



Northwest Coast Map



The Northwest Culture Area is located in a narrow section of coastal land stretching from Washington State up into Northern British Columbia and Alaska. The people lived in permanent villages. They relied on fishing to survive. Working together, they went out in wooden boats to capture large fish, including whales. All the people lived near some kind of water, either the Pacific Ocean or a river or lake. Salmon was the single most important food. The people also used the forests in the area. They used cedar trees to make everything from their houses and canoes, as well as blankets and clothes. They also hunted for deer and elk.



Northwest Coast Mural



Using the following learning objectives and activities tied to them, this section explores Plains cultural artifacts to understand both the similarities and differences between tribal nations.

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental, basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using the resources available to them in their environment.

Learning Objective 2: When Europeans arrived, new resources from another part of the world became available to Native people and altered their ways of life.



STUDENT WORKSHEET **BEFORE** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental, basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using the resources available to them in their environment.

Read: The cedar tree was very important to the people of the Northwest Coast. When you come to the Museum, you will see many examples of its use. See if you can guess the use of the items in the pictures below. Use the **Word Bank** to write the answers next to the pictures.

Word Bank: *blanket* *hat* *canoe* *houses* *basket*













STUDENT WORKSHEET **BEFORE** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental, basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using the resources available to them in their environment.

Read: There are lots of red cedar trees in the Northwest Coast area. The people living here have always used them to make some of the things they need. Describe the cedar trees in the picture to your teacher.



A. Activity: Look at these four pictures and answer the following questions.



1. Write the names of things from the four pictures that you think are made from cedar wood.

2. Write the names of things you think are not made from cedar wood.

B. Activity: Think about what you have learned about the Woodlands, Plains, and Southwest culture areas.

3. Which area do you think is most like the Northwest Coast? Why? _____

4. Which area do you think is most unlike the Northwest Coast? Why? _____



STUDENT WORKSHEET **BEFORE** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 2: When Europeans arrived, new resources arrived from another part of the world became available to Native people and altered their ways of life.



Read: Look at the picture of a button blanket above. These blankets were and are made to use as a cape or robe at ceremonial dances. They are also given as gifts at ceremonies known as potlatches. The design on a blanket is important to the person who wears it. It may be a symbol of a family, a clan, or a social position. This type of blanket began to be made after the Northwest Coast people met European traders. Originally, these blankets were made using shells. Then, when European traders came, they were made with mother-of-pearl buttons. Today, these blankets usually have a red border with blue or black cloth. The designs are often animals or geometric shapes.

1. What kind of design do you see on this blanket? _____

2. What part of the blanket shows that Northwest Coast people traded with Europeans?

3. Describe a traditional item of clothing that might represent your culture. What is it and what does it look like?



STUDENT WORKSHEET AFTER THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental, basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using the resources available to them in their environment.

Read: Before you visited the museum and during your visit, you learned something about potlaches. One of the most interesting traditions associated with potlaches is the idea of the give-away. Whoever hosted the event gave away many gifts. The more gifts you gave away, the more honor you brought to your family. Sometimes, the host gave away so many things, he had almost nothing left! Of course, when he was invited to someone else’s potlatch, he and his family got valuable gifts in return.

1. Think about a party at your house recently. Write what was the same or different about your party compared to the potlatch descriptions.

| A Potlatch | My Party |
|---|----------|
| Guests came in canoes. They came from many different villages. | |
| There was singing, dancing and storytelling. | |
| There was lots of food. It was good manners to eat a lot. | |
| The party could last for more than a week. | |
| Each guest got a gift. If the guest was important, he or she got a better gift. | |
| It might take a family more than a year to prepare to give a big Potlatch. | |
| The more gifts the family gave away, the more honor the family received. | |
| Sometimes the family gave away so many gifts they had very little left! | |

2. Do you think it’s better to get gifts or give them away? Why? _____



STUDENT WORKSHEET **AFTER** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using resources available to them in their environment.

Read: The tribes of the Northwest Coast created an important cultural symbol that was almost as important as any of their basic needs, the totem pole. The poles told stories and honored the carver's heritage. Some were signposts and others functioned as a type of billboard.

Symbols used were those of the clans. At the top was a raven or eagle clan. Beaver, fox, bear and frog were figures of sub clans. The human at the top was the village watchman. A figure hanging upside indicated a village debtor. If the debt was paid, the pole was chopped down and dragged to the woods. Red eyes and mouth indicated a stingy person. Poles were carved from the very tall cedar and spruce trees of the area. There were three types of poles, crest portrayed family ancestors, story-telling were for weddings to preserve history, and mortuary honored the dead and often contained cremation ashes.

Activity: Use the image at the right to answer the following questions on the answer sheet.

1. Which of the three types of totem poles do you think is shown here? Explain.
2. Can you name the clan portrayed by this pole?
3. Totem poles were not found in any region other than the Northwest Culture Region. Can you think of a reason for this?
4. Early missionaries believed totem poles to be religious figures and ordered their native converts to Christianity to destroy their poles. Can you think of a reason for this action? Does this seem reasonable to you? Explain.
5. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, totem poles were hand carved and that practice continued until the introduction of power tools. Why do you think the carvers were willing to spend so much time and effort creating these poles?
6. Write a brief paragraph describing your interpretation of this image.





Mitchell Museum
of the American Indian

Answer sheet:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



STUDENT WORKSHEET **AFTER** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes and transportation by using resources available in their environment.

Learning Objective 2: When Europeans arrived, new resources from another part of the world became available to the native people and altered their way of life.

Read: In addition to their basic needs, people also tend to their spiritual needs. Traditional native people see themselves as a part of a circle of life that includes people, plants, animals and all other living things. Many tribal people express their spiritual beliefs through music and dance. In the Northwest Coast the dances were often performed by special dancers wearing masks.

Activity: Use information from the reading and the image of the eagle below to answer questions.

Eagle with Salmon



1. The eagle is an important symbol for many tribes of the Americas and it also became a symbol for the United States. Here, the eagle is portrayed by a highly stylized image. Why do you think the eagle became such an important iconic figure?

2. Why do you think so many indigenous people incorporate animals into their spiritual celebrations?

3. Only American Indians are allowed by law to possess eagle feathers and they can only get them from the federal government. Why do you suppose such a law exists?



4. Using resources in your library or on the internet, research federal laws that govern the possession of eagles or eagle feathers. Write an essay of several paragraphs describing the laws

Activity: After contact with Europeans, better carving tools became available enabling carvers to make more complex mask and images. Some masks had moving parts and were made of other materials in addition to the traditional wood. Some masks depict mythological monsters and some the totem of local clans. During ceremonies and rituals, dancers portrayed important cultural stories.

1. Carefully study the Badger and Mosquito mask; write a paragraph telling a story that can be portrayed by a dancer wearing each mask.

Beaver Mask



Mosquito Mask





STUDENT WORKSHEET **AFTER** THE MUSEUM

Learning Objective 1: Native people met their fundamental, basic survival needs for food, houses, clothes, and transportation by using the resources available to them in their environment.

Learning Objective 2: When Europeans arrived, new resources from another part of the world became available to Native people and altered their ways of life.

Post-Assessment: Write facts about the Northwest in the correct place. Put a question mark if you don't know any answer. Add other information that you remember at the end of the chart.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Location/Climate | |
| Food | |
| Houses | |
| Clothes | |
| Transportation | |
| Trade Items | |