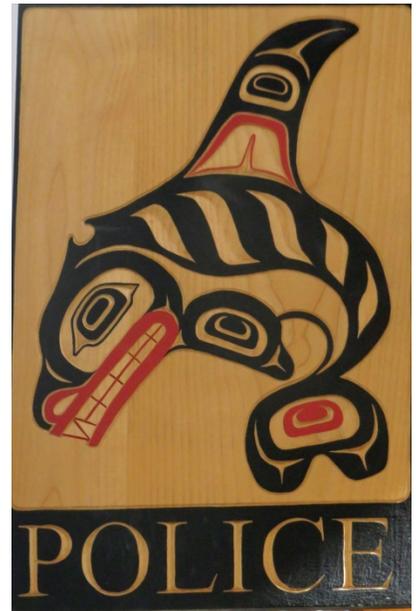
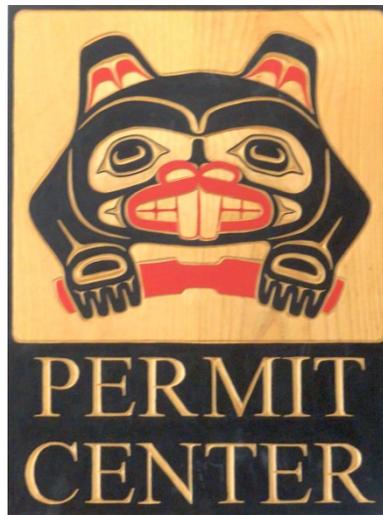
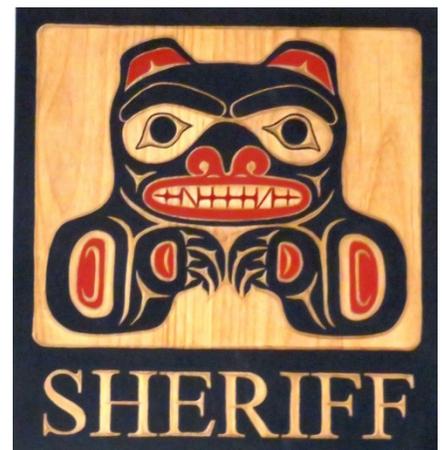


Signs in City Hall



NW Native Animal Symbols





Eagle (Council): “ Grace, power, intellect, wisdom,
leadership”



Beaver (Permit): “Creative, artistic, determined, industriousness, good building skills”



Orca (Police): “Always work together, take care of each other, Special protector of humans”



Seal (Reception): "Curiosity, creativity and imaginative"



Bear (Sheriff): “Because of their strength and fearlessness they are frequently the guardians, protectors and helping spirit of man”

Beaver Lake WoodWorks

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Sammamish, WA 98075
425-391-0661
beaverlakewoodworks@comcast.net



Northwest Native-style Woodcarving Classes and Commissions

Joe McConnell has been carving Northwest Native-Style relief and 3-dimensional pieces since 1988.

His carvings include Mask, Bowls, Rattles, Warrior Helmets, Paddles and Totem Poles.

Since January 2001, he has been teaching this form of woodcarving seven times a week at his studio in Sammamish.

Students start with little, if any, carving experience and range in age from teens to seniors.

When not teaching, Joe works on commission pieces for both corporate and private collectors.

To see carvings by Joe and his students, please visit his web site at:
www.beaverlakewoodworks.org



The Thunderbird in Pacific Northwest Native Indian Art

The thunderbird has been one of the most dominant icons in Native American art and legends. In fact, the concept of the thunderbird has been so popular that it has been used in the non-Native world to name a classic automobile, liquor, a 1960's children's adventure television show (and subsequent recent movie), a US Air Force squadron and is referenced in pop music (remember the word 't-bird' in 1950's rock and roll?). The thunderbird is one of the few cross-cultural characters in Native American mythology since it is found in legends of Pacific Northwest, Plains, and Northeastern tribes.

The Native Indians of the Pacific Northwest Coast always lived along the shores and never ventured inland to the mountains. Legend has it that the thunderbird, a mighty God in the form of a giant, supernatural bird lives in the mountains. The Quileute tribe of Washington State considered a cave on Mount Olympus as the home of the thunderbird while the Coast Salish believed it is located on the Black Tusk peak in British Columbia. It is thought that the thunderbird never wants anyone to come near its home. If Native hunters get too close, the thunderbird will smell them and make a thunder sound by flapping its wings. It would also roll ice out of its cave and down the mountain with chunks breaking up into many smaller pieces.

Some tribes such as the Kwakwaka'wakw believe that their people once made a deal with the thunderbird for its help during a food crisis and in return, the tribe agreed to honor the thunderbird for all time by making its image prominent in their Pacific Northwest Native Indian art. This is why Northwest Native totem poles are often carved with thunderbirds with outstretched wings at the top.

