

Totems: The stories they tell

Read the text below and fill in the blanks with words taken out and listed here:

carved / design / generations / myth / raised / raven / records / responsible



Totem poles are a traditional way of telling the stories of First Nation families and clans, and of keeping (1) _____ of important historical events.

Many people think of the totem pole as belonging to Indigenous cultures all across Canada, but in fact only six West Coast First Nations are (2) _____ for the creation of totem poles.

It's easy to tell where a totem pole comes from based on how it's carved because the style and (3) _____ of each pole are specific to each family, clan or region.

Most totem poles were (4) _____ from mature cedar trees using sharpened stones and cedar carving tools. Cedar resists rot better than other trees and was therefore a natural choice to ensure that the stories are preserved for many future generations.



The stories that totem poles tell may be a (5) _____, a legend, or honour Indigenous peoples through symbols. The crests on a totem pole belong to a family and tell its story.

Once the stories of each crest are known, the totem poles really come alive. The most common crests of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest include the eagle, the (6) _____, the thunderbird, the bear, the beaver, the wolf, the killer whale and the frog.

The poles are usually (7) _____ in the presence of hundreds or even thousands of people, in locations of honour in First Nations villages and throughout the world.

In the last century, traditional pole carving nearly died-out. Fortunately, today's Indigenous carvers are bringing back the crests and stories of the poles for families and clans to pass along to their future (8) _____.

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