

# Northwest Coast Native Art

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the **Collection**



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# Welcome

The William A. Egan Library opened in January, 1990. This booklet describes the library's Northwest Coast Native Art Collection and two separately funded totems on the UAS campus.

The library was named for William A. Egan, who served as Alaska's governor for 12 years between 1959 and 1974 and devoted nearly fifty years to Alaska politics. An early proponent of statehood, he led the Alaska Constitutional Convention which preceded statehood in 1959.

While the library was still under construction, the Alaska Percent for Art in Public Places Committee recommended 14 artists' proposals which were approved by the UAS Chancellor and UA Board of Regents. These pieces comprise the library's native art collection.

The University of Alaska Southeast is located on lands originally inhabited by the Aak'w Kwáan Tlingit people. *Áak'w Kwáan Aaní káx'*. The mission and core values of UAS reflect support of Alaska Native students and an increasing awareness and knowledge of Alaska Native heritage unique to Southeast Alaska.



## Level Two Main Library Entrance

### 1 Four Masks

*Edna Jackson*

The four female masks are made of cedar bark paper. Below the two center masks are shredded and spun cedar bark rings which encircle Eagle and Raven. Designs representing Eagle or Raven are painted on two of the women's cheeks. The artist initially deemed her attempts at this artwork unsuccessful because she sought to duplicate traditional carved wooden masks. Paper is not a traditional material used in Tlingit art. After experimentation in the paper making medium, however, she discovered a more successful approach by focusing on the inherent qualities found in handmade paper.

### 2 Aak'w House Posts

*Steve Brown and Wayne Price*

(flanking stairs) The house posts, carved in red cedar, are derived from an early Stikine Tlingit style. Each portrays characters from Tlingit legends. Tlingit society is divided into two sides (moieties), Raven and Eagle, with each side subdivided into clans characterized by one or more emblems or crests.

As you face the house posts, the post on the left recalls how Raven stole the sun and carried it into the sky. The Dog Salmon is shown swimming upstream. On the lower portion of the post is Good Luck Woman (*L'enaxxeet'ak'w*). Tradition has it that anyone who comes in contact with her will have good luck. Misfortune, however, awaits wandering children who meet her for they are carried away into the forest.



At the base of the post are stacks of mussel shells from a recent meal.

The post on the right shows the Big Dipper in human-animal form wearing a crown of stars. The next figure shows the shaman (*Ixt*). He



wears the bear's ears and fringed robe as a sign of his role as spiritual healer and prophet.

The Weasel, the figure at the bottom of the totem, sometimes acts as the *Ixt*'s helper.



### 3 Head Canoe

*Steve Brown*

This red cedar panel (*upper wall opposite stairs*) symbolizes that all humans and animals share in the spirit of life. The canoe carries some of the animal spirits of Tlingit mythology, representing each side of Tlingit society and some clans. The prominent figure is Raven holding the moon in his beak, a reference to the story of Raven bringing moonlight to the world. Next is Bear, from the Eagle moiety, clutching the gunwales of the canoe. Behind Bear is Frog, from the Raven moiety.

Behind Frog is Eagle, Raven's opposite; on the bow and the stern are figures of Killer Whale. The dorsal fin of the rear Killer Whale extends above the gunwale, suggesting that he is part of the canoe, but in some respects, apart from it. On the bow is a human figure grasping the gunwales as he is carried along on the supernatural ocean by his spirit friends. The Head Canoe is a reminder of the benefits and kindness given by the animal spirits. Their gifts include medicines, dreams, intuitive wisdom, and inspiration that lead mortals through the voyage of life.



#### 4 Circular Wooden Panels: Raven and Eagle

*Nathan Jackson*

These panels (*upper wall flanking reference desk*) are made of red cedar and are four-and-a-half feet in diameter. They are four inches thick in the center and taper off to a thickness of one-and-a-half inches at the edges. In Northwest Coast art, as in life, Raven's beak is long and pointed, while Eagle's beak is shorter and curved downward.

Raven is a leading figure in Northwest Coast mythology. He is the trickster and creator; he loves to

tease and trick, to woo and win; he is clever and he cheats. It is Raven who gave the world the sun and the moon, the stars, the rivers and lakes, the fish and other animals.

Entertaining stories of Raven's adventures are found along the Northwest Coast, throughout Alaska and even in parts of Siberia.

Eagle is a symbol of power and prestige and is, in many respects, Raven's opposite. In traditional Tlingit culture, persons must marry opposites: Ravens to Eagles, Eagles to Ravens. The panels reflect this social balance in Tlingit society.



