

### *S'abadeb – The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists*

- The Coast Salish region extends from the northern Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland areas to western Washington state.
- There are dozens of Coast Salish First Nations groups in BC and Washington state.
- Archaeological evidence shows that First Nations have inhabited the region since at least 9000 BC.
- The term “Coast Salish” was coined by linguists to refer to one branch of the vast Salishan language family.
- There are many distinct Coast Salish languages – considerable efforts have been made within First Nations communities to keep these languages alive.
- In the Salish world view, elders are amongst the most precious of gifts.
- The connection between Coast Salish people and the land and water of the Pacific Northwest is at the centre of cultural beliefs and practices.
- For the Coast Salish peoples, the earth is the ultimate source of nourishment and knowledge. Earth provides gifts of food, shelter, clothing and medicine.
- First Foods ceremonies are one way the Coast Salish celebrate respect for the earth. These ceremonies honour traditional foods such as water, clams, duck, elk, salmon, sprouts and berries.
- At the end of the First Salmon ceremony, an important type of First Foods ceremony, the bones of the salmon are returned to the water. This shows the salmon was well-treated and it will be welcomed the following year.
- Coast Salish people refer to the Western Red Cedar as “the tree of life” because it provides materials for canoes, longhouses, clothing, tools and basketry.
- Maritime explorers arrived on the coasts of British Columbia and Washington state in the 1770s, with British captain George Vancouver collecting some of the earliest-known Coast Salish artifacts.
- After the establishment of Fort Langley in 1827, Fort Nisqually (present-day Tacoma, WA) in 1833 and Fort Victoria in 1843, a new population of settlers, missionaries and government agents arrived on traditional lands of the Coast Salish people.
- Despite the changes to traditional ways of life during the 19th and 20th centuries, contemporary Coast Salish artists have nurtured a vital sense of identity through renewed art forms.