

- Students can create a table or poster to show the similarities and differences between the two Nations. They can present their findings to the rest of the class.
- Have students suggest reasons why there are so many differences in the types of governance among First Nations.

3. Understanding Feasts and Potlatches

Students can use a study of feasts and potlatches to examine the changes in First Nations governance over time.

A full study of feasts and potlatches is beyond the scope of this resource guide. Here the focus is on their roles in First Nations governance, and their suppression by colonial forces.

In the past, feasts, potlatches and other cultural institutions connected the social, political, legal and economic parts of First Nations societies in the past. The feast halls where they took place were like a combination of the courthouse, legislature, courthouse, land registry, insurance office and bank of today.

After Confederation, the Canadian government made feasts and potlatches illegal. This had a severe impact on the governance in First Nations communities. However, feasts and potlatches have survived and today they are a significant part of social, cultural and political fabric of many First Nations.

Students can consider four major questions about feasts and potlatches:

1. What are feasts and potlatches?
2. How were they important to First Nations governments in the past?
3. How were feasts and potlatches attacked by outside forces?
4. How are feasts and potlatches practiced today?

Resources

There are many books and websites available that discuss feasts and potlatches.

Some suggested resources are:

- Backgrounder 6, *Public Witness: Feasts and Potlatches* page 241.
- Beynon, William. *Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Beynon's 1945 Field Notebooks*. UBC Press, 2000.
- Carrier Sekani Family Services. *Culture and Diversity*. PDF booklet, 7 pages. <https://tinyurl.com/fnesc923>
- Gray, Lynda. *First Nations 101*. Adaawx Publishing 2011.
- Nelson, Nella. *Welcome Family and Friends to Our Bighouse. Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch*. Union Bay BC: Raven Publishing 2017.
- *Living Tradition. The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch of the Northwest Coast*. Virtual Museum Website. <https://umistapotlatch.ca>

Backgrounders
See Backgrounder 6,
Public Witness: Feasts and Potlatches, page 241.

UNIT 3 • SHAPING FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE: GRADES 7-9

- Lutz, John. *Makúk*, John Sutton Lutz, UBC Press, 2008.
- Mann, Marlaena Mann and Warner Adam, *Nowh Guna' Our Way: Carrier Culture, Knowledge and Traditions*, pages 87-98.
- "Potlatch: What I Learned as a Guest." Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. <https://tinyurl.com/fnesc925>.
- Nuxalk Nation. "Potlatch." Nuxalk Nation website. <https://tinyurl.com/fnesc926>.
- Ts'msyen Nation. *Persistence and Change*, SD 52 Prince Rupert, pages 42-44.
- Ts'msyen Nation. *Luutigm Hoon, Honouring the Salmon*, SD 52 Prince Rupert, pages 89-90.

a. What are Feasts and Potlatches?

Students build an understanding of some characteristics of feasts and potlatches.

- Determine if feasts or potlatches are practiced by First Nations communities in your region. If possible, find the traditional names for feasts or potlatches in the local First Nations language.
- If your school is in or near a First Nations community that holds feasts or potlatches, some students may be able to share their experiences or memories of attending a feast or potlatch.
 - If possible, students could meet with an Elder or knowledge-keeper who could explain the importance of the feast or potlatch to the local First Nations community. Depending on your community, they may be able to make a field trip to a feast hall.
- Provide students opportunities to learn about the purposes and the parts of a feast or potlatch using a variety of resources. See the list of Feasts and Potlatches resources above for suggested sources of information.
 - If students search online for websites and videos, use it as an opportunity for critical thinking and assessing the validity of sources. Some items that turn up are of questionable authenticity.
- Have students work in groups to outline some of the major components of a feast or potlatch, using the resources they have researched. Ideally students will be able to focus on the local First Nations communities.

b. Feasts and Potlatches in First Nations Societies

Students will examine how feasts and potlatches are connected with social, economic, political and governance aspects of First Nations societies.

- Teach or review the terms: social, economic, political, legal, governmental aspects of a society. Ask students to give examples of each from their own lives.
- Have students use a variety of resources to explore the history of feasts and potlatches: Government institutions in traditional societies; attacks by colonialism; revitalization of feasts and potlatches today.
 - Identify social, economic, political, legal, governmental features of a potlatch or feast.

UNIT 3 • SHAPING FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE: GRADES 7-9

- Have students examine how the feast or potlatch serves as an important institution of governance in many First Nations communities.
- Investigate why the Canadian government banned them, and how the banning impacted First Nations.
- Feasts and Potlatches Today. Students can find out how feasts and potlatches have survived and how they are interpreted today.

4. Impacts of Colonization

Students can examine different aspects of the impact of colonization on First Nations governance.

See also the activities about the impacts of colonization in Unit 2 for Grades 4-6, which can be adapted for grades 7 to 9.

a. Pass It On Game

Students engage in a game that may evoke emotions of being treated arbitrarily or unfairly. First Nations who faced the changing and arbitrary rules of colonization over many decades, rules over which they had little or no control.

- Play the Pass It On game to simulate an arbitrary and unfair experiences.
 - Have the class sit in a circle. Explain that they are going to play a game, but you are not going to explain the rules.
 - Choose an object to be passed from person to person, such as a pen, stapler, scissors or book.
 - Give the object to one person. Ask them to start the game by passing the selected object to the next person.
 - As soon as the object is passed, announce that the person has broken a rule. Explain what that rule is.
 - The broken rules should be simple and arbitrary. They can be about how the object was passed, who it was passed to, or passing without doing some arbitrary action or saying a code word. For example:
 - holding the object by the wrong end
 - passing with the right hand
 - giving it to someone wearing blue
 - not saying "gimme" when passing
 - Students continue to pass the object, following the rules that have been given.
 - Every so often, interrupt the flow and announce another arbitrary broken rule.
 - Continue the game until there are so many rules it breaks down.
- Have students reflect on their experiences playing the Pass It On game. Ask questions such as:
 - What are some words that describe your feelings during the game?