

**Title:**

Introduction to Northwest Coast Native American Art

**Word Count:**

424

**Summary:**

Introduction to the striking art style of the Northwest Coast Native American Indians.

**Keywords:**

northwest, coast, native, american, art, pacific, canada, british columbia, vancouver

**Article Body:**

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, salmons, 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.