

# First Nations

## Animal



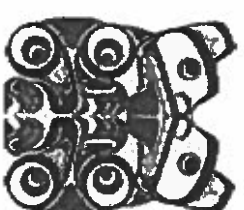
## Symbols



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## ANIMAL SYMBOLOLOGY



The Bear

The bear has a great self awareness and is also able to deliberate about choices or actions. We look at the bear to show us how to fish the salmon and collect the berries. The bear symbolizes family and strength. The bear in Northwest West Coastal Native Culture represents strength and learned humility through motherhood and teaching and is an important family crest associated with family and children. Sometime referred to as the protector of the animal Kingdom and forests, the bear is a well respected member of the community and can sometimes be referred to as an elder or a person that has passed on to a new life. Some bears return to the same den for hibernation, for which reason they are associated to home. Bears winter with their young until they are yearlings, for which reason they are associated to family. A Mother bear will always fight to protect it young and can be very fierce in this situation but then can be gentle and quiet as well. Because of human traits the bear shares, it is believed that the bear understands human speech and thought. Has great self awareness and is also able to deliberate about choice or action. We look at the bear to show us how to fish the salmon and collect the berries. Black bears are depicted with a short snout, short ears, small tail, and sometimes hanging tongue. Grizzly bears have bigger teeth, particularly the canine teeth, and large claws.



The Eagle

The eagle is the ruler of the sky and has the ability to transform itself. The eagle also has a connection with our creator. It symbolizes grace, power, and has great intellectual abilities. The Eagle is a sacred, wise and noble creature representing power and prestige to the First Nations People of the Northwest Coast. The gift the eagle shares is the ability of foresight, and an indication of good times to come. Eagles mate for life and is accepted as a sign of lasting spousal dedication. Few eagles that have lost their mate have been known to end their own life in despair. Eagle "Down" is revered as sacred and is sprinkled on the ground in ceremonies to welcome an important person in formality. Eagle feathers are used while smudging along with praying. The feathers were also given as symbolic gift to impart respect for accomplishment and display of courage and wisdom. In Aboriginal Northwest Coast culture, the Eagle has long been a source of artistic inspiration for traditional and contemporary Native art. The Eagle and can be identified by a powerful beak whose upper half ends in a strong downward curve with piercing eyes, feathers and large talons. The Eagle is frequently depicted on totem poles, masks, prints and jewelry.

**Woodpecker: Jun 21 – Jul 21**



Woodpeckers are usually the most nurturing of all the Native American animal symbols. The consummate listener, totally empathic and understanding, the Woodpecker is the one to have on your side when you need support. Of course, they make wonderful parents, and equally wonderful friends and partners. Another proverbial feather in the Woodpecker's cap is the tendency to be naturally frugal, resourceful, and organized. In a nurturing environment the Woodpecker is of course caring, devoted, and very romantic. Left to his/her own devices the Woodpecker can be possessive, angry, jealous, and spiteful.



**Snake: Oct 23 – Nov 22**

Most shamans are born under this Native American animal symbol. The Snake is a natural in all matters of spirit. Easily attuned to the ethereal realm the Snake makes an excellent spiritual leader. Also respected for his/her healing capacities, the Snake also excels in medical professions. The Snake's preoccupation with matters intangible often lead others to view them as mysterious, and sometimes frightening. True, the Snake can be secretive, and a bit dark – he/she is also quite sensitive, and caring. In a supportive relationship the cool Snake can be passionate, inspiring, humorous, and helpful. Left to his/her own devices, the Snake can be despondent, violent, and prone to abnormal mood swings.



**Goose: Dec 22 – Jan 19**

If you want something done – give it to the Goose. Persevering, dogged, and ambitious to a fault, the Goose sets goals for accomplishment, and always obtains them. The goose is determined to succeed at all cost – not for the approval of other – but those with this Native American animal symbol competes with his/her own internal foe. Driven is the watchword for the Goose's dominating personality trait – which makes them excellent in business and competitive sports. When tempered with supportive, nurturing family and friends, the Goose excels in all things he/she attempts. In a loving environment the Goose can be very passionate, humorous, gregarious, and even sensual. However, lead to his/her own devices, the Goose may fall into obsessive or addictive behaviors that will inevitably be his/her demise

cleansing. Frog's songs are believed to contain divine power and magic. Frog is a messenger and communicator between species being valued for his adaptability because he freely travels between and survives in two worlds land and water, inhabiting both natural and supernatural realms. Frog holds knowledge and power and is known as a positive spirit driver. The Frog closely linked with femininity and womanhood often depicted to be woman in or springtime and new life. The Frog designs are often utilized as decorative elements and imagery are carved on practically everything the people utilize, including house posts, bows, and totem poles where the frog is often seen peeking out with his tongue out and from under another creature's ears, mouth or hands. The Haida carved frogs on all of their house posts, believing that this would keep the poles from falling over. His shape and green body can identify the Frog and he is also most often depicted with a wide mouth, or grin, with an extended tongue.

