

Living Cultures: Indigenous Artist Profile, Dr. Richard Hunt

Film Title: Living Cultures: Indigenous Artist Profile, Dr. Richard Hunt

Film Synopsis: This film introduces master carver and hand painter Richard Hunt, who was born in Alert Bay and is Kwakwaka'wakw from Fort Rupert, British Columbia. Richard describes his work as cultural property and shares his methods of traditional carving and how his mentors have guided him through his carving journey. Richard speaks of the exciting revival of culture that he is seeing and the importance of Indigenous cultures moving forward.

Warnings: This film speaks to shameful historical events in Canadian history, including harm from past and ongoing colonial practices that stem from the Indian Act. Examples include forced assimilation and relocations, day and residential schools, control and theft of Indigenous land, and banning of traditions, cultures, and spirituality.



Keywords/Topics: Big house, cultural property, cultural revival, evolving Indigenous cultures, learning from Elders, going to jail to keep Indigenous cultures alive

Word Bank: Big House, cultural property, cultural revival, cultural resurgence, Elder, evolving culture, cultural extinction, Indigenous, mentor, traditional

Word Bank Definitions

Word	Definition
Big house	Big houses are unique to the First Nations Peoples of the Northwest Coast. They are the customary space for ceremony and acts of governance, and they are also used as dwellings. Big houses are an important and central part of First Nations communities.
Cultural resurgence	Indigenous cultural resurgence is the recovery and re-emergence of cultural practices, events and ceremonies after a period where they were not as active or even dormant.
Cultural revival	Cultural revival is the renewed interest in and proliferation of cultural practices, which can be seen in the arts, music, literature and actions of Indigenous youth.
Elder	Indigenous Elders are highly respected and are the gatekeepers of First Nations wisdom, knowledge and history. Elders hold a deep spirituality and follow guiding principles and values that influences how they live and teach. Indigenous communities determine Elders differently. There is no set age for an Elder and the role is not gender-specific.
Evolving culture	All cultures evolve over time. Indigenous cultures are imbedded with traditions that remain relatively unchanged alongside traditions that have and continue to change over time. There are also aspects of Indigenous cultures that have evolved in significant ways since settlers came to this land now called Canada over 400 years ago.

Cultural extinction	<p>Indigenous Peoples have existed since time immemorial. Historically, Indigenous Peoples inhabited all of Turtle Island, an Indigenous term for the modern-day continent of North America. Over the course of thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples developed important knowledge sets relating to the land, cultural expressions, practices and traditions, rites and rituals, technologies and techniques, and health.</p> <p>Indigenous populations are estimated over 60 million before colonization. The 2021 Census counted 1.8 million Indigenous people, counting for 5% of the total population of Canada. Past and ongoing colonialism continues to cause Indigenous Peoples to experience spiritual and cultural oppression, alongside loss of lands, territories, art, languages and natural resources. Yet, the widely held belief that Indigenous Peoples would become extinct through enfranchisement (the loss of one's Indian status and rights to land under Canadian law) or assimilate into Canadian society founded predominantly on European traditions, did not come to be.</p>
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Indigenous	Indigenous is an inclusive term encompassing all Indigenous Peoples, including status, non status, First Nation, Inuit and Métis.
Mentor	A mentor provides guidance, advice, helps build skills, and provides teachings to support others. In Indigenous society, a mentor may also provide cultural teachings and live a healthy life to influence others. A mentor may or may not be an Elder.
Traditional	Traditional Indigenous teachings encompass ways of knowing, being, and doing that are actively practiced or learned. Traditions evolve over time and are a method of teaching others. Traditional Indigenous values often include the Seven Teachings: Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth.

Defining cultural property:

In the context of this film, cultural property refers to any cultural item, physical object, expression, and visual arts piece.^{1,2} Canada endorsed the United Nations Declarations on the Right of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 (also known as UNDRIP). This means that Indigenous artists have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over traditional cultural expressions.³ Cultural objects have a special and protective status due to their value to people as symbols of identity.

1. Humphrey, C., & Verdery, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy*. (1st ed). Routledge.

2. Hardlotte, B., McLeod, R., & Mitchell, H. (2021). Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of the Woodlands Cree and Denesuline Peoples of northern Saskatchewan, Canada: The land as teacher and healer. *Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing. Te Rau Ora.* (6)1, 26-36.

3. United Nations (General Assembly). (2007). Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Pp. 21- 22.

Overarching Questions: What is the meaning of cultural property? Who is Mungo Martin and how did he influence Richard Hunt? How do Indigenous cultures change and evolve?

