

# Dancers of Damelahamid — Traditional Aboriginal Dance

KNOW

## About the Artist



**Artistic Statement:** “Growing up in a small community on the northwest coast of British Columbia, I was immersed from a young age in the practice of songs and dances. As Executive and Artistic Director for the Dancers of Damelahamid the work that I do is to ensure the continuation of what has been of such great importance to my parents and grandparents, and now to me. I treasure dance as the most significant inheritance I have from my ancestors and it will be a life journey to strive to develop the art form to its potential.” —Margaret Grenier

As a dance group, we were inspired to share our culture in schools with both students and teachers as we believe this to be one of the best ways to share the teachings of our songs and dances with future generations. We always enjoy the warm welcome that we receive and the open hearts with which the students share and interact with our dancers.

**Refer to biography in teachers’ resource package.**

## About the Performance

We will be sharing a 45 minute performance of Traditional Gitksan and Cree dances. There will also be an interactive audience segment at the end of the performance and time for Q&A.

During the performance students can expect to see elaborate carved masks, button-blanket regalia and hear stories and teachings. There will be dancing, drumming, singing and storytelling.

Students are welcome to clap at the end of each song and encouraged to ask questions at the end of the performance. During the audience interactive section we also will invite the students to participate in some of the songs and dances along with us.

Technical requirements will be emailed to the school prior to the performance. We will bring our own dance screen and sound equipment.

Link to our website: [www.damelahamid.ca](http://www.damelahamid.ca)

## About the Art Form

### Background information of the art form:

The Dancers of Damelahamid are an inter-generational, First Nations dance company who share story, song and dance distinct to their Gitksan ancestry. The Gitksan are part of the Northwest Coastal group of cultures that have the distinctive button blanket regalia. Gitksan means ‘people of the river of mists’. According to Gitksan history, Damelahamid is the original city of their first ancestors. Their dance company is named after this city. We also have Cree Ancestry in our family from Northern Manitoba and we honour this by opening the performance with a Cree story and teachings.

The message that we hope students take away with them after watching the performance *In Abundance* is a greater understanding of important cultural teachings based on balance, community and sustainability. The salmon teachings shared in our performance symbolize abundance and are a key reminder of the importance to value and protect this essential resource. *In Abundance* also teaches that when we take only what we need there is plenty for all, including the salmon needed to spawn for the next year’s cycle.

Recommended link for additional resources and a broader understanding of Westcoast art forms:  
[http://www.sfu.ca/brc/educator-resources/paint\\_grades-k-to-3.html](http://www.sfu.ca/brc/educator-resources/paint_grades-k-to-3.html)

WONDER



**Links to Curriculum**

**Learning objectives include:** First Nations Studies, Social Studies, Science, Visual Arts, Performing Arts (Theatre/Dance)

**Samples are:**

- Social Studies K-7: Human and physical environment (describe Aboriginal peoples’ relationship with the land and natural resources) Identity, Society & Culture (Distinguish characteristics of various Aboriginal cultures in BC and Canada)
- Science K-7: Earth and Space Science (Analyze how the Aboriginal concept of interconnectedness of the environment is reflected in responsibility for and caretaking of resources)
- Life Science K-7: Habitats and Communities (demonstrate awareness of the Aboriginal concept of respect for the environment)

**Pre-Performance Discussion Questions**

1. What is the name of the local First Nations group of the area where your school is located?
2. Where is the Gitxsan territory located?
3. What are regalia?
4. What is a crest?

**Post-Performance Activities**

1. On a piece of paper, divide the page in four and draw a picture for each of the four clans of the Gitxsan. (Orca, Raven/Frog, Eagle and Wolf)
2. Practice the Happy Song in your classroom. Ask the students to recall and demonstrate the 2 main movements for the dance (one each for boys and girls and the bow to the four directions.) See teacher resource package for song lyrics.

**Post-Performance Discussion Questions**

1. Remember some of the regalia worn by the dancers. Identify the colours. Where did you see the clan crests?
2. What are some of the teachings that you learnt from the stories? What did you learn about respect for ourselves, one another and our environment?

Learn more about this artist online at [artstarts.com/aotd](http://artstarts.com/aotd)