

## Activity 13 Looking at Bears in Aboriginal Art

### Activity Information

**Grade:** 4 - 7

**Subject:** Social Studies, Visual Arts

**Skills:** chart making, description, group discussion, observation, research

**Duration:** Part I - 20 minutes  
Part II - 20 minutes

**Group Size:** any

**Setting:** indoors

**Key Words:** Aboriginal, First Nation, Haida, Nuu Chah Nulth, Tsimshian, Salish, Tlingit, Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl)

**Materials:** library and classroom books on Aboriginal art, access to websites on Aboriginal art, paper, pens

### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Compare how bears are artistically represented by at least two Aboriginal cultural groups
- Identify the artistic style or characteristics of a particular Aboriginal cultural group
- Recognize unique qualities of a culture reflected in its art
- Construct and fill out a simple chart

### Method:

Using books, websites and other sources, students search for images of bears in Aboriginal art and identify similarities and differences in regional art styles.

### Background:

Bears are prominent in myths, stories and artwork in First Nations and other aboriginal cultures. Aboriginal artists, particularly on the coast of British Columbia, have distinct ways of depicting animals in their work. Throughout B.C. different cultural groups have evolved their own distinct styles, but there are also differences with each group. Importantly, many contemporary artists have taken the traditions of their artistic ancestors and changed them to make them their own.

This activity provides the opportunity for students to observe some examples of bears in First Nations and Aboriginal art, and make their own observations about how a particular animal, the bear, is rendered by various cultures (e.g. Musqueam or Cowichan).

“Aboriginal” refers to all indigenous people including Inuit and metis people. “First Nations” refers to those aboriginals people who identify with a specific band or reserve.

Please see the section in the primer entitled “Bears in Culture” for more background information.

## Part I

### Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups. Group size should be determined according to availability of resources.



2. Provide each group with access to the internet and/or several books on Aboriginal art. Ask students to search for as many examples of bears in Aboriginal art as they can find e.g. totem poles, jewellery, sculpture prints, blankets, baskets, etc
3. As they work, students should bookmark the images so they can be used in Part II.

Note: Please see the bibliography provided in the appendices.

## Part II

### Procedure:

1. Hand out the 'Comparing Aboriginal Artwork' worksheets.
2. Ask each student to fill out their own chart as fully as they can for every bear image they have located. They must identify images from at least four cultural groups.
3. Within their groups, have students to compare the notes they've taken for each image and discuss any differences or similarities in methods and styles of the art, or between artists and cultural groups.
4. Hand out the 'My Favourite Bear Images' T-chart. Have each student choose two of their favourite bear images to compare. The images should be from different cultural groups. Students should give the name of the image, the artist, and the cultural group the artist identifies with and give a minimum of two, well thought out reasons why they like this particular art piece.

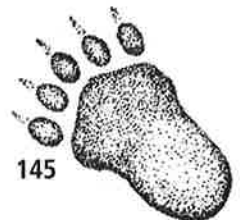
### Assessment:

Gather the comparing Aboriginal Artwork charts and assess for:

- Completion of the chart
- The identification of at least four different cultural groups
- The attempt to use descriptive words and personal observations about the art in the "Artistic Notes" column

Gather the T-charts and assess for:

- Name of image, artist and cultural group for two artworks
- Well thought out reasons for choosing each piece



### **Extensions:**

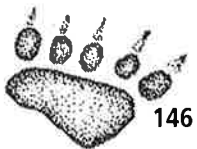
If there are Aboriginal artists in your community, arrange to visit a studio or invite an artist in to speak to the class. Students can ask the artist about the way bears and other animals are depicted by them personally and by their culture. Does their art relate to any myths, beliefs or stories in their culture?

Select an Aboriginal myth or legend about bears for the class to read and discuss. Some myths are given in the "Bears in Culture" section found in the primer. The bibliography, located in the appendices, will also provide direction for finding myths and legends. Identify the cultural group where the story originates, e.g. Nuuchah Nulth. Locate the traditional territory of the group or groups on a map of B.C.

If there are pictures to illustrate the story discuss the way in which the artist and/or cultural group has depicted the bears and other animals.

Have students illustrate the story in the style of one of their favourite aboriginal artists.

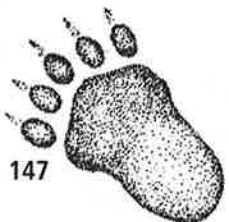
Use the images the students have chosen to set up an 'Aboriginal Art Gallery'. Have students write biographies of the artists and descriptions of the artwork to accompany the images. Invite other classes to view the art show.



# Activity 13 Worksheet Comparing Aboriginal Artwork

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name & Artist	Cultural Group (eg. Snuneymuxw First nation)	Location	Could you tell image was a bear?	How could you tell?	Artistic Notes Is there anything unusual in the way the artist has shown the bear?



# Activity 13 Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Favourite Bear Images

Image:	Image:
Artist:	Artist:
Cultural Group:	Cultural Group:
Why I like this art piece:	Why I like this art piece:
1. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	1. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	2. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

