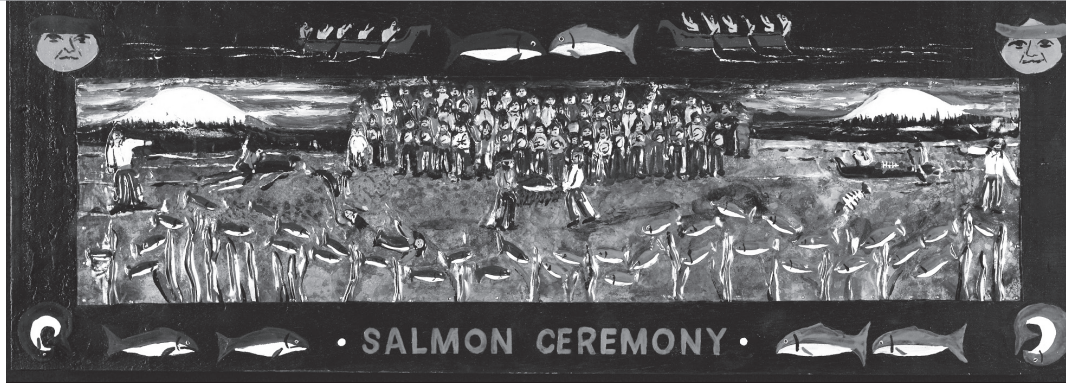


S'ABADEB THE GIFTS

PACIFIC COAST SALISH ART AND ARTISTS

1 Discover the gifts of family, tradition and nature as we explore Coast Salish culture through ancient and contemporary art and artifacts. This four-week series is brought to you by Newspapers In Education and Seattle Art Museum.



First Salmon Ceremony, 1978, Ron Hilbert Coy (č'adesqjdeb), Tulalip/Upper Skagit, 1944-2006, wood, acrylic, copper, 25 x 15 x 3 in., Gift of Vi Hilbert, in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, © Ron Hilbert Coy, Photo: Susan Cole.

Who are the Coast Salish?

Coast Salish First Peoples include at least 70 distinct groups of people who live in Washington state and British Columbia. There are 14 unique Salishan languages spoken among the Coast Salish peoples. The ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest are rich in trees, plants, berries, deer, elk, mountain goats, freshwater and saltwater fish, shellfish and waterfowl. Think of the many plants and animals you see when you visit parks in Seattle. Or think about the rivers or forested areas just outside the city. For thousands of years, Coast Salish people moved freely around those forested areas and waterways in special types of canoes, becoming experts in the land and sea. The connection between Coast Salish people and the land and water of the Pacific Northwest is at the center of their cultural beliefs and practices.

Starting in the 1850s, Coast Salish people were forced to move from their land by non-Native settlers and the governments of Canada and the United States. However, the

relationship between Coast Salish people and the land and water of our region did not end. Even today, like many other native groups in the United States and Canada, the Coast Salish people continue to fight for rights to their homelands and natural resources like salmon, shellfish and cedar trees.

Gifts of the Earth

To Coast Salish First Peoples, the earth is the ultimate source of nourishment and knowledge. Like many cultures worldwide, the earth provides the Coast Salish gifts of food, shelter, clothing and medicine. Based on these beliefs, you might consider the Coast Salish our first environmentalists. For example, they feel that it's okay to use natural resources — it's just not okay to abuse them or use them up.

One way that the Coast Salish celebrate their respect for the earth is through First Foods Ceremonies. These ceremonies honor traditional foods — water, clams, duck, elk, salmon, sprouts, berries — and celebrate the appearance of these foods at certain times of the year. First Foods Ceremonies involve the entire community. Many people come together to harvest and prepare special foods for the ceremonies. They also sing songs

to thank the earth for providing them with these important foods, year after year.

One important First Foods Ceremony is the First Salmon Ceremony. This is the subject of Tulalip/Upper Skagit artist Ron Hilbert Coy's painting, *First Salmon Ceremony* (see above). The ceremony is made up of a particular sequence of events. First, there is singing to welcome the first salmon of the season. Second, salmon is carried on top of cedar tree branches into the house where it is cooked and ritually eaten. At the end of the ceremony the bones of the salmon are returned to the water. This shows the earth that the salmon has been well treated and will be welcomed again when it returns the next year.

The First Salmon Ceremony gives thanks to the salmon for returning each year, teaches us about our dependence on nature and highlights our responsibility to protect the earth and its gifts (food, water, etc.). From the late 1800s to the mid-20th century, the Canadian and United States governments banned ceremonies like the First Salmon Ceremony. Despite this, the stories lived on and in 1978 the Skokomish tribe of Washington state was able to reinstate the First Salmon Ceremony.

DISCUSS

- ▶ Why do you think Coast Salish people see trees, plants, animals and fish as gifts? Do you see these things as gifts?
- ▶ What can we do to help protect natural resources?
- ▶ What can your school or family do to honor the earth?

EXPLORE

- ▶ Learn more about the life cycle of salmon. Start with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's Web site on salmon recovery: wdfw.wa.gov/recovery.htm.
- ▶ Think of a celebration you have attended. What sequence of events took place at this celebration? Make a quick outline of these events and then create a drawing, painting or collage that illustrates the celebration.
- ▶ Launched in 1970, Earth Day is a nationwide environmental demonstration that takes place every year on April 22. Research the beginnings of Earth Day. What was its purpose then? What is its purpose now? What has changed since 1970? Plan an Earth Day celebration for your class. Don't forget to outline the sequence of events that will take place during the celebration.



Inspiring Students To Learn

Educators! Join SAM for a FREE preview of **S'ABADEB — THE GIFTS** with live music and light refreshments. Wednesday, October 29, 2008, 6 - 8 p.m., Seattle Art Museum downtown. RSVP at seattleartmuseum.org/teacher/educator.asp.

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