## 5 Eagle-Shark Panel

*Jennifer Brady Morales*

(upper wall near rear) Shark is the principal crest of the Wooshkeetaan clan of the Eagle moiety. This relationship is illustrated by having Eagle's head and claws form the upper portions of Shark. The "S" shapes on the upper side of Eagle's wings serve a dual purpose: they represent the backbone of Eagle and Shark.

This panel is comprised of sixteen yellow cedar boards with the grain running vertically. The paint is

acrylic. Graphite was added to the black paint to make it glisten like traditional charcoal paint.

The human figure in the front dorsal fin depicts a husband while the figure in the second dorsal fin symbolizes his wife with a lip plug or labret. The lower pectoral fins show their son and daughter. The children are shown without teeth and only four fingers to symbolize their immaturity. This combination of family figures, symmetrically balanced in splayed design, honors the importance of clan and family in Northwest Coast societies.



## Level One

### 6 Big Dipper Panels

*Nathan Jackson*

(upper wall) The Big Dipper (*Yax-te*) is an important crest of the Aak'w Tlingit. The crest is said to have been given to the Aak'w warriors after a battle near Klawock. The red cedar panel on the left depicts Raven and the one to the right depicts Bear. The copper discs not only highlight the animal crest, but also show the big dipper in the night sky over Aak'w village and the city of Juneau.



## Level One

### Display Case

### 7 Plaited Utility Basket

*Jan Criswell*

This square basket is made from plaited red cedar bark. Northwest Coast weavers used various local materials for their baskets. Red cedar grows in southern Southeast Alaska and in British Columbia and was used by Tsimshian and Haida craftsmen in making many objects. Farther north, among the Haida and Tlingit, most weaving was done with spruce roots, as red cedar is seldom found north of Prince of Wales Island.



## 7 Midwinter Ravenstail Robe

*Cheryl Samuel*

The ravenstail style of weaving was a predecessor of the technique used in making Chilkat robes and tunics. The technique had not been used for the past 150 years until its recent revival by artists such as Samuel. This modern blanket does not use traditional colors or fibers. It represents the colors of the winter beach, with a black warp and silk strands of mauve, blue-green, steel blue, and pink.

The center is black with a design in the color of mussel hearts. The pattern across the top represents dark mountains with a single ray of golden hope streaming from the peaks. The long tassels flow with the tides, reflecting the hues of winter light. The collar is trimmed with marten fur.

## 7 Open Weave Clam Basket

*Jan Criswell*

This basket (*upper right*) is made with spruce roots gathered in Juneau. The open weave was designed for baskets used for harvesting shellfish and other resources so that the items could be washed after being collected.

## 7 Haida Storage Basket

*Mary Lou King*

This mid-sized storage basket (*lower right*) is woven from spruce roots collected in the Juneau area. Baskets such as this were woven in various sizes and used for holding household items. The skip-stitch pattern in the weaving on the top section is called *st'alaaw* in Haida, meaning slug or snail.



## 7 Haida Ceremonial Hat

*Mary Lou King*

The ceremonial hat is made of woven spruce roots. Since spruce roots swell when wet, the hat is waterproof when worn in the rain. The pattern in the weave is called *k'uhichihaangaat* in Haida, meaning spider web.

In the past, such hats were sometimes topped with small spruce root rings known as potlatch rings. An important person could add a ring for each major memorial feast or potlatch they had sponsored.

## 7 Bentwood Box

*Ray Watkins*

Bentwood boxes were made throughout the Northwest Coast and some of the finest were made by Tlingit and Haida craftsmen. To make such a box, a plank was

grooved, or kerfed, into four sections. The wood was then steamed or moistened with boiling water and quickly folded into rectangular form. The final corner, where the ends come together, was fastened with spruce root lacing. A cover and bottom were then added. Such boxes were used to store food, ceremonial items and family heirlooms.

The Tlingit design on this box portrays a Killer Whale with bared teeth. The small face on top represents the spirit of the whale at the blowhole.

