

Silent Storytellers



When you think of your family, what images come to mind? Your favorite trips together? Your holiday traditions? Your family pets?

American Indians in the U.S. and First Nations cultures in Canada tell family stories with totem poles. Cedar logs carved with animals and people represent tribes, families, or legends.

In the past, artists used handmade tools and natural paints made from things such as minerals, shells, and

salmon eggs. The figures on a pole have meanings that vary with different tribes. An animal may represent a family's clan. A person with outstretched hands can be a sign of welcome and peace. A raven might symbolize the Creator, while a wolf may stand for family unity.

Today, modern carvers continue to create these majestic, colorful works of art. Many stand in parks, villages, and museums, honored as symbols of a rich heritage.

What stories would you tell on your totem pole? Think about symbols that represent your family, and create your own family totem pole here.