The wingspan of the thunderbird was described to be twice as long as a Native Indian war canoe. Underneath its wings are lightning snakes which the thunderbird uses as weapons. Lightning is created when the thunderbird throws these lightning snakes or when he blinks his eyes that glow like fire. Sometimes these lightning snakes are depicted in Native American art as having wolf or dog-like heads with serpent tongues. They are occasionally referred to as the thunderbird's dogs. Native American art portrays the thunderbird with a huge curving beak and prominent ears or horns.

The thunderbird is large and strong enough to hunt its favorite food which is the killer whale. The lightning snakes of the thunderbird are used during hunts out at sea for the killer whale. After capture, the thunderbird carries the killer whale back to the mountain to eat. According to legend, the thunderbird and killer whale once battled so hard that entire trees were uprooted. This was the explanation why there are treeless prairie regions near the Pacific Northwest Coast mountains. The thunderbird and killer whale are often depicted together in Pacific Northwest Native Indian art. A large example is at one by renowned carver Richard Hunt at one of the art exhibits at the Vancouver International Airport.

The Squamish Nation in British Columbia, Canada has a thunderbird as their symbol. Their thunderbird is portrayed as one of the special messengers of the Creator. The Squamish thunderbird is a symbol for strength as well as change with the three tail feathers representing the past, present and future. In the talons of this thunderbird is a face of a lizard which represents spiritual protection for the people of the Squamish Nation.

For many people, Natives and non-Natives alike, the thunderbird has become a symbol of power, strength and nobility.

The Bear in Pacific Northwest Native Indian Art

The Native American people have always had a special place in their hearts for the bear. Bears are portrayed in Pacific Northwest Native Indian art on totem poles, plaques, drawings, masks, jewelry and many other artworks. The bear represents a symbol of power, strength, learned humility, motherhood, teaching, healing and even dreaming. Bears are respected by the Northwest Native people for their human-like qualities. Bears in Pacific Northwest Native Indian art signify friendship and many are shown to be smiling.

Bears, regarded as masters of the forests, are also special from an environmental point of view because they are considered to be a part of the land shared by both bears and humans. Whatever happens to bears will affect the environment which will also ultimately affect humans. This relationship between bears and humans is depicted on giant bear-human masks as part of the art exhibits at Vancouver's International Airport.

Also interesting is that according to Northwest Native mythology, bears change into their spirit bodies to allow their earthly bodies to revitalize during winter hibernations. By Northwest Native tradition, a bear that is killed by hunters is taken to the house of the tribe's chief and treated like a guest of honor. Eagle down is sprinkled on the bear as a welcoming gesture. Dances and prayers are made to the bear's soul in order to ensure that no harm would later come to the hunters.

One of the most widely told Haida legends is that of the Bear Mother. She was a daughter of a tribe's chief who fell in love with and married a young handsome bear who was the nephew of a great bear chief. After the birth of twin bear cubs, the Bear Mother's brothers killed her bear husband during a hunt. As a result, the tribe agreed to use the bear as their crest which is how the bear clan started. This agreement maintained good relations between the bears and humans. The twin cubs, who had the ability to transform from bears to humans at will, became guardians of the land's people. The bear clan became one of the most respected of all Northwest Native Indian clans.

The Eagle in Pacific Northwest Native Indian Art

The eagle has been a universal symbol of power respected by many cultures throughout the world. The bald eagle was chosen as the emblem of the United States of America because of its great strength, majestic looks, long life and also because it was then believed in the 18th century to exist only in North America. The eagle was used as the name for the first space craft to land on the moon and even the Chinese developed a martial arts style based on the eagle.

The eagle is highly revered by many Native American cultures which have special eagle dances, ceremonies and societies. Both bald eagles and golden eagles along with their feathers are considered sacred. It is said that the Creator chose the eagle as the master of the skies. Since eagles fly higher and see better than other birds, they are considered to be closer to the Creator than any other Earth creatures. The eagle is regarded as a messenger to the Creator. It has the honor of carrying the prayers of humans in the world of the Earth to the world of Spirit where the Creator resides. It is believed that if one saw an eagle while praying or participating in a ceremony, prayers would be answered. Wearing or holding an eagle feather would also cause the Creator to take immediate notice. Some Native American tribes regard the wings of an eagle to be significant in representing the balance between a male and a female with each one dependent upon the strengths or abilities of the other.

