



COWICHAN 2008
SPIRIT
POLE

British Columbians
carve a moment
in history...

Spirit Pole design and illustration
by Carey Newman



The Spirit Pole

Called "Victory of Spirit, a Story In Wood," the Story Pole design was created by artist and master carver Carey Newman.

It symbolizes the strength of a People: healing through sharing, sharing through learning, and learning through generations. The pole echoes the past, pays tribute to the present and looks to the future.

Reverberations of the past appear in the symmetry of Wolf in the centre of the pole. Variations of this figure can be seen on poles from the early days through to the present. In a more contemporary style, the roots at the base signify a deep connection to the past. On the chest of Eagle is Moon offering wisdom and guidance.

The present is honoured by Salmon swimming upstream. This ritual of renewal, carried out through generation after generation, illustrates the cycle of life. We return to where we have come from, to pass on what we have learned. Atop the pole will be an Eagle, strong, self-assured, majestic and proud. This expresses a positive future, one in which young leaders are learning from the elders, showing that the future is in good hands.

The future is seen by Eagle and passed down to Frog through Wolf and the river. Frog teaches us that the future is a culmination of our collective experience. We break free from the bonds of our past when we are ready to both honour and leave it behind. If you look closely, you will see

that Frog has taken his first step forward. This idea of moving into the future is also embodied by the flowing water, an element that is reflected in the angle of the Eagle's wings, and the arch of the Wolf's brow. Everything is connected.

Also told by the figures on the pole is the story of Quw'utsun'. When the People first saw the place that would become their home, the mountains appeared to be "frogs warming their backs in the sun." The Hul'qumi'num word for this is Scowutsun. Known today as "Cowichan," Quw'utsun' is "a place to warm your back in the sun."

The pole itself is meant to represent the mountains. The river flows down the mountain and wraps around the Frog near the base. Unseen from the front, the Sun is opposite the Moon, warming the Eagle's back. The wings of the Eagle are not only designed to be his feathers and wings, but are also evocative of a Cowichan blanket.

From the artist's perspective, this pole represents his belief that the way to move forward is by honouring the past and reflecting on the present. This is depicted in the movement of the figures: each is breaking free from its pose, stretching out and reaching, animating itself, and thus the theme it represents.

The Story Pole: British Columbians Carve A Moment in History tour was conceived by the Cowichan 2008 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) leadership and is supported by the Province through BC150.

Student Name: _____

Age: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____

Message to Athlete: _____
