

# S'ABADEB THE GIFTS

PACIFIC COAST SALISH ART AND ARTISTS

3 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.

## Gifts of our Families

Like many cultures around the world, Coast Salish First Peoples of Washington state and British Columbia strongly value family. Coast Salish families are defined both by the father's and the mother's ancestors and are organized into groups called "kindreds," meaning "groups of related people." Traditionally, Coast Salish families lived in large cedar plank houses and were identified by shared family names. Unfortunately, these traditional ways of living were greatly altered by contact with non-Native peoples. For example, during the 18th and 19th centuries, devastating diseases, brought to the Pacific Northwest by European fur traders, killed thousands of Native people. Then restrictions were placed on important family ceremonies and rights to subsistence activities such as fishing and gathering. Finally, from the 1870s to the early 20th century, Native children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools where they weren't allowed to speak their own languages or wear their own clothes.

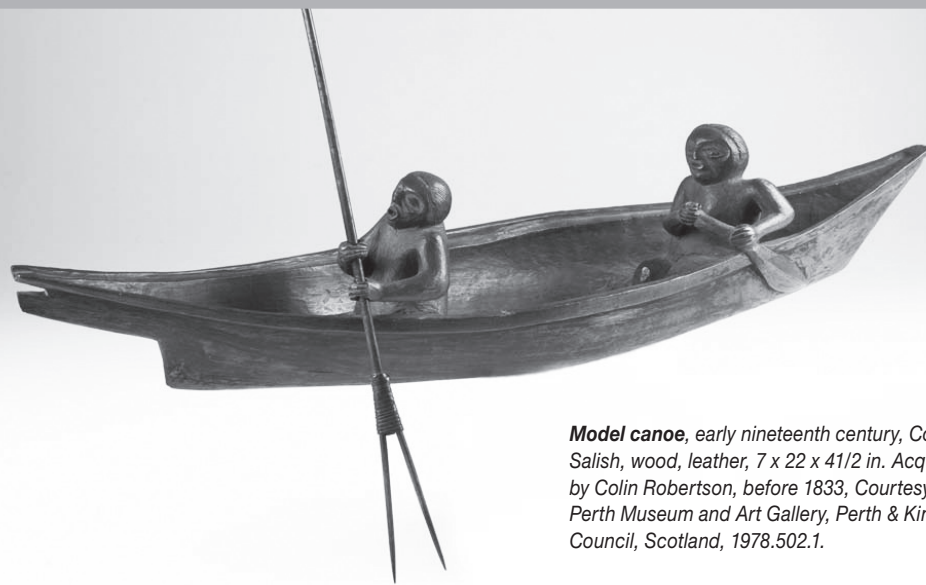
Despite these disruptions, some Coast Salish families and individuals have held on to important knowledge and traditions. These traditions, which include family names, songs, stories, dances, objects and land, relate to all aspects of Coast Salish life.

This small Coast Salish canoe model (see image) was most likely carved as a trade item. It references a time when canoes were the main means of transportation for Coast Salish families along

Northwest Coast rivers and open salt waters. Until the 1930s, canoes were used for trade, visiting relatives and travel to different fishing, hunting and food gathering locations. Canoe travel helped to connect all the different communities in the Northwest Coast area, just like cars and roads enable tribes across the United States and Canada to stay in touch today.

In 1989 more than 20 Native canoes landed on the shores of Seattle in an event honoring the water-based traditions of the Coast Salish. Known as the "Paddle to Seattle," the event included canoes from Native communities in Northwest Washington as well as one canoe from Bella Bella, B.C. Since 1989 there have been multiple ocean-based canoe travels called Canoe Journeys or Tribal Journeys. These events have inspired a resurgence of Native culture and values. During these annual events "Canoe Families," or groups of people who join together to support a canoe, travel long distances on the ocean and the inland salt waters. The 2008 host of the Canoe Journey was the Quw'utsun Nation at Duncan, B.C. More than 100 canoes came from the southern coast of Washington to as far north as Alaska.

Canoe Journeys are rich experiences that bring on a mixture of feelings for participants; from the exhilaration of traveling on the water, to tests of physical and mental endurance, to fun and celebration.



*Model canoe, early nineteenth century, Coast Salish, wood, leather, 7 x 22 x 41/2 in. Acquired by Colin Robertson, before 1833, Courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland, 1978.502.1.*

## DISCUSS

- ▶ How are traditions passed down in your family or community?
- ▶ Connection to the water is a key part of Coast Salish culture. What are important aspects of your own culture or family?
- ▶ What do you think is the significance of the Canoe Journeys that started in the late 1980s to Coast Salish peoples?

## EXPLORE

- ▶ Learn more about Coast Salish canoes online at [washington.edu/burkemuseum/collections/ethnology/canoes/](http://washington.edu/burkemuseum/collections/ethnology/canoes/) or [pugetsalish.com/canoes.html](http://pugetsalish.com/canoes.html).
- ▶ Watch a clip from the 2007 Canoe Journey hosted by the Lummi Nation on the Seattle Art Museum's interactive Web site: [seattleartmuseum.org/exhibit/interactives/sabadeb/flash/index.html](http://seattleartmuseum.org/exhibit/interactives/sabadeb/flash/index.html). Under "Gifts of the Earth" look for the section called "Revitalizing Canoe Culture."
- ▶ Take your family to the 2009 Tribal Journey to Suquamish. Find out more at [suquamish.nsn.us/2009.html](http://suquamish.nsn.us/2009.html).