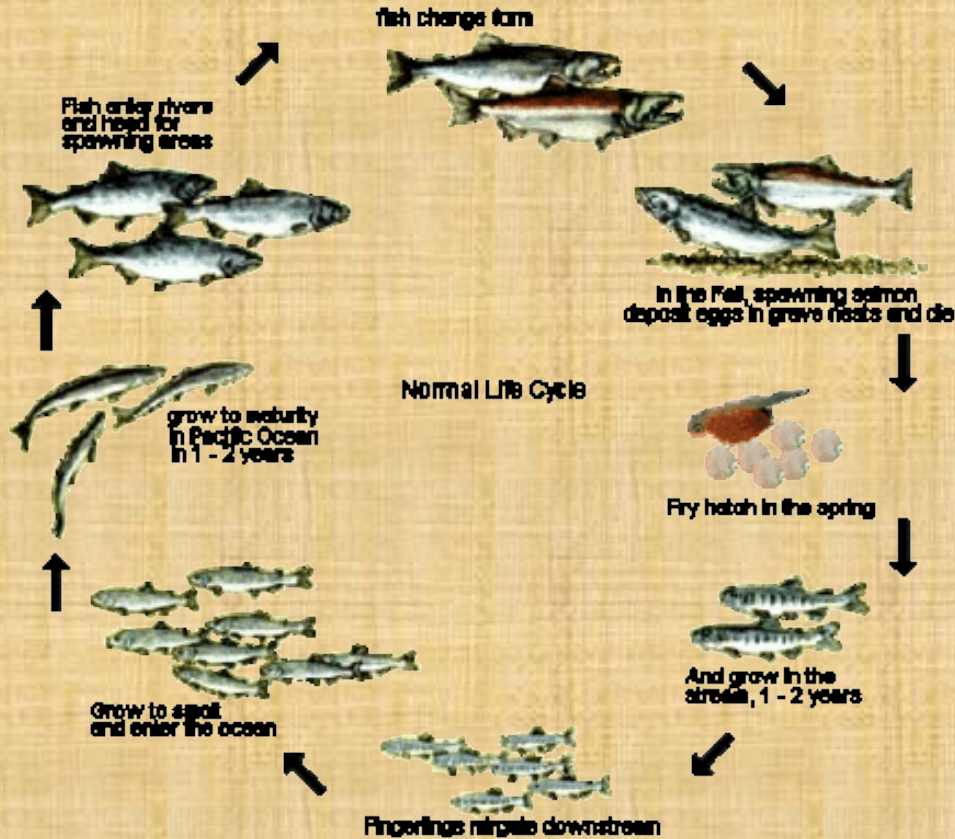




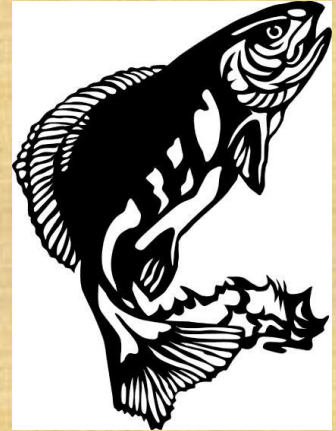
# Salmon Life Cycle



Like the Salmon they depend on, Northwest Coast Native Americans roles varied with the stage of life

# First Salmon Ceremony

- The First Salmon was an important feast honoring the salmon, one of their most plentiful food sources. They believed the salmons chose to sacrifice themselves for humans so their spirits could go on to live again like humans, in houses under the sea. So the bones of the first Salmon had to be returned to the water where it came from.



# Circle of Life

- Different stages of life were had special practices and rituals.
- The way the children were raised from childhood to adulthood was a reflection of practical needs as well as spiritual beliefs



Shaman is the  
medicine man  
and the link to the  
spirits

# Babies

- Parents in the Northwest Coast took great care of their babies. They gave them a bath every day and rubbed them with whale oil, used willow ash powder and used soft cedar bark diapers.
- To take the babies while they worked, the mothers strapped their baby in a cradleboard made of a hollowed cedar board stuffed with soft shredded cedar bark.

# Babies in Cradle Boards

- The cradleboard allowed a mother to keep her child with her at all times the first year, either carrying it strapped to her back or leaning it against a tree trunk while she was gathering roots and berries. The board was portable, safe and comfortable.