Eagles inhabit the Pacific Northwest Coast region in great numbers and have special significance for the Native Indian people who live there. The eagle is a symbol of power, leadership and prestige. It also represents wisdom since it flies high above the world giving it a broad perspective of everything. Its feathers or down represent peace and friendship. The feathers are used in many rituals and worn on masks, headdresses and aprons for dances. Eagle down was sprinkled before guests during welcome dances and other ceremonies. An eagle feather as a present is said to bring good luck to both the recipient and the giver. The eagle is a favorite subject in Pacific Northwest Native Indian art.

The Killer Whale in Pacific Northwest Native Indian Art

One of the most awesome creatures in both real life and in Pacific Northwest Native Indian art is the orca or killer whale. Feared many years ago but now loved by millions of people around the world, the killer whale is one of the most prominent subjects for Northwest Native artists. The killer whale is regarded as the guardian as well as the ruler of the sea because of its sheer size and power. The killer whale is also seen as the best hunter of the sea.

Killer whales are symbols of longevity and romance since they are believed to mate for life. It is said that if fishermen ever injure a killer whale, it will capsize the canoe sinking the fishermen to the Village of the Whales. It is here where the fishermen will be transformed into whales themselves. Whales near the shore are believed to be humans who were transformed trying to communicate with their previous human families ashore. Others believe that killer whales are reincarnations of deceased native chiefs. Some legends claim that the first killer whale was previously a supernatural white wolf that entered the sea and transformed into a whale. Mother Earth painted markings on the side of the killer whale as a reminder that it used to be a member of the wolf family. Indeed, both the killer whale and wolf share similar characteristics as they both have similar coloring. They both also stay and hunt in family packs. There are also legends that describe the killer whale being able to transform back and forth into a wolf.

Killer whales are thought to be the prey of the mythical thunderbird who is powerful enough to capture and carry a killer whale back to the mountains. The geography of some parts of the Pacific Northwest Coast region is thought to be the result of a legendary battle between the killer whale and thunderbird. The Haida have a legend about a raven finned killer whale who is a whale chief carrying a raven perched on top of his dorsal fin.

The Raven in Pacific Northwest Native Indian Art

The most important symbol to many Northwest Native people is the Raven bird who is considered the Creator's assistant. It is said that the Raven could transform himself into anything. He was responsible for supplying the rivers and seas with fish as well as putting the sun into the sky. This is why the Raven is sometimes referred to as the 'Bringer of Light'. Interestingly enough, the Raven's antics were thought to be motivated by greed.

It was also said that he loved to tease and trick which gave him the reputation of being the trickster. Despite his selfishness, the Raven is also a cultural hero since his mischievous actions always helped the world.

According to one Pacific Northwest Native legend, an old chief hid the sun away in a box. The Raven transformed into a pine needle which dropped into the drinking water which the chief's daughter drank. She became pregnant and a son was born. One day, the chief finally gave into the Raven's (now disguised as his grandson) whining and allowed him to play with the sun in the box. Once the box was outside, the Raven broke it and transformed back to his original bird form. He then took the sun into his beak and flew up to the sky putting the sun back in its right place.



THE EAGLE is revered for its beauty, regal nature and signifies peace, spirituality and friendship.



THE THUNDERBIRD is the most powerful of all mythical creatures, and symbolizes personal power and a link to the spirit world.



THE BEAR is known for its human-like qualities and caring for family. The Bear is a symbol of strength, power and honor.



THE WOLF is known for its association with spiritual power. It is a symbol of family, unity and spirituality.



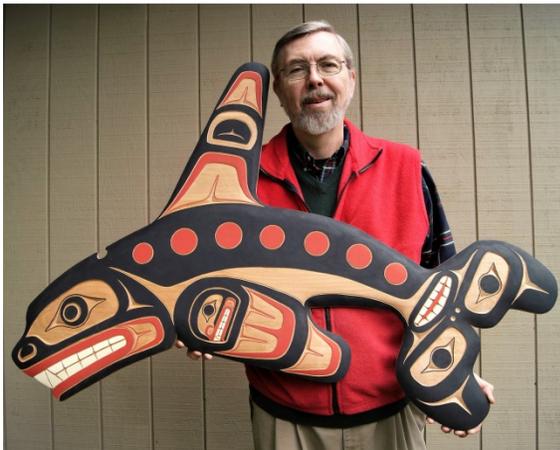
THE FROG is a symbol of innocence, stability and communication. It is known as a bringer knowledge and wealth.



THE ORCA is the Lord of the Ocean and the most respected of all sea creatures. The Orca symbolize s wealth and long life.



THE HUMMINGBIRD is a gentle creature, and is known for its fortitude and ability to overcome great obstacles. The Hummingbird symbolizes peace, healing and joy.



Other works by Joe

Beaver Lake WoodWorks

NW Native Style Woodcarving
Classes and Commissions

Joe McConnell

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