

Speaker's Staff (Talking Stick)

The Talking stick was held by the speaker, who stood beside the chief at ceremonies and announced the chiefs wishes. The talking stick was the property of the chief and was intricately carved with his crests and family stories much like a miniature totem pole. Today, at gatherings it is the turn of whoever is holding the talking stick to speak.

In this graphic representation of a talking stick there is as follows, Wearing a tall hat of wealth with its potlatch rings, is a long billed Raven. Under the Raven is Ttsaamuus, the Snag, in his Sea Grizzly form. From the Snag's mouth a third figure, the Raven once again in fledgling form.

The Raven and the Snag on the speakers staff, are all crests of the Raven families This combination of figures, raven and snag, is most frequent of all themes in Haida sculpture: a theme as ubiquitous as the adoration or tor the crucifixion in European art, and no less potent once its signification is known.

When the figures the Raven and the Snag are together on a pole, they are often elaborated with other intriguing details. First, the young Raven is often shown emerging from the Snags mouth and resting on his belly. This is the sculptural equivalent of the statement that the Snag's voice and the Ravens voice are the same. This is the graphic answer to the myth tellers statement Dii hau dang iiji: "I am you". Second the Raven above the Snag is often equipped with fingers or hands, as a sign of transition between human and avian forms.

Raven above, Snag Below - was the most common motif on haida house poles of both the Raven and Eagle clans. It is not impossible that in some earlier age it was the only motif on house poles because vertically assembled, these figures evoke an original house poles: the stone pole of the Snag, which stood on the floor of the ocean before the creation of the Haida Gwaii.

In this graphic representation of a speakers staff, is the creation of the world told by the Haida Gwaii elders.