussion with students about where they come from. *City Dog* looks at change over time and how relationships also change. These ideas link to the concept of transformation that is part of the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch program. Read these books aloud to your class and discuss the various kinds of transformation students go through.

Theme: Transformation of attitudes

Red Parka Mary, by Peter Eyvindson

Six Crows, by Leo Lionni

The Sandwich Swap, by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah

The books teach patience and understanding, and introduce the idea that what at first seems foreign can become familiar. Inspired by *The Sandwich Swap*, have a class potluck encouraging students to bring foods that are special for them at home.

Theme: Cultural Diversity

How are we the same and different? by Bobby Kalman

People, by Peter Spier

These books are a great resource for learning about other world cultures. Encourage discussions about what the students already know about their own and other cultures, before and after reading the books.

Suggested Terms/Concepts to Review before your visit:

Chief: A Chief is a respected leader of a family, clan or community. Chiefs can inherit the position or be elected. A Chief has a deep understanding of his/her people's history and culture. A Chief hosts a potlatch.

Traditions: Traditions are the handing over or passing on of beliefs or customs from one generation to the next. They can be passed on through stories, songs or dances.

Protocol: Protocols are rules and guidelines. Protocol is very important in the potlatch. There are many rules and cultural customs that are followed when planning and hosting a potlatch. For example, the dances that are performed at a potlatch must occur in a specific order, and are danced only by those who have the right to do so.

Respect: Respect is something that we show ourselves and others. It acknowledges that a person, group, or object is important and is valued.

Transformation: Transformation can be described as change in form, appearance, nature, or character. We transform physically when we grow up, and emotionally when we have different experiences. In the potlatch, another kind of transformation may be represented as well – the change from human to animal to supernatural being.

Ancestry: In the potlatch it is important to know your ancestors – right back to the original member of your nation. Kwakwaka'wakw people trace their origins to the first member who came from the supernatural realm.

Kin: Kin are people who are related to you through blood lines, or marriage.

Elder: An Elder is a highly respected person in a community or family. Kwakwaka'wakw elders are often called upon to tell their family histories. Elders play an important role in planning and hosting potlatches.

Supernatural: This term describes a being, place, object, or occurrence that is beyond what we normally understand. It can be something that is unexplainable by natural laws, or being or event that occurs in the spiritual realm.

Origin Story: Origin stories are also referred to as genesis or first ancestor stories. A Kwakwaka'wakw origin story tells how their nations began and how they came to live in their territory.

Rights: Names, songs, and dances are part of a family's rights and privileges. For the Kwakwaka'wakw, this means that the family who owns these things has the privilege to use and pass them on to the next generations. It also means that this family has the responsibility to take care of them.