**The Wolf**



The wolf is known for his intelligence, leadership and strong sense of family values as well as being a great team player. He is also known to have strength in relationships. The wolf symbolizes perseverance, intuition and success.

**The Salmon**



The salmon symbolizes instinct, determination and persistence. The salmon is also a provider of life. Salmon in pairs is good luck. Salmon is also a symbol of abundance, wealth and prosperity because the salmon is the primary food source for the people of the Northwest Coast. It is also symbolic of dependability and renewal as it is a provider. All five types of salmon run through our waters and is a main staple in the Northwest Coast diets. The salmon is both a saltwater and freshwater fish. Salmon travel great distances in schools, down the west coast to warmer waters during the winter months, and during warmer weather swim northwards again. At the end of their life cycle, the salmon will return to their spawning grounds, the fresh water rivers where they themselves were born; to spawn, lay and fertilize the eggs of the next generation. The salmon fight to return upstream, many dying before accomplishing their goal. After spawning, the salmon dies, creating a plentiful food source for bears and other wildlife. Out of respect, ceremonies are often held by the Northwest Coast people to celebrate the return of the salmon to their traditional spawning grounds.

**The Hummingbird**



The hummingbird sends messages to the people of things to come. Messages can be a spirit message or a message of healing. The hummingbird symbolizes beauty, intelligence, and love.

## THE KINGFISHER

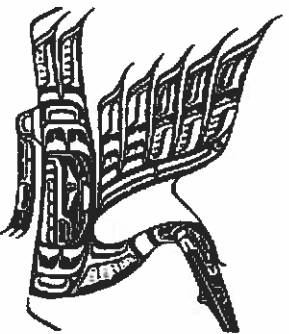


First Nations of the Northwest Coast believe that the Kingfisher is the promise of abundance, of new warmth, prosperity and love that is about to unfold within your life.

The Kingfisher has long been recognized for his speed and agility as well as his keen hunting skills.

Kingfishers are a group of small to medium sized brightly colored birds, large heads, long, sharp, pointed bills, short legs, and stubby tails.

## THE LOON



Loon symbolizes peace, tranquility, communication, serenity, & generosity.

With a generous and giving nature, Loon features significantly in the art and mythology of Canadian First Nations Peoples. Loon is famous for its unique and often haunting voice, and is respected for its knowledge of various realms. Animals with unique vocal talents are held in high regard by Northwest Coast peoples, who traditionally perceive words, voice and song as carriers of power and magic. Loon is associated with copper and wealth.

In the years of the great flood that took over our lands, a loon carried a willow branch across the water bringing hope to the nation, by telling the people the water was receding.

First Nations people perceived the owl to be linked with wisdom, foresight and the keeper of sacred knowledge. The Owl is a great foreteller of weather conditions and can be observed to identify changes in environment. He is the ruler of the night and the seer of souls, the symbolic meaning of owl revolved around guardianship of the underworlds and it is this relationship that gave the owl some negative associations with death. The strength of the owl would be invoked during ceremonies when prophesy of secret knowledge or a message of the unknown is involved. The owl has a family connection to sorcerers, as well as companions to seers, supernatural and medicine people. We are all visionaries and what we see is our soul in things. Owls can be identified in NorthwestCoast Aboriginal art by their large forward-facing eyes and ear-holes, a hawk-like beak, a flat face with a conspicuous circle of feathers around each eye.



The Thunderbird

The story of the Thunderbird in Native American Mythology is popular among various Native American and First Nations peoples. Thunderbird is a giant supernatural bird who causes thunder and lightning. His weapons are lightning snakes which are carried beneath his wings. Lightning flashes when he throws the lightning snakes or when he blinks his eyes. He is powerful enough to hunt Killer Whale and is often depicted with one in his talons, he is also known to help the weak and poor by in some cases picking up large animals (Killer Whale) and dropping them in a village of need. In many Coast Salish legends, Thunderbird is a mountain dweller and is a highly intelligent creature. From his home, he keeps a close eye over his dominion. Humans should beware not to try and outwit Thunderbird for they are most certain to have it backfire. In some Coast Salish myths, the peak Black Tusk in southern British Columbia, Canada is said to be his favorite perch. According to the Quilleute people of Washington State, it is the Blue Glacier of Mount Olympus. Art designs vary by artist but some common features found in Northwest Coast are a hooked beak, often but not always larger than that of Eagle. Thunderbird is often shown with a crown or a curly top, showing supernatural powers. The Thunderbird represents the carrying out of law and protocol.

## THE HERON



The Heron is considered to be a very good omen representing grace, purity, patience and long life. First Nations people took notice of the Heron's inquisitiveness, determination and excellent judgment skills and recognize the Heron as an expert fisher and hunter. Native people believed that sighting a Heron before a hunt was an indication that the hunt would be a victorious one.