

Totem Pole Colors

The Indians originally used pigments made from clay and roots. The colors were very bright and faded a bit after the pole had weathered several winters. The symbolism of the colors changed a little in different parts of the United States. The following only a general meaning to the main colors.

	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White is used, along with other light colors, as a background and predominating shade. • As a rule it symbolized the skies and spacious heavens. • It also stood for purity, peace, and death
	Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally Red stands for blood, war or valor. • Sometimes it is used as appears in nature, such as the crest of a red-headed woodpecker, the scarlet tanager or frequently the tongue of an animal.
	Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue was most commonly used as the symbol for the rivers, waters, and lakes, also the skies. • Certain tribes even used it for mountains in the distance. • Blue stands for sincerity and happiness. • Berries formed a large portion of the natural materials for this color.
	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow reflects the symbol of the sun, light and happiness. • The natural abundant materials made Yellow a very popular and predominating color. • Clays, tree moss, roots, and tannic barks furnished the natives with dyes.
	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may easily be realized that Green represents the earth, the hills, the trees, and mountains, so common in all Indian legends. • Green is made by mixing two primary colors, Yellow and Blue, or it may be made from simple acid action on copper. • In certain sections of the west and northwest copper was rather abundant. • Other parts of the country used the juice of grasses
	Purple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purple stood for mountains in the distance and general conventionalized signs • Huckleberries give a very good substance for dyeing, and the Indians commonly used them to make Purple. • Purple is an excellent color for recessed portions of the carving and for symbols of a reverent nature.
	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rule, Black stood for power • Mud from sulphur springs and other earth deposits made Black available to the Indian.