

Suite 200-100 Park Royal South, West Vancouver, BC, V7T 1A2 PH: 604-922-5277

The Dancers of Damelahamid acknowledge the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the X̱məθkʷəḡəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətaɣ̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples upon whose lands we have created this work. We thank the teachings and guidance of our Elders and mentors, and the foundation that was laid for us by previous generations.

Dancers of Damelahamid Description:

The Dancers of Damelahamid is an intergenerational Indigenous dance company, with dancers of all ages, from infants to elders. Their performance, *Spirit and Tradition*, shares stories, songs, and dances that celebrates the richness of Gitxsan and Cree culture. Gitxsan means 'people of the river of mists'. The dance company is named after a city called Damelahamid, where the Gitxsan nation originates from.



The company's mandate is to advance the public's knowledge and appreciation of the art, history, language, and traditions of Indigenous culture through story, dance and song. Students of all ages will gain insight into the continuing traditions of Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast. The company has performed for audiences across Canada, and internationally in New Zealand, Australia, Cook Islands, China, Scotland, Germany, Ecuador, Peru, United Arab Emirates, and the USA.

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Spirit and Tradition:

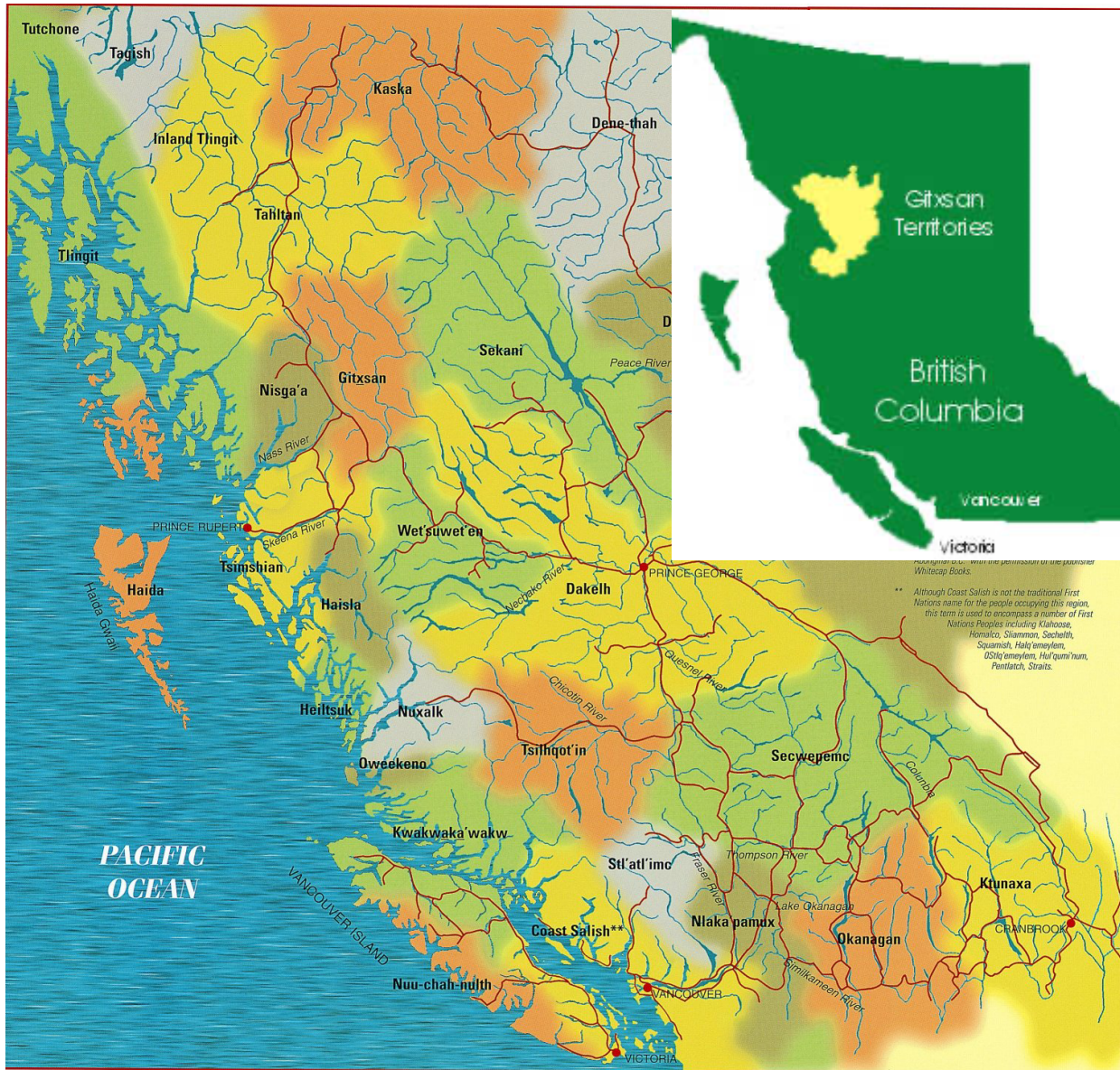
Spirit and Tradition layers Coastal Indigenous masked dance, projected imagery, and soundscape, immersing the audience into the rich and diverse ecosystem of the mountains, rivers, and oceans along the Northwest Coast. *Spirit and Tradition's* key themes are reciprocity and ecological sustainability, conveying important teachings on balance, interconnectedness, and community.

