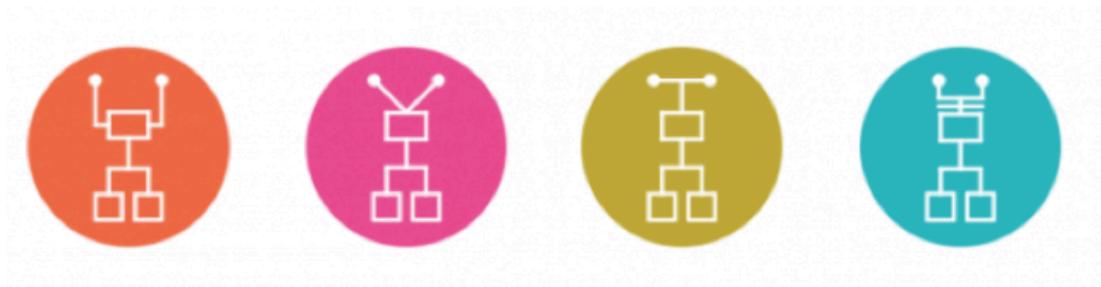


THE T'AKDEINTAAN CLAN



Zoom on the Tlingit

The T'akdeintaan clan is part of the Tlingit tribe of Alaska, in the United States. Their culture is based on hunting and gathering in the forests of the region. Historically, they carved canoes out of cedar trees and went fishing in the sea. Salmon was the basis of their diet. The men would carve wood and the women would make baskets and fabrics out of barks.

The Tlingit society is hierarchical and is divided among numerous clans. Although the hierarchical divisions are now less important, the clans persist through time. Each of them has their own histories, songs and totems.



In 2010, eight cultural objets were repatriated to the T'akdeintaan clan, such as the mask displayed below, by the Pennsylvania University Museum.



Photo courtesy of Hoonah Indian Association, published with permission from the T'akdeintaan Clan, Snail House, of Hoonah, Alaska

Zoom on their culture

These cultural objets were used in ceremonies such as the Potlatch ceremony (illustrated below).

The word « potlatch » comes from the chinook (a jargon used in British Columbia and in some American States such as Alaska) ; it means « action of giving ». The term is used to refer to various ceremonies leading to festivities (speeches, dances, songs) as well as exchanges and gift givings.

These ceremonies, observed amongst the populations of the Pacific coast, from the State of Washington to Alaska, are held to announce a pregnancy, to celebrate a wedding, or to honour a deceased. It is also the occasion for the Chief of a clan to pass down his rights and privileges to his first son.

These ceremonies were traditionally held in the winter because spring and summer were dedicated to the research of food ; and autumn to its storing. Today, they are often held in spring. They were prohibited until 1934 in the United States and 1951 in Canada by the governments, because Christian missionnaires believed that they were evil. The prohibition was also based on the idea that those ceremonies were barring the prosperity of the Indigenous populations, as the cultural goods were distributed without restraint. Yet, they represent one of the pillars of the aboriginal culture. The aboriginals have continued to practice them, more often clandestinely.

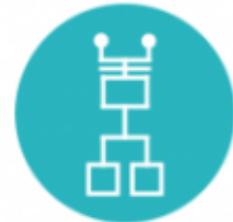


Credits : First Peoples of Canada

Zoom on the law

The American Indian Religious Act of August 11 1978 protects and preserves the religious and cultural practices of the Native Americans, the Eskimos, the Aleut and the Hawaiians by regulating the access to sacred sites and the possession of sacred objects. To this day, very few jurisprudence has been listed.

To the contrary, the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) 1990 seems to be more effective. It organised the repatriation of sacred artifacts, funeral objects, sacred objects, and object which are part of indigenous population's cultural heritage who can prove that they are the inheritors of these goods or that they have a strong cultural link with these objects.



The Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights has initiated a campaign at the beginning of september 2014 for the protection of indigenous tribe's cultural goods. If you want to know more and to support us financially, you can find us on the United Donations website (www.uniteddonations.co).