## 7 Cylindrical Basket

*Delores Churchill*

This basket represents weaving techniques of the Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian. The cresting wave design was used by all three S.E. Alaska tribes. The bottom third is Tlingit, woven clockwise as the basket is held



right side up. The Tlingit use maidenhair fern, sunbleached grass and spruce roots except for the Wrangell weavers who often use cedar bark. The middle third is Alaskan Tsimshian who also weave clockwise with sunbleached grass and maidenhair fern. The Alaskan Tsimshian were influenced by the Tlingit to compact twine, as originally they plaited their baskets with red cedar bark. The upper third of the basket is Haida, woven counterclockwise and upside down with spruce and alder bark. The cresting wave design is surrounded by a strawberry design. The lid design includes Tlingit fern fronds (on the nob), Haida red cedar tree branches and the outer Tsimshian design of red cedar sunbleached grass representing smoke house racks.

## 7 Carved Bowl, Seal Design *Ray Watkins*

The bowl is made of alder wood and inlaid with operculum shells. Bowls like this were used for storing and serving foods such as dried fish, fish eggs, dried berry cakes, seaweed, eulachon oil, and seal oil. The bowl represents a seal sitting on a rock, warming itself on a sunny day, arching its long hind flippers and stretching its head upwards.

On ceremonial occasions a bowl such as this was sometimes filled with food and oil and presented to a distinguished guest. A gift of this sort brought great honor to both the recipient and the donor.



## 7 Raven Headdress

*Harry Calkins*

This Raven Headdress (*pictured on previous page*) was inspired by the art of the Nuxalk peoples of British Columbia. It is made in three pieces from birch which is stained black with designs rendered in silver paint. The body, head and tail comprise a single piece, while the wings are separate pieces attached to move up and down as the dancer moves. Such headdresses were worn for the Sisaok Ceremony, where important chiefs would demonstrate their family's history. Masks and headdresses used in the Sisaok would be handed down from generation to generation.

## 7 Ravenstail Apron

*Delores Churchill*

The design and weaving of this apron incorporates Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian art forms. The materials used include merino wool, fur, and deer hooves. The weaving is done with a handspun warp.

The top portion is a Haida weave called spider web. The central section, traditionally made of leather with a porcupine quill trim, represents the seasons of the mountains and is a Tlingit design. The bottom section, representing lightning, is a Tsimshian design.



## Outside Library Mourant Courtyard

### **Ch'áak' Kootéeyaa** **[Eagle Totem Pole]**

*Joe Young, T.J. Young*

The Eagle Totem Pole was raised during a large community celebration on April 24, 2010, eighteen years after the raising of the Raven Totem Pole across from the Whitehead building. The Eagle pole was jointly funded by Sealaska, UAS, and community contributions. Wooch.een, a UAS native student group, helped select the crests depicted and helped promote and raise funds for the project.

Balance is a key principle in Southeast Alaska native culture, and the arrival of the Eagle pole restored the balance lacking since the Raven pole came to UAS in 1993.

The Eagle Totem Pole is made from a 400-year-old red cedar tree from Prince of Wales Island and stands 36 feet. Starting at the top, the Eagle Clan crests represented are the Eagle and the Shark in transformation representing the *Wooshkeetaan* or Shark Clan of the Aak'w Kwáan or "People of the Small Lake" who were the original inhabitants of the land where the UAS campus is now. The Killer Whale, the Thunderbird and the Wolf, all other crests of the Eagle Moiety, complete the pole.

## Across from Whitehead Building

### *Yéil Kootéyaa*

#### [Raven Totem Pole]

*Tommy Jimmie Sr., Wes Willard,  
Leo Jacobs*

This 36-foot red cedar totem pole overlooks the campus buildings and Auke Lake. The pole was carved in 1963 near Haines, Alaska. It was later raised at a Chevron refinery near Nikiski on the Kenai Peninsula. Sometime after the refinery closure in 1991, it was donated to UAS and raised on the Auke Lake Campus on October 3, 1993.

Raven, a symbol of Tlingit heritage, is the top figure. The Aak'w Kwáan people originally lived in the Auke Lake campus area. Raven, a source of creativity, is standing on the sun. A person holding a copper or Indian money piece as a symbol of wealth is the next figure; they are followed by a man representing strength shown ripping apart a Sea Lion. The Beaver at the base represents diligence.



### **Steve Brown**

Steve Brown has had a long career as a carver, researcher, author and museum curator. His mediums include wood and metalwork. He currently resides in Washington State.

### **Harry Calkins**

Harry Calkins, after teaching Alaska Native Arts for four years, has moved to the Midwest where he currently teaches math. In his spare time, he continues to create art inspired by Northwest Coast Indians and the people of China, Japan and India.

### **Janice Criswell**

Janice Criswell is a Tlingit/Haida artist who has taught Northwest Coast basketry at the University of Alaska Southeast for several years. She learned to weave Raven's Tail robes from Cheryl Samuel and baskets from Delores Churchill. Her work is in various museum and private collections.

