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**My Introduction To Northwest Coast Native American Art**

**By Clint Leung**

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I had lived in Vancouver very briefly as a child and it was during that time when I was first exposed to the art of the Northwest Coast Native American Indians. It was the towering colorful totem poles out in Stanley Park that everyone gazed at with wonder and appreciation. It took about 30 years later during a return trip to Vancouver when Northwest Coast Native American art caught my eyes again.

I was in Vancouver for business and landed at the city's new airport terminal. One could not help but notice the huge native carvings near the arrivals area. Later on during my stay, I decided to wander around in the Gastown district. It was in these shops and galleries in Gastown where I fell in love with Northwest Coast Native American art. I saw many wonderful wooden plaques representing different animals. There were also art prints, paintings, masks, wooden bowls and even furniture with these animals either painted or carved right into the pieces.

The colors and designs, which might be considered a bit exaggerated to non-native eyes, were striking as well as bold. I knew at that time that I wanted to include some of this magnificent artwork on my walls back at home. So I bought two plaque carvings and carried them home like newly found treasure.

Historically, the native Indians who lived along the river valleys and coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest were all hunters and gatherers. The region was blessed with abundant resources from both the seas and forests. These people captured in their artwork the animals they hunted and observed. These included bears, killer whales, eagles, ravens, salmon, wolves, hummingbirds and even frogs. Chiefs and mythical characters important in their legends such as thunderbirds were also included as art subjects.

Northwest Coast Native American art is just only recently gaining some major attention in some galleries and museums around the world. Compared to other native arts such as Inuit (Eskimo), exposure of Northwest Coast Native American art is still rather limited to the northwest coast of Canada and the United States. This form of artwork is virtually unknown to most parts of the world including many regions of North America. This will hopefully change as more people from around the world travel to Vancouver. The future winter Olympics in 2010 up in Whistler, BC will also have a

positive impact on the region's Native Indian art. I personally believe that Northwest Coast Native American art has a lot of potential to be internationally recognized and accepted.

(To see this article complete with photos of actual carvers and their artwork, see <http://www.FreeSpiritGallery.ca>)

Clint Leung is owner of Free Spirit Gallery (<http://www.FreeSpiritGallery.ca>), an online gallery specializing in Northwest Native and Eskimo Inuit art including carvings, sculpture and prints. Free Spirit Gallery has numerous information resource articles on both Native Indian and Inuit art as well as free eCards.

## **Native American Indian Clothing For The Whole Family**

**By Edward Charkow**

Throughout the years, the clothes that we wear have changed with society. Jeans, shirts, skirts, dresses, and even undergarments have changed designs. It almost seems as if nothing is the same as was it was before, that is expect for Native American Indian clothing.

While traditional clothing has been altered over time, for the most part, Native American Indian clothing has stayed the same. Native American Indians celebrate tradition and that can be seen in their clothing. Native American Indian clothing use to be worn by American Indians, but since then the clothing has expanded in popularity. Now, anyone who wants to can purchase Native American Indian clothing for their whole family.

Suede or imitation suede are the two most commonly used materials in Native American Indian clothing. White, brown, and tan are often considered the most popular colors for American Indian clothing. Additional colors may be available. The color of a piece of clothing will all depend on the clothing maker or supplier. Popular clothing designs include matching fringes, unique borders, and beautiful beads. Different styles and designs make American Indian clothing popular for individuals of all ages.

Women, whether they are of Indian decent or not, are often frequent buyers of Native American Indian clothing. There are a wide variety of different reasons why women choose to and enjoy purchasing Native American Indian clothing. One of the most common reasons is it because of the beauty.

Shirts and dresses are the items that are mostly commonly purchased out of all women's clothing. In addition to shirts and dresses, a large number of women purchase clothing accessories. These accessories most often come in the form of purses, handbags, and shawls. Depending on the outfit in question, it is possible to purchase an outfit with matching accessories.

Men, unless they are of Indian descent, are less likely than women to purchase Native American Indian clothing. It is not known why more American men prefer not to wear Indian clothing; perhaps it has to do with the selection of clothing available. Their clothing can come in a wide variety of different colors, but the styles are not as large as the women's. Popular clothing pieces for men include leggings, shirts,

and jackets.

Native American Indian clothing for children is almost as popular as women's clothing in today's society. A large number of parents purchase Native American Indian outfits for their children. There are a wide variety of different clothing styles and designs, including dresses, leggings, skirts, shirts, and jackets.

Native American Indian clothing can be purchased from a wide variety of locations. Clothing piece are most commonly purchased from a Native American Indian storefront location, online store, or custom ordered directly through a designer. Custom-made American Indian clothing is exciting because you can design your own piece of clothing, but it will increase the price of an outfit.

If you are interested in purchasing a Native American Indian outfit, it is important that you do not believe popular myths surrounding the clothing. Native American Indian clothing is not just limited to

those of Indian decent. Anyone and everyone who wishes to wear American Indian clothing can do so if they choose to.

Edward Charkow is the administrator for American Indian History. For more information please visit:



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