



#FontanaTogether

Totem Pole

The carving on totem poles separates and emphasizes the flat, painted surfaces of the symbolic animals and spirits depicted on them. Each pole generally has from one (as with a grave marker) to many (as with a family legend) animal images on it, all following standardized forms which are familiar to all Indians of the Northwest Coast; beavers, for example, always include cross-hatched tails, and eagles show downward curved beaks.



The word totem refers to a guardian or ancestral being, usually supernatural, that is revered and respected, but not always worshipped. The significance of the real or mythological animal carved on a totem pole is its identification with the lineage of the head of the household. The animal is displayed as a type of family crest, much as an Englishman might have a lion on his crest, or a rancher a bull on his brand. More widely known, but in fact far less common, are the elaborately carved tall totem poles that relate an entire family legend in the form of a pictograph. This legend is not something that can be read in the usual sense of the word; only with an understanding of what the symbols mean to the Indians and a knowledge of the history and customs of the clan involved can the pole be interpreted. Each animal or spirit carved on the pole has meaning, and when combined on the pole in sequence, each figure is an important symbol constituent of a story or myth. An exact interpretation of any set of symbols, however, would be almost impossible without the help of a knowledgeable narrator from the family. Now lets make our own Totem Pole.

Materials:

- Empty paper towel or wrapping paper rolls
- Crayons and/or markers
- Construction paper (many colours)
- Glue
- Scissors

Instructions:

1. Cut a piece of construction paper long enough to wrap around the paper roll.
2. You can cut the paper towel roll in half to make a smaller totem piece.
3. Lay the paper out flat and draw on an animal's face.
4. You can draw multiple animals so they are all stacked up when you glue it around the roll.
5. When you have finished drawing the face, glue the construction paper around the toilet paper/paper towel roll.
6. Cut a pair of wings and glue them to your totem.
7. If you like, you can make a few different totems and stack them on top of one another.

