LESSON 2 – MOURNING

SAŁA – KWAḴWALA WORD WHICH MEANS MOURNING CEREMONY

1. Grade Level: Grade 4/5 (can be modified for Primary and Intermediate)

2. Activity: Students will learn about the Kwakwaka'wakw Sała – (mourning ceremonies); there are ceremonies for both life and death.

3. Estimated Time: 2 periods

4. Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

- Context
  - C1 compare dances from a variety of cultural and social contexts
  - C1 participate in music from a variety of historical cultural and social contexts
- Health
  - C1 describe the choices an individual can make to attain and maintain physical and emotional health

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Section of Website containing relevant information, photographs and film clips:

- Potlatch
- View "Virtual Tour" to see 3–D photos of Ḵwasanuma – Mourning Masks

Blackline Masters:

- BLM 2A – Mourning Masks
- BLM 2B – Mourning Song

Audio Clips:

- Mourning Song – Salam sung for Agnes Cranmer's great grandfather, Siwidi, Chief of the Ławiṯsis (sung by Chief Bill Cranmer, great great grandson of Siwidi)
- Words in Kwaḵwala and English for Mourning Song – Salam sung for Agnes Cranmer's great grandfather Siwidi, Chief of the Ławiṯsis

Film Clips:

- Potlatch Means to Give

Kwaḵwala Language Component:

- Mourning Song – Salam sung for Agnes Cranmer's great grandfather, Siwidi, Chief of the Ławiṯsis (sung by Chief Bill Cranmer, great great grandson of Siwidi)
- Words in Kwaḵwala and English for Mourning Song – Salam sung for Agnes Cranmer's great grandfather Siwidi, Chief of the Ławiṯsis

NEW WORDS

Maya'xala – treat someone or something good, the closest word that defines maya'xala in the English language is "respect". It is a respect for all living beings, humans, animals or plants, for things and for oneself.

Spirituality – for the Kwakwaka'wakw, this is the connection to the creatures who we believe placed us within each of our own territory.

Sała – Mourning – grieving and letting go of the spirit of the person who has crossed over to the spirit world.

Salam – mourning song.

Ḵwasanuma – Mourning Mask.

Imas – mask which represents the spirit of a deceased person.

PERIOD 1/2 – SAŁA – MOURNING CEREMONY (WHAT IS IT?)

Brainstorming session of what students think "Mourning" is. (no suggestion is wrong, everything is recorded, for reviewing at end of class) What do students think this word "mourning" means, not to be confused with morning the beginning of the day.

Watch video clip *Potlatch Means to Give* (the end section of this clip shows a glimpse of the mourning ceremony at a memorial potlatch). Today at a memorial potlatch, four mourning songs are sung while female relatives sit in a row in front of the singers. Each lady who has had a relative die, sits there to wipe away the tears and let go of their sadness for their loss. After the fourth song the singers will sing one more song which is when the ladies stand and dance in one spot. The photograph on BLM 2A shows the ladies standing and dancing. This is when the tears are wiped away and the spirit of the deceased is set free.

Discussion of what they saw and heard in the Sała – Mourning ceremony from the video clip *Potlatch Means to Give*. Questions might include; how did the song sound from the video? (ie, did it sound like a happy, upbeat song or a sad song) how did the ladies look that were sitting in a row?

This is the Kwak'wala–speaking peoples' healthy process of letting go of the deceased. Grieving and releasing their tears and sorrow for their loss which allows them to continue on with their own life. Mourning songs are sung at the beginning of every potlatch, to honour and help the spirit of the loved–ones cross over to the spirit world. These songs have deep meaning and the words being sung relate to the heavy heart of great loss.

Students will listen to the *Mourning Song* and using BLM 2B look at the words of the song and discuss what they heard and what kind of words are used in the song. The *Mourning Song* or *Salam* was sung for Agnes Cranmer's great–grandfather, Siwidi, Chief of the Ławit'sis. This song is sung by Chief Bill Cranmer, son of Agnes Cranmer.

Questions might include; how did the song sound? (ie, did it sound like a happy, upbeat song or a sad song) how did it make you feel (did it make you feel like dancing?) What kind of words are used in the song? Why do you think these kinds of sonttgs were created?

Look at the K̓wasanuma – Mourning Masks in the Virtual Tour

Show the pictures of the mourning masks on BLM 2A. (Alternate option: have students visit Virtual Tour part of website and gather information about these masks. Look at the masks and describe how the masks are painted and discuss what are they used for. Why do you think masks like these would be needed? Can you find information about what these masks were used for, why they are painted the way they are?

The Kwakwaka'wakw had Maya'xala (respect) for the life–cycle. Each stage of life and, in the end, death was acknowledged. The Sała – mourning ceremony was and continues to be the Kwakwaka'wakw way of showing their respect and love for our deceased loved–ones.

Final activity will have students drawing their own mourning mask, they can use the masks from the photographs and create their own picture.

Extension Activity

Discuss the Imas mask – represents the ancestor of the deceased person, who the memorial p̓asa – potlatch is for. Imas represents the spirit of the deceased relative, coming to check on the family one last time before moving on to the spirit world. Remember what we learned in Lesson one about one of the 'Namgis origin stories, video clip *Origin Story of the 'Namgis*.

What are the two supernatural creatures in this story? What do you think would be the Imas mask for a 'Namgis community member if their ancestor was one of these two supernatural creatures? View the Virtual Tour and look at the Gwa'yam (whale) mask and the Imas (ancestor face) masks, these masks could be used to show the spirit of the ancestor at a memorial potlatch.