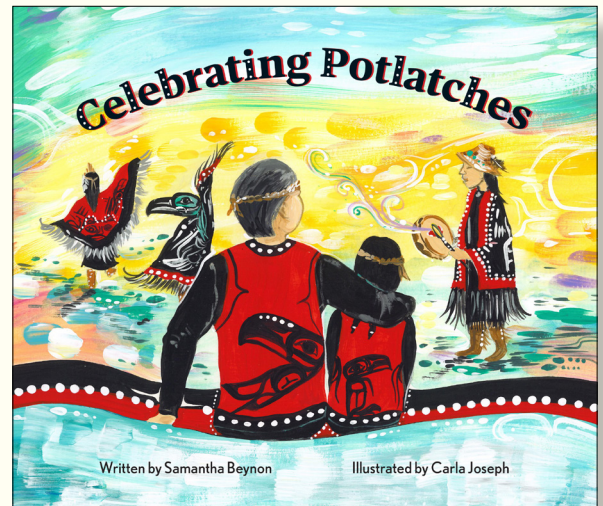




Title: Celebrating Potlatches
Author: Samantha Beynon
Illustrator: Carla Joseph
Genre: Picture Book / Children’s Fiction
Grade Levels: Kindergarten – Grade 3



BOOK DESCRIPTION

“Papa, what is a Potlatch?”

Inspired by Ts’msyen Chief William Beynon’s historic notebooks on Potlatches in the Gitksan village of Gitsegukla, *Celebrating Potlatches* pairs intergenerational storytelling with beautiful illustrations to honour Indigenous traditions. From the award-winning author of *Oolichan Moon* and the accomplished illustrator of *Be a Good Ancestor*, this book recounts the 1885 Potlatch ban and the resilience of the communities who fought to keep their traditions alive.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Celebrating Potlatches is based on the knowledge passed down by Samantha Beynon’s great-grandfather, William Beynon. William Beynon (1888–1958) was a chief of the Ts’msyen Nation and shared many stories about his people. In *Potlatch at Gitsegukla*, Marjorie M. Halpin and Margaret Seguin Anderson collect nearly 200 of Beynon’s notebook pages, where he recorded detailed descriptions and drawings of the Potlatches and totem pole raisings he witnessed in the Gitksan village of Gitsegukla in 1945.

TEXT FEATURES

- title page
- illustrations
- factual backmatter
- historical photograph

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Early Literacy – listening, reading, and discussing
- Art – traditional Indigenous art, drumming, and regalia
- Social Studies – the 1885 Potlatch ban, history of Indigenous Peoples, connection to community
- Social Responsibility – uplifting others and ourselves, honouring traditions
- Indigenous Knowledge and Traditions – Potlatch ceremonies, intergenerational storytelling



PART 1: PRE-READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

- Students understand that Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, and collective memory.

Materials

- a copy of the Know, Wonder, Learn chart (page 7 of this lesson plan) for each student
- a pencil for each student

Procedure

1. Distribute a copy of the Know, Wonder, Learn chart to each student.
2. Explain to the class that today you will be reading a book called *Celebrating Potlatches*. Explain that the author wrote this story about the history of her family and her community.
3. Ask students to share something that they already know about Potlatches, and to write their answers in the “Know” column of their chart. If they aren’t familiar with that word, explain that a Potlatch is an important celebration in many Indigenous communities, and that it is okay to leave the first column blank because it just means that the class has more fun things to learn!
4. Students will complete the rest of the chart in a later part of the lesson.

PART 2: PRE-READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

- Students understand that people from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects of life.

Materials

- chart paper and markers

Procedure

1. Have students think of their own special celebrations (e.g., birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving). Ask: *What is your favourite celebration?* Allow time for students to share with the class.
2. Ask: *What do you do during this celebration?*
3. Ask: *How do you feel during this celebration?*
4. Ask: *How would you feel if you weren’t allowed to have this celebration anymore?* Record answers on the whiteboard.
5. Show the cover of *Celebrating Potlatches* to the class. Explain that this is a book about what happens when special celebrations are not allowed. Ask students how they think the characters in the book will feel. Allow some time for class discussion.



PART 3: DURING THE READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

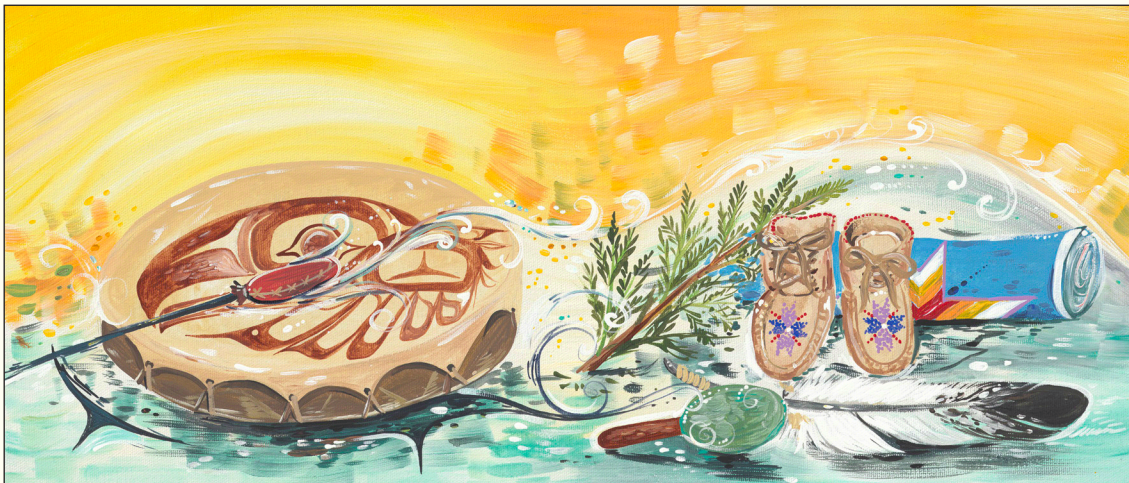
- Students ask questions, make inferences, and draw conclusions.

Materials

- students' Know, Wonder, Learn charts from Part 1
- a pencil for each student

Procedure

1. Ask students to return to their Know, Wonder, Learn charts. Tell them to use the “Wonder” column to record any questions they have as you read the book.
2. Read *Celebrating Potlatches* aloud to the class.
3. Students will complete the rest of the chart in a later part of the lesson.





PART 4: AFTER READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

- Students understand that people from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects of life.

Materials

- a copy of the Special Celebrations T-chart (page 8 of this lesson plan) for each student
- whiteboard and dry-erase markers

Procedure

1. Distribute copies of the Special Celebrations T-chart to the class. Draw a copy of the T-chart on the board so that you can demonstrate how to use the chart for the class. Tell the class you will be comparing Potlatches to other celebrations, and ask students to recall their special celebration from Part 2. Students will write this celebration at the top of the right column of their T chart.
2. Ask: What are some things you would find at a Potlatch celebration? (E.g., Family, dancing, food, regalia, gifts, love.) Write students' answers in the left column of the T-chart on the whiteboard. If students need some prompting, re-read pages 8 and 9 of *Celebrating Potlatches* aloud.
3. Choose a celebration, such as your birthday, to add to the T-chart on the board in the right column. Read the first entry in the "Potlatch" column aloud and record that entry in the right column if your celebration also has it. For example: *Does my birthday include family? Yes, it does, so I'm going to write "family" in the column for my favourite celebration.* Move on to the next entry in the "Potlatch" column, and continue this way until you make it through the entire list. For example: *Do I wear regalia on my birthday? No, regalia is traditional clothing that is only worn for special events like Potlatches, so I won't write it in this column.* Add a few parts of your celebration that are different from Potlatches to the bottom of the column (e.g., birthday hats or balloons).
4. Tell the class that now they will think about the parts of their favourite celebration. Read the first entry in the "Potlatch" column aloud and ask students to raise their hand if their favourite celebration also includes it. If so, tell them to write it in the right column of their T-chart. Move on to the next entry in the "Potlatch" column and continue this way until you make it through the entire list.
5. Ask students to think of parts of their favourite celebration that are different from Potlatches. Have them write these elements in the right column of their T-chart, then invite them to share a few of these elements with the class.





PART 5: AFTER READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

- Students ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.
- Students explain why people, events, or places are significant.
- Students recognize the causes and consequences of events, decisions, or developments.

Materials

- students' Know, Wonder, Learn charts from Part 1
- a pencil for each student

Procedure

1. Ask students to return to their Know, Wonder, Learn charts.
2. Were any questions in the “Wonder” column answered in *Celebrating Potlatches* or in Part 4? If so, students record the answers in the “Learn” column.
3. For any remaining unanswered questions, see if the students can come up with answers together or do some research as a class.





ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: DRAWING OUR FAVOURITE FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

Materials

- blank white paper and drawing utensils for each student
- whiteboard and dry-erase markers

Procedure

1. Ask students to draw a picture of their favourite family celebration. Provide positive reinforcement and constructive feedback as students work on their drawings.
2. Walk around the room and ask what students are drawing as they work. Create a list on the white board under the title “Our Favourite Family Celebrations.”
3. Invite students to share their drawings with the class.

ACTIVITY 2: PAINTING LIKE CARLA JOSEPH

Materials

- blank white paper or construction paper for each student
- paintbrushes for each student
- paint in a variety of colours
- chart paper

Procedure

1. Show students the illustrations in *Celebrating Potlatches*. Ask students to share some things they notice about the illustrations (e.g., bright colours, wavy lines, paint texture).
2. Explain that the illustrator of the book, Carla Joseph, uses a unique style of painting for the backgrounds of the illustrations, and that the class is going to try painting in a similar style.
3. Distribute paper, paint, and paintbrushes to each student.
4. Create your own painting inspired by Carla Joseph’s artwork on the chart paper, demonstrating how to use paintbrushes to create wavy lines and dots like those in the book.
5. Ask students create their own paintings.
6. Invite students to share their paintings with the class.

Know, Wonder, Learn Chart

I know...	I wonder...	I learned...

Special Celebrations T-Chart

At a Potlatch, there is...	At _____, there is...