Tlingit mother with  
Baby on Cradleboard

# Early Years

- Young children were left in the care of their grandparents much of the time. They were given much affection and few restrictions.
- When a child reached the age of 6 , he or she was old enough to follow the mother or father around to start learning grown-up tasks and responsibilities

# Children

- Boys learned how to fish, hunt and woodcarving
- Girls learned how to keep house, gather berries and roots and making baskets.
- Children learned their tribes' legends and creation stories. They were taught to be quiet indoors and respect their elders.



Small Carved Canoe



Bark Basket  
used to pick  
berries



# Vision Quest

- When a boy was considered old enough and knowledgeable enough by tribal elders, he would make a vision quest to find his guardian spirit. (usually during his early teens)
- These animal totems, or spirit guides walk through life with them, teaching and guiding them and in some instances, protecting them. Spirit animals are often carved on Totem Poles.



# Marriage

- In the Northwest, girls were considered for marriage from the age of 14 and boys were considered eligible from the age of 16
- The marriage were often arranged by the parents. The wedding was a 3 day feast with great celebration, and a father to throw the biggest party of his lifetime (potlatch)

# Wedding



Wedding Group Kwakiutl NW Coast

# Mens Jobs

- Men made tools to catch fish, and tools for woodworking. They carved totem poles in front of their longhouse. Also they made canoes to go fishing for salmon.



# Womens Jobs

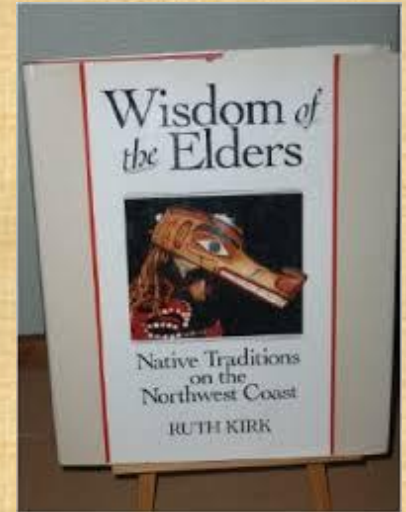
- The women went to pick berries and roots and prepared the food.
- They also did some weaving and made baskets.



Nootka women weaving

# Old Age

- Older people did less heavy work, and they became the teachers who trained children and the story tellers who handed down the tribe's legends and stories to the younger generation.
- Tribal elders presided over important ceremonies



# Celebrations and Ceremonies

- The Northwest Coast People performed dances and told stories and legends of their people during ceremonies for important events. This was the most important way of sharing their history because they did not have any written language.



Haida Raven Dancer

# Tribal Elders

- Tribal elders gave counsel
- They enjoyed caring for younger children while the mothers were out gathering food.
- Older people started giving their possessions when they stopped working
- A man would give his canoe to his sons and gave things away at potlaches (big parties with much singing and dancing, rituals and storytelling)

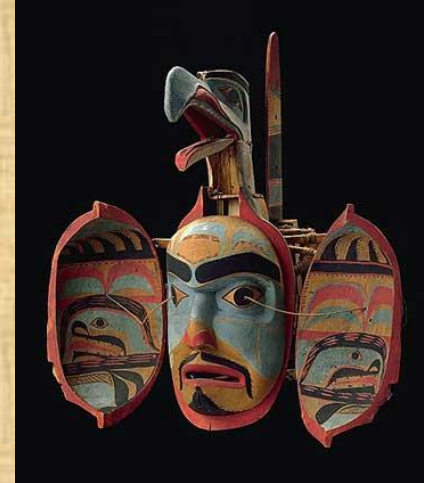


# Masks

- Beautiful and intricate cedar dance masks were carved out of wood. They were often used in storytelling at ceremonies such as a potlatch. Some masks even had a second carved face inside the first to unmask as a story was told.



Transformation Mask



# NW Coast Dancing with masks



# Death

- Personal items went with a person when they died.
- Burial customs varied up and down the Northwest coast, but almost all the cultures had cemeteries. The dead were not buried, but raised above the ground, usually on top of trees in large boxes or canoes.
- The tribes erected carved wooden monuments near the burial place of their most important people.

# NW Coast Death ritual artifacts



American Museum of Natural History

- It was the custom to remove a deceased person's name from the language, so that the spirit of death would not come and visit.
- If another person had the same name, he had to adopt a new name.

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