### **Delores Churchill**

Delores Churchill is a Haida artist and weaver of baskets, hats, robes and other regalia. Her exhibited works include utilitarian and ceremonial objects made of spruce root,

cedar bark, wool and natural dyes. She has received numerous awards including the National Heritage Fellowship Award.

### **Edna Jackson**

Edna Jackson is a life-long Tlingit resident of Kake, Alaska who has worked and exhibited in the mediums of paper, beadwork and jewelry.

### **Nathan Jackson**

Nathan Jackson is Chilkoot Tlingit of the Raven moiety, who has been creating artwork since 1959. His projects include masks, screens, panels, house posts, totems and jewelry. He has instructed wood-carving and design at several institutions, and his work is found in museums and private collections throughout the world. He currently resides in Ketchikan, Alaska.

### **Leo Jacobs Sr.**

Leo Jacobs Sr. was a Tlingit artist of the Coho Clan, from Haines, Alaska. He carved many art pieces, and museums across the United States own his work.

# About the Artists

## *Tommie Jimmie Sr.*

Tommie Jimmie, Sr. is a Tlingit resident of Juneau, who has been carving since the age of 14. He is from the L'uknax.ádi Clan of the Raven Moiety. His art includes totems, smaller wood and stone carvings and jewelry. In addition to his work on the Raven Totem at UAS and in "Auke Village" close to the ANB Hall downtown, two totems in the Sitka National Historical Park are solo creations. Tommie Jimmie, Sr. has also been a musician.

## *Mary Lou King*

Mary Lou King is a long time resident of Juneau who learned her basketry skills at UAS from Selina Peratrovich, Janice Criswell and Delores Churchill. She has also authored and taught in the field of outdoor education.

## *Jennifer Brady Morales*

Jennifer Brady Morales is a late Tlingit/Tsimshian artist who worked and exhibited in the mediums of silver, wood, ivory and painting. She also created drums.

## *Wayne Price*

Wayne Price is a Wooshkeetaan Tlingit master carver who has carved over 20 traditional and non-traditional totems. He is an associate professor of Northwest coast arts at UAS.

## *Cheryl Samuel*

Cheryl Samuel has had a long career as a weaver, researcher, author and teacher. She is associated with the revival of Raven's Tail weaving. She was adopted by the Eagle/Wolf Clan of the Chilkat Tlingit.

## *Ray Watkins*

Ray Watkins began carving and studying Northwest Coast Art in 1978. He was adopted into the Raven Sockeye Clan of Haines. He teaches carving at UAS and has received awards for his work; many pieces are in public and private collections.

## *Wesley J. Willard*

Wesley J. Willard was a master totem carver and lifelong Chilkat Valley resident until his death in 1994. He demonstrated his carving skills at the 1964 World's Fair in Seattle. He was also an accomplished musician and danced with the Chilkat Dancers.

### ***T.J. Young***

T. J. Young, a member of the Yaadaas Eagle Clan of the Kaigani Haida, is from Hydaburg, Alaska and was introduced to Haida art by his grandfather Claude Morrison. In addition to carving totems and ceremonial objects he has studied in Vancouver's Northwest Coast Jewelry Arts Program.

### ***Joe Young***

Joe Young, from the Yakw'laanaas Raven Clan, is T.J. Young's brother and also from Hydaburg. He began drawing in junior high school and learned the basics of carving from Warren Peele. Prior to carving the Eagle Pole on the UAS Juneau campus, the Young brothers completed poles which stand in the Sitka National Historical Park and Hydaburg Totem Park.

## **Cyril George Indigenous Knowledge Collection**

*(est. 2016)*

This special collection is named after Kaalkáawu Cyril George, a Tlingit leader from the Deisheetaan Clan of Angoon, and partially funded by a Rasmuson Foundation grant. The Cyril George Collection honors indigenous voices and Alaska Native Knowledge in a collection of over 3,000 volumes on the main floor [level two] of Egan Library. The collection includes sub-collections for Alaska Native Arts, Alaska Native Language, and Alaska Native Society. A Global Indigenous Knowledge collection has materials with more of a focus on indigenous people of North America and the world, as well as more general language materials, and literature. All of the indigenous literature can be found in the Global collection, including by Alaskans, so that they can all be located together for a broader collection representing indigenous voices. There are also two material-based sub-collections, for Media and Oversize materials.

Selected from  
the Egan Library

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