Suggested Class Discussions/Questions/Activities:

1. Discuss the significance of traditional Indigenous names and their meaning. How do Indigenous people obtain their Indigenous name?
2. What is the Big House? Are there Big Houses in all Indigenous cultures?
3. Some places in British Columbia have been renamed back to an Indigenous name. Can you name some examples? (e.g., Mount Douglas Park changed to PKOLS)
4. Richard Hunt describes his work as “cultural property” and not art. What does he mean by this statement?
5. Why would some people think Indigenous Peoples in Canada are extinct?
6. How have Indigenous cultures evolved over time? What have Indigenous people needed to do in order to keep their cultures alive and thriving?
7. Richard Hunt shares the importance of mentors in his life, and mentions Mungo Martin. How did Mungo shape Richard’s work? Do you have a mentor in your life?
8. What is the Indian Act? How has it been used by the government to attempt to control Indigenous Peoples, past and present?
9. What is the Doctrine of Discovery? How has it been used to control Indigenous Peoples in Canada? Are there other parts of the world where the Doctrine of Discovery has been used as well?
10. Research the Indigenous cultural practices that were banned as a result of the Potlach Ban.

Teacher Resource Sheet

BC Curriculum Links – Kindergarten – Grade 5

Kindergarten: Arts Education	Grade 1: Arts Education
<p>Big Idea: People create art to express who they are as individuals and community.</p> <p>Content: Traditional and contemporary Indigenous arts and arts-making process.</p> <p>Competencies: <u>Reasoning and reflecting</u> Observe and share how visual artists use processes, materials, technologies and techniques.</p>	<p>Big Idea: People connect to others and share ideas through the arts.</p> <p>Content: Students observe a variety of local Indigenous arts and other works of art from Indigenous artists from other parts of Canada.</p> <p>Competencies: <u>Communicating and documenting</u> Describe and respond to various works of Indigenous arts.</p>
Grade 2: Arts Education	Grade 3: Social Studies

<p>Big Idea: Creative expression develops our unique identity and voice.</p> <p>Content: Students explore Indigenous art that serves a purpose for ceremonies as part of cultural tradition (e.g., Art for the big house).</p> <p>Competencies: <u>Communicating and documenting</u> Interpret symbolism and how it can be used to express meaning through the arts.</p>	<p>Big Idea: Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions and collective memory. Content: Oral history, traditional stories and artifacts as evidence about past Indigenous cultures (e.g., Types of tools used for carving).</p> <p>Competencies: <u>Critical and reflective thinking</u> Sequence objects and images, then explain why some aspects change and others stay the same (e.g., How have Indigenous carving techniques changed from the past to present? Why?)</p>
Grade 4: Arts Education	Grade 5: Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies
<p>Big Idea: Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge and perspectives.</p> <p>Content: Visual arts: students explore elements of design: line, shape, space, texture, colour and form. Competencies: <u>Exploring and creating</u> Choose visual arts elements, technologies and tools using combinations of line, shape, etc. specific to Indigenous art.</p>	<p>Big Idea: Skills are developed through practice, effort and action.</p> <p>Content: Cross-curricular with Visual Arts to create a two-dimensional totem pole using images from Richard Hunt's pole on the computer followed up with a 3-D model.</p> <p>Competencies: <u>Applied Design</u> Choose a design, outline a plan on paper, then to computer and then create a 3-D image. Gather peer feedback and reflect on process.</p>

Reading Material Suggestions:

- Florence, M. (2022). Righting Canada's Wrongs: Residential schools: the devastating impact on Canada's Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings and calls for actions. James Lorimer & Co. Grades 9-12.
- Gray Smith, M. (2017). Speaking our Truth. Orca Publishing. Grades 5-8. Also includes a Teacher's Guide.
- Webstad, P. (Ed.). (nd). Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Society. Grades 4-12.

Additional On-line Educational Resources:

- The Kwakwaka'wakw People <https://www.kwakiutl.bc.ca/>
Explore Richard Hunt's home community, culture and land through online history, stories and biographies. Grades 5-12.
- Richard Hunt <https://www.richardhunt.com/>
Explore traditional Indigenous carvings from master carver Dr. Richard Hunt.
- Focused Educational Resources <https://focusedresources.ca/en>
This website supports excellence in K-12 education. Indigenous resources (books, films, etc.) are vetted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators.