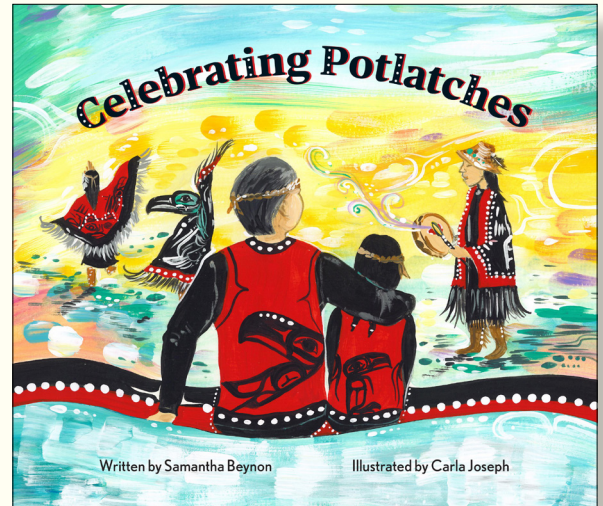




Title: Celebrating Potlatches
Author: Samantha Beynon
Illustrator: Carla Joseph
Genre: Picture Book / Children’s Fiction
Grade Levels: Kindergarten – Grade 3



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

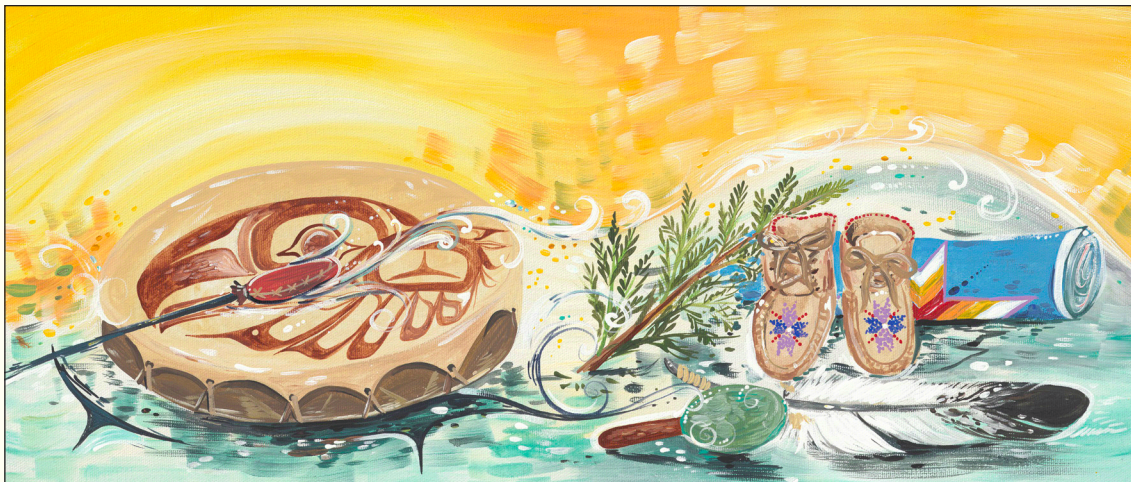
- Students understand personal and family history and traditions.
- Students identify fair and unfair events, decisions, or actions and consider their consequences.

Materials

- chart paper and markers

Procedure

1. Explain that today you will be reading a book about a special celebration called a Potlatch.
2. 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.
3. Ask: *What do you do during this celebration?*
4. Ask: *How do you feel during this celebration?*
5. Ask: *How would you feel if you weren't allowed to have this celebration anymore?*
6. 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 2: DURING THE READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

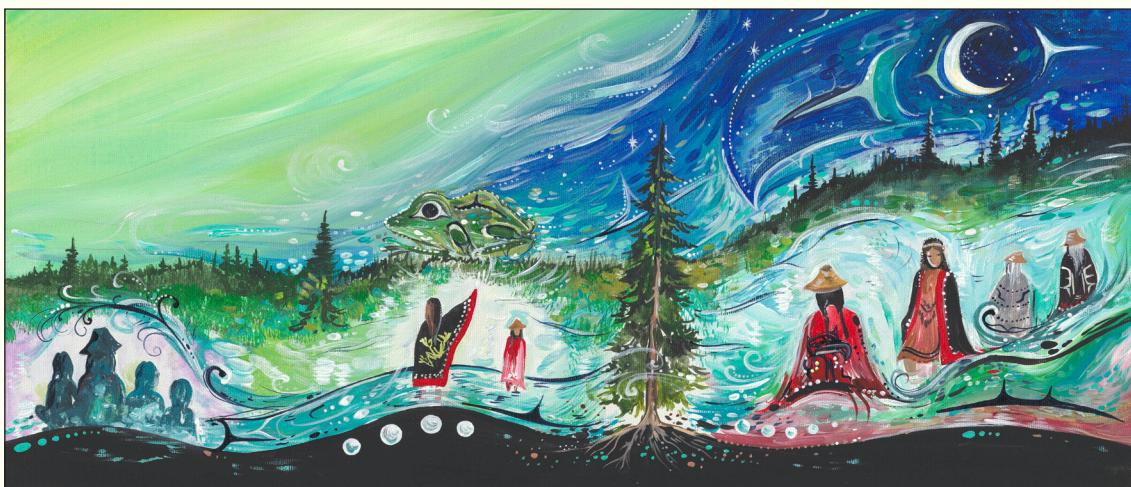
- Students understand that stories and traditions reflect who we are and where we are from.
- Students understand that rights, roles, and responsibilities shape our identity and help us build healthy relationships with others.
- Students understand diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives.
- Students understand key events and histories in the local community.
- Students ask questions, make inferences, and draw conclusions.

Materials

- chart paper and markers

Procedure

1. Read page 4 of *Celebrating Potlatches* aloud to the class.
2. Ask students to raise their hands if they have any questions about anything on this page or if there is something they want to learn more about. Record students' questions on the chart paper.
3. Read page 6 of *Celebrating Potlatches*, stopping again to give students an opportunity to ask questions. Record questions on the chart paper.
4. Continue this way for each page in *Celebrating Potlatches* until you have read the whole book.
5. Review the questions on the chart paper. Ask students if any of the questions were answered as you read more of the book. Record answers on the chart paper. Circle any questions that remain unanswered.
6. Ask: *Was there anything else in the book that you want to learn more about?* Record students' answers.
7. Read the book aloud again, this time without stopping.
8. Research any questions that remain unanswered and share your findings with the class.





PART 3: AFTER READING

Focus Curriculum Area: Social Studies

- Students understand that people from diverse backgrounds also share a lot in common.
- Students acknowledge different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events in their lives.
- Students understand personal and family history and traditions, and the history of traditions of their community.
- Students understand that our rights, roles, and responsibilities are important for building strong communities.
- Students explore different perspectives on people, places, uses, or events in their lives.

Materials

- chart paper and markers

Procedure

1. Draw a T-chart on the board. Label the left column “Potlatch” and the right column “My Favourite Celebration.”
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. Tell the class that you will be comparing Potlatches to some other celebrations. Choose a celebration, such as your birthday, so that you can demonstrate. Read the first entry in the “Potlatch” column aloud and record that entry in the “My Favourite Celebration” 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 this column.* 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. Ask students to think of their own favourite celebrations. Read each entry in the “Potlatch” column aloud, having students raise their hand if their celebration also includes it.
5. Ask students to think of parts of their favourite celebration that are different from Potlatches and invite them to share with the 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 whiteboard under the title “Our Favourite Family Celebrations.”
3. Invite students to share their drawings with the class.

ACTIVITY 2: FINGER PAINTING INSPIRED BY CARLA JOSEPH

Materials

- blank white paper or construction paper for each student
- washable 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. However, unlike Carla, students are only going to use their fingers as tools to create their paintings.
3. Distribute paper and paint to each student.
4. Create your own finger painting inspired by Carla Joseph’s artwork on the chart paper, demonstrating how to use fingertips to create some splotches of colour like those found in the book.
5. Ask students to create their own paintings.
6. Invite students to share their paintings with the class.