



# UNIT 9

Native Arts

## *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Relationship with the Environment*

**OVER TIME, THE NATIVE PEOPLES** of Southeast Alaska developed sophisticated art forms. Even many tools that were used every day were decorated with art forms. Stories, songs, and drama were also important art forms.

The traditional regalia of the Southeast Natives can show power, wealth, and lineage. Native peoples respect the opposite clan and their ancestors in the making and handling of the regalia. Importance is placed on the maker of the regalia. Members of the opposite clan are asked to make the regalia. Regalia in Native culture are an acknowledgment of all ancestors who came before.

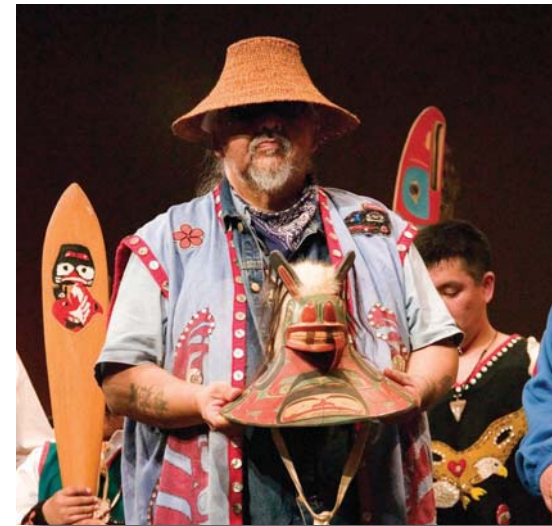
Fur capes and shirts of deer or seal skin were worn. The most valuable furs used for clothing were sea otter, wolf, beaver, marmot, and especially marten. For the winter, trousers and jackets were made from

suede. Hooded capes were made from bird skins.

One of the most famous art forms is the Chilkat robe. The robes are made from mountain goat wool, cedar bark, and dyes. Each robe shows a clan crest. It can take from one to five years to make a Chilkat robe. Chilkat robes almost became an extinct art form in the twentieth century. However, today there are several weavers who make Chilkat regalia.

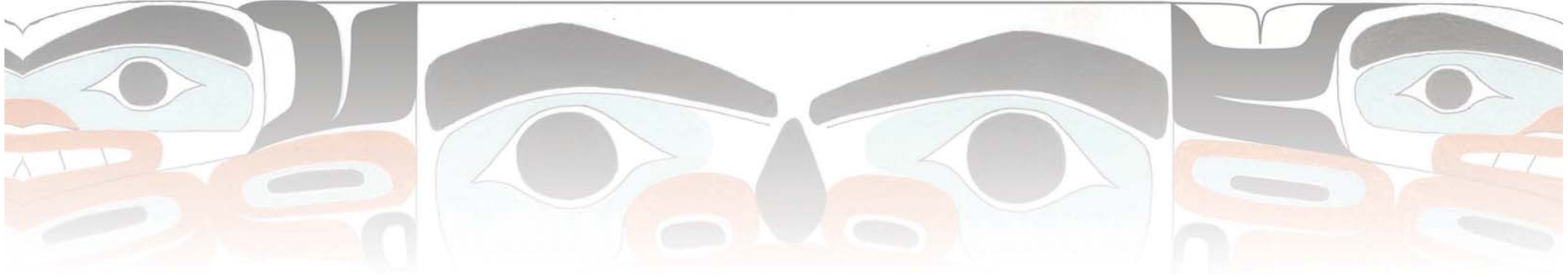
Raven's Tail robes are also made today. They were not made for almost two hundred years. Weavers also make leggings, medicine bags, dance purses, dance aprons, tunics, and shirts.

Button blankets are more common than the Chilkat and Raven's Tail robes. These blankets are often decorated with clan crests. These blankets are worn to display lineage and clan crests at ceremonies,



in much the same way as the Chilkat robe.

Clan hats are one of the most important Native art forms. They are often brought out during ceremonies. They can be decorated with paint, abalone shell, mother-of-pearl, sea-lion whiskers, and



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ermine.

