

3rd Grade
Unit 1: Interrelationships: Communities and their
Environments



Essential Question #5: In what ways does community and environment shape human culture?

Lesson Title: Potlatch (Northwest American Indian Communities)

SS Standard II, Objective 1, 2
Art Standard IV, Objective 2, 3

Implementation Time: Two or Three 30 minute lessons

Media Resources Needed: *Northwest Coast Indians* by Mir Tamim Ansay or any other appropriate picture book that highlights Potlatch Ceremony and Totem Poles.

Materials Needed: empty boxes, construction paper, stapler, scissors, paints, brushes, newspaper

Procedure:

1. Read the book *Northwest Coast Indians* to the class and discuss. Show the pictures as you read.
2. Generate a list of special events the class has experienced or will experience during the year: field day, field trips, guest speakers, assemblies, class parties, plays, etc. The longer the list the better.
3. Stack the boxes in an interesting manner. Use the stacking pattern to plan the totem pole
4. Divide the class into groups of four. Choose six events from the list to represent in the totem. Since this unit is taught at the beginning of the year you may want to choose upcoming events that will happen throughout the year.
5. Decide as a class which box should represent each class event. Take the boxes apart and assign each box to a small group.
6. Have each group work collaboratively to plan (carve) and paint their section. Allow sections to dry.



7. Reassemble the totem in the sequence of events. Have a class Potlatch.

A Potlatch is a ceremony to erect a totem pole, a chance to tell its story, and a reason to have a party. Have each group tell their part of the story. Students can plan refreshment, costumes, legends, dances, songs, and invite honored guests.

Assessment:

Students can create their own totems using small boxes, soup cans, etc. These should represent milestones in their lives such as learning to ride a bike or playing a sport. They should then write the stories of their totems. Provide another Potlatch opportunity for students to share their individual totem poles.