

THIS SPACE HERE

In January 2020, Haida artist Jaalen Edenshaw and collaborator Geoff Horner released a Haida Emoji Sticker App for use in Messages on iOS. We reproduce a selection of the emojis here along with an explanatory statement by Edenshaw.



HaidaEmoji

THE HAIDA EMOJI PROJECT was created in response to the prevalence of digital culture that has become so common in our community as it has around the world. In the last 150 years of our history, Haida culture has evolved in reaction to outside forces.

When I was growing up, school and television were the main “outside” cultural forces shaping our world view. Now, for the last twenty years (my children’s entire lifetimes), we have still had to deal with the constant incursions of the state educational system and television, but arguably the biggest influence on culture today is internet-based digital media, constantly accessible through smartphones, gaming devices, and computers.

My collaborator Geoff Horner and I aimed to carve away a small notch of the influence of digital culture to allow room for Haida story and expression to be articulated in the mobile device arena. The first emojis we created were a series of simple “Emotion” faces. Happy, sad, frustrated ... All aimed at putting a Haida inflection on the traditional emoji face. These were used as a starting point to get people’s attention and interest in this project as well as to provide a platform for incorporating the Haida aesthetic into everyday use in the digital environment that has little room for Indigenous expression.

The Naxiin faces are our second series and introduce to the platform designs used in our ancient weaving practices. When looking at the weaving designs you will commonly see these types of faces and they bring character and expression to the overall design. Seeing these characters in old blankets was part of the impetus for starting this project.

The third series brings Haida stories and crest figures into emoji form. I started with some of the most well-known characters of our stories such as “The Golden Spruce,” which tells a story of a supernatural ancestor of our people. He was a boy who turned into a golden spruce along the banks of our largest river, the Yaguun. Another figure is the “Gagiixiit,” a person in a wild state that can occur after a near death experience like almost drowning. Gagiixiits wander the woods straddling the line between this world and the next. “Fungus Man” is the one Raven asked for help to steer the canoe to a powerful island when no other being was able to handle the job.

The last series is the Haida expressions that were used in everyday conversation. I grew up hearing these expressions from my elders on a daily basis, but as time has passed these terms are used less and less. Many of the expressions are hard to describe in English but I will try.

“K’w” – an expression of disgust, often from an older person to a younger, or in modern times used in mock disgust. Kid: “Can I borrow sro again?” Grandma: “K’w!”

“Mah” – an expression said at someone else’s misfortune when you know they deserve it. Kid 1 slips on the floor where water has spilled.

Their friend, Kid 2, laughs at them but then a little while later slips in the same spot when they aren't paying attention. Kid 1: "Mah!"

Sijjuu – an expression like "cool" or "slick." Man walks in with a new cedar woven bowler hat. Friend: "pretty Sijjuu hat."

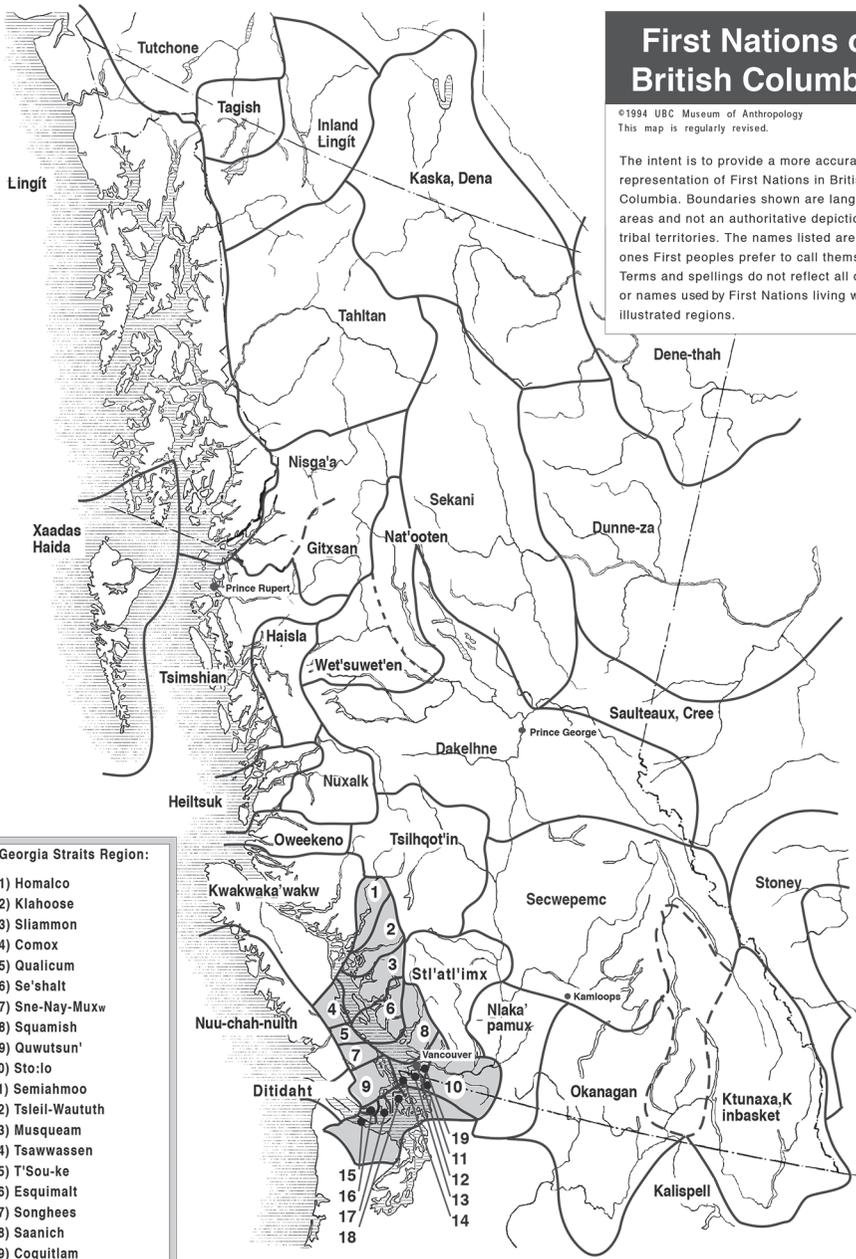
As we share these emojis we aren't imagining we're saving ancient ideas. Instead, the fact that they are being used is testament to the fact that these ideas and feelings are still in the everyday consciousness of our people. The emojis are not to be taken too seriously, but to have fun with and to provide another way for our young people to express their own thoughts and feelings in a way that belongs to them.

–Jaalen Edenshaw

First Nations of British Columbia

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This map is regularly revised.

The intent is to provide a more accurate representation of First Nations in British Columbia. Boundaries shown are language areas and not an authoritative depiction of tribal territories. The names listed are the ones First peoples prefer to call themselves. Terms and spellings do not reflect all dialects or names used by First Nations living within the illustrated regions.



Georgia Straits Region:

- 1) Homalco
- 2) Klahoose
- 3) Sliammon
- 4) Comox
- 5) Qualicum
- 6) Se'shilt
- 7) Sne-Nay-Muxw
- 8) Squamish
- 9) Quwutsun'
- 10) Sto:lo
- 11) Semiahmoo
- 12) Tseil-Waututh
- 13) Musqueam
- 14) Tsawwassen
- 15) T'Sou-ke
- 16) Esquimalt
- 17) Songhees
- 18) Saanich
- 19) Coquitlam