Spirit and Tradition has toured to the (2010) World Expo, Shanghai, China, the International Festival de Danzas, Cusco, Peru (2011), the Festival internacional de danza folklórica, Ambato, Ecuador (2014), the (2015) Pan American Games in Toronto, Ontario. 2020 World Expo in Dubai, UAE.



For more information please see our website at www.damelahamid.ca

Gitxsan territory:



This map outlines the Indigenous territories that make up what is known as the province of British Columbia. Within each nation there are many more communities and nations that are related to the larger group outlined on this map. The Gitxsan* territory is in the watershed of the Skeena River of Northwestern BC. Image: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm

The Gitxsan Clans:

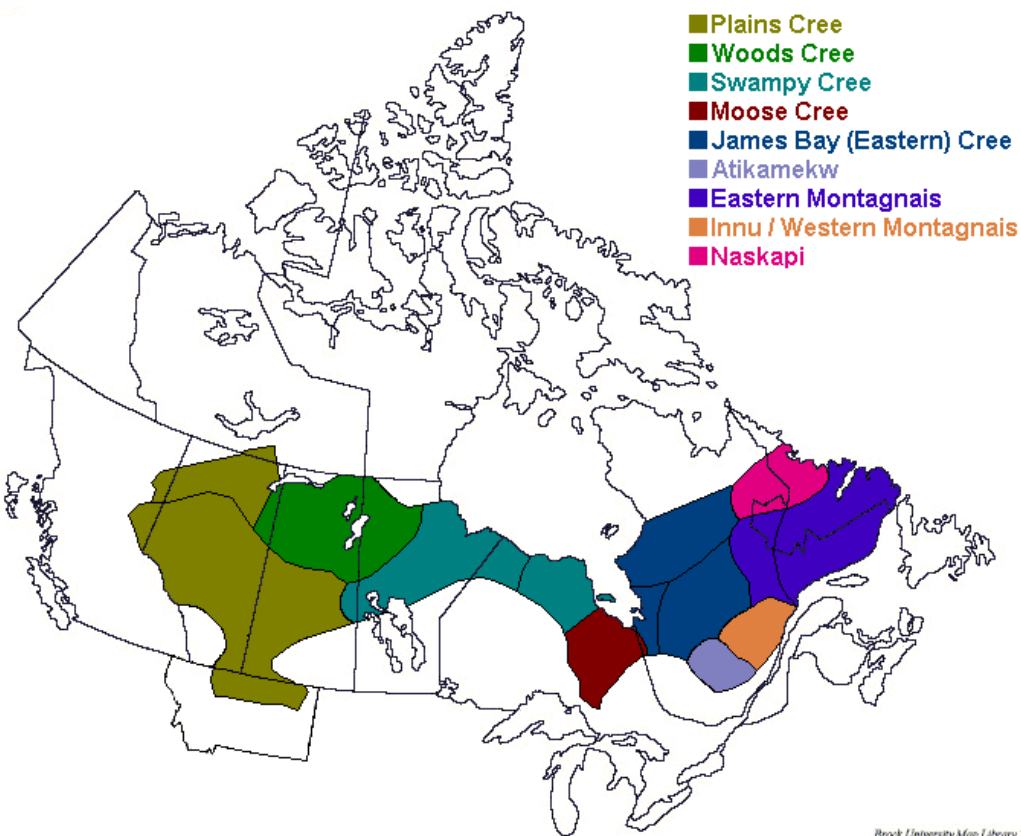
Clans are large family groups. The origin of each clan begins with a story that is part of the oral traditions of the people of the Northwest Coast. The people of a clan share common ancestors, crests, and privileges. The crests are symbols worn on regalia representing a person's clan. There

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are also more personal family crests worn on some regalia to represent a person's lineage. Regalia is the term used to describe the traditional dress worn such as button blankets, dresses, and aprons.

* Gitksan is spelled both Gitksan or Gitksan

Cree Territory



This map shows the various Cree territories. Within each grouping, there are many more communities and naitons. Each Cree group has a different dialect of language and has a word for "Cree" in their language, for example the plains Cree refer to themselves as "Nehiyaw." The name "Cree" is derived from the Algonkian-language exonym Kirištino, which the Ojibwa used for tribes around Hudson Bay.

Image:<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=512262>

Suggested concepts to prepare for the dance presentation:**1. What does the term Gitxsan mean? Where is the Gitxsan territory located?**

Gitxsan means 'people of the river of mists'. The Gitxsan territory is in the watershed of the Skeena River of Northwestern BC.

2. What is a clan? What is a crest?

Clans are large family groups. The origin of each clan begins with a story that is part of the oral traditions of the people of the Northwest Coast. The people of a clan share common ancestors, crests, and rights. The crests are symbols worn on regalia representing a person's clan. There are also more personal family crests worn on some regalia to represent a person's lineage.

3. What is regalia?

Regalia is the term used to describe what we wear and is a representation of the dancer's lineage and culture. In Gitxsan culture, this may be pieces such as button blankets, blankets, masks, dresses, and aprons. In Cree culture, regalia may be shawls with ribbons, beadwork, and feathers. There are also differences in use of colours and designs. Gitxsan regalia the colours are usually red, black and white with formline designs of animals or crests. Cree regalia often uses many colors and designs that are floral or geometric. While there is often a differentiation between Cree and Gitxsan regalia and dances, because the family comes from both communities, there are times where Gitxsan regalia is worn during a Cree song.

4. What materials do you use to make regalia?

All of the regalia that you will see the dancers wearing were made by the members of the dance group. They are hand made using materials such as cloth, hide, cedar wood, buttons and beads.

5. What responsibilities does a dancer carry?

Dancers of Damelahamid was founded as a way to ensure that the practices of song and dance were passed forward for future generations. Dancers carry a responsibility to create a supporting environment for young dancers to be included. Dancing also requires a strong level of commitment, the Dancers of Damelahamid practice regularly and are always working on developing new dance productions.

6. What does the term stewardship mean?

A steward is someone who has a responsibility to take care of something. The songs and stories carry teachings that describe our roles as stewards of the land and all its abundant resources. It is our responsibility to care for the land so that we have something beautiful to pass on to future generations. We are also the stewards of these songs and dances.

Questions to keep in mind while watching the performance:

1. Look at the regalia worn by the dancers. Identify the colours? Where do you see crests?
2. Listen to the stories. What are some of the teachings that you can learn from the stories?
3. What do we learn about respect and caring for ourselves, one another and our environment?

Post Performance Exercises

1. In *Spirit and Tradition*, what parts of the dance do you remember as either Gitxsan or Cree?
2. Ask the students if they know whose traditional territory their school is located on. Ask them if they know about the songs, stories, and dances that are practiced in your area. If they don't know, teach them and share ideas on ways to learn more about the local Indigenous communities and territory near your school.
3. Ask the students what kind of art they saw during the performance. The art used in the performance reflects the collective and individual identities of the dancers. Have the students complete an art project that expresses their own identities using symbols, colors, designs etc.
4. Ask the students about the dances that they saw, what were their favorite dances? How did the dancers tell a story through movement? Get the students to write a short story, song, or poem based on what they see in their natural environment. Then, get them to create actions and movements that tell their story, song or poem.