

**Lesson Focus:** B.C.'s First Peoples. How has the Potlatch in Coastal BC changed or stayed the same over time?



### **The Potlatch Ban**

In 1885, the Canadian government passed the Potlatch Law. This law made it illegal to encourage or participate in the potlatch ceremony. Any person who participated in a potlatch would be sent to jail. The law lasted until 1951.



Potlatch Now

“ Even though the ban was lifted in the '50s, it took people a long time to feel comfortable about standing up and saying, 'This is who we are.' It wasn't until the 1970s that [the potlatch] started to become a normal part of our lives again. ”

— Barb Cranmer, *'Namgis First Nation, Kwakwaka'wakw*



Gift-Giving Then



Gift-Giving Now

**Some Potlatch Gifts over Time**

| Gifts in the 1800s    | Gifts in the 1900s    | Gifts in the 2000s          |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| animal furs and hides | Hudson’s Bay blankets | towels and fabric           |
| carved bentwood boxes | carvings              | T-shirts with crest designs |
| copper strips         | copper bracelets      | silver jewellery            |
| canoes                | flour and sugar       | flour, sugar, coffee        |
| ooligan oil           | ooligan oil           | ooligan oil                 |

## Grade 3 Social Studies: October 5 – October 9, 2020

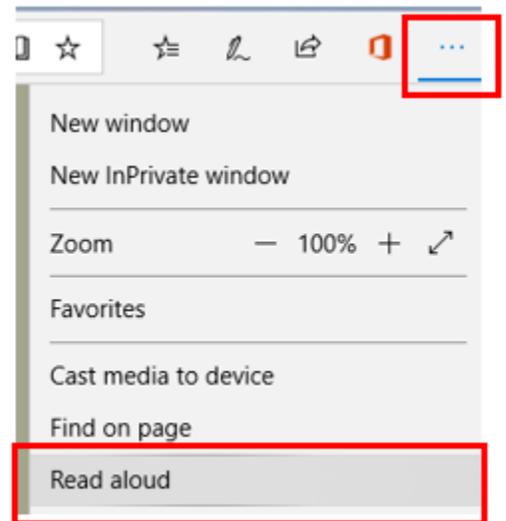
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### Materials:

- Internet access for videos
- Notebook or worksheet attached here

**Invitation to Learn:** You will be gathering evidence about how a First Peoples' practice has changed and stayed the same over time.

(Technology Hint: if you launch these sites using Microsoft Edge Browser, you will have access to the **READ ALOUD** option. Click the triple dots at the top right corner to find this.



Watch and read the following. Be ready to discuss what you have learned.

- [Modern Day Potlatches](#)
- [Raven and Crow's Potlatch](#)
- [Potlatch: Why we Potlatch](#)
- [The Importance of Potlatch](#)

### Ask/Discuss:

What does the word "potlatch" mean?

- verb: to give
- noun: a ceremony that involves feasting, gift-giving, singing, and dancing
  - Potlatches are held for a variety of reasons, including to mark occasions such as marriages and funerals; to pass on a family's rights to land, dances, songs; and to renew the community's ties to its ancestors. Potlatches last a number of days and involve gift-giving, song, dance, stories, and feasting.

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Brainstorm events that you enjoy as a family and how your family celebrates/practices this event

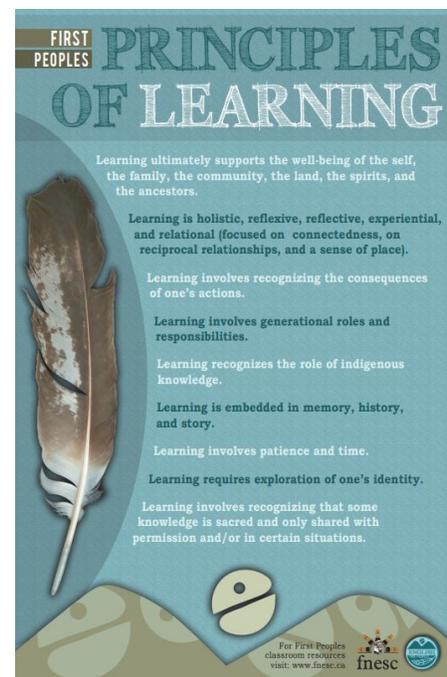
- *Example:* movie night, Sunday dinner, family birthdays, special food, location, clothes, guests, preparation

Are there things that have stayed or changed from how you practiced/celebrated this event in the past to how you celebrate now?

- *Example:*
  - stayed the same: reason for the event/practice, day event is celebrated
  - changed: decorations, guests, location, food

### Learning from First Peoples

Potlatches pass down memory, history, and story from generation to generation.



Look at the images at the beginning of this lesson.

#### Discuss:

- What are some things that are the same in both the Potlach then and now images?
  - *Example:* the mask with the long beak is the same in both images?
- What evidence do you see of the potlach staying the same?
- *Example:* masks; gift-giving; clothing and ornaments; dancing; guests
- What evidence do you see of changes to the potlach?
- What might be a reason for the gifts that are different now?

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- What clues tell you what happens during a potlatch?
- What objects can you add to the chart based on the images in the evidence?
- How did the Potlatch Law create change in the lives of First Peoples?
- What change happened after the Potlatch Law was lifted?
- Did this change happen quickly or slowly?
- How do you feel when you are not allowed to do an activity that is important to you?
- How do you think First Peoples felt about not being allowed to practice the potlatch?

### Potlatches Then

- A potlatch could last for days or weeks and involved feasting, singing, dancing, and speeches. The performers wore masks and other special clothing/ornaments. In this photo, Kwakwaka'wakw dancers perform an "illegal" potlatch in Alert Bay in 1914. According to Kwakwaka'wakw belief, ancestors, spirits, or supernatural beings temporarily embody dancers who wear the masks and other special clothing/ornaments.

### Potlatch Ban

- The ban aimed to force First Peoples to assimilate/ follow European Canadian values. During the ban, some potlatches continued, including one held by 'Namgis chief Dan Crammer in 1921. Government agents arrested his guests and confiscated ceremonial items.

### Potlatches Now

- The Kwakwaka'wakw aim to revive customs that were lost during the time of the ban. This dancer wears a Hok Hok (bird) mask at a potlatch in Alert Bay in the 1990s. Today, a potlatch usually lasts one to two days.

### Gift-Giving Then

- One of the most important parts of the potlatch is the giving of gifts to guests. The photo shows the gifts to be given to guests during a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch in Alert Bay in 1914.

### Gift-Giving Now:

- Today some First Peoples still potlatch, and gift-giving is still a unique part of the ceremony. This photo shows the gifts to be distributed at a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch in Hee Ghums Village. The gifts themselves, as shown in the chart, have both changed and remained the same over time.

### Notebook Time:

Review all the images and information from this lesson and complete the T-chart worksheet (after this page) or record this in your notebook.

## Changes and Constants T-Chart

1. In the Changes column, record clues that show changes over time.
2. In the Constants column, record clues that show constants (things that stayed the same) over time.

| Changes | Constants |
|---------|-----------|
|         |           |