Traditional ornaments included bone hair pins, ear and nose piercings, bracelets, face paint, and tattoos. Dentalium shells, bone, and shark's teeth were used to make the ornaments. Wealthy people had copper rings, bracelets, and necklaces. Shamans would often wear pendants made from bears' teeth. Some women also wore a labret in their lower lips. This was a wood, bone, or stone plug. The size of the labret was based on the age of the women. A plug could be over three inches in size for an elderly woman. Slaves were not allowed to wear labrets.

Dugout canoes were made from spruce and cedar logs. Red cedar was the favorite tree for dugout canoes. These canoes were used for trading, hunting, fishing, and warfare. The canoes could be up to sixty feet long. The Haidas made the largest



dugout canoes. They had the best red cedar trees. Cottonwood was used for making small dugout canoes. Large canoes often had a carved figure at the front. Some figures were painted with crests. A water-proof paint was made by mixing minerals, salmon eggs, and chewed spruce gum. This paint was put on a boat with a bear- or porcupine- hair brush.

Most Native objects were carved from wood. Wood was the most available natural resource. Other materials such as horn, copper, and later silver were also decorated with carved figures. Southeast Natives traded for argillite with British Columbia tribes. Since contact, paper, canvas, glass, and precious metals have also been used for different art forms.



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Traditionally, the tools used by Native people were also works of art. These tools included stone adzes and axes, drills, and carving knives made from stone, bone, or shell.

Native masks, rattles, and other regalia were decorated to illustrate lineage and clan history. The most lavishly carved eating utensils and bowls were saved for ceremonies. Those used for everyday meals had simple decorations.

Carved boxes stored food supplies and ceremonial clothing. The bentwood box is one type of box. To make a bentwood box, the wood is steamed and then shaped into a box. Boxes were also used for cooking. They did this by dropping hot stones into a box filled with water.

Huge screens, used to divide the living quarters within a house, were also carved. Often these screens were decorated with

clan crests.

Totem poles are used to tell a story, legend, event, tradition, or lineage. Totems could also be made for the birth of a child or the death of a clan leader. The carvings on totem poles are usually animals—a bear, eagle, or killer whale, for example. Humans can also be carved into a totem pole. To understand the meaning of a totem pole, one would have to ask the person who wanted it carved. Early missionaries thought the totem poles were bad. They had many of the totem poles destroyed.

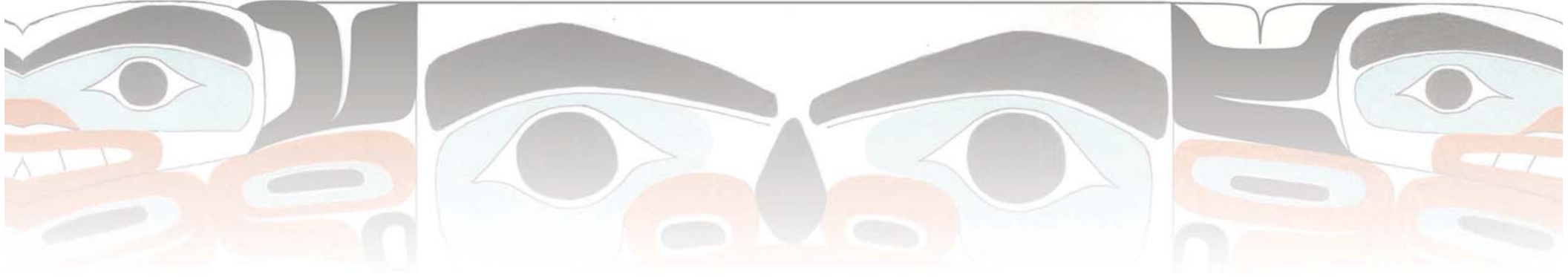
Other hand-made things found in a clan house were wooden plates, dishes, cups, bowls, ladles, scoops, and spoons of wood and horn. Many of these things were decorated with designs and mother-of-pearl, animals' teeth and shells.

A clan house was made with four spruce support posts and hemlock planks



for siding. Often the support posts were carved. The entrances to the clan houses were sometimes made through the shape of a carved or painted animal.

Within the traditional Southeast clan home, there would be mats of grass or cedar bark, and blankets of animal skins, as well as boxes and baskets.



## *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Relationship with the Environment*

To this day, Native baskets are made from spruce roots, bear grass, and dyed bear grass. They are so well made that you cannot see the weaving on the inside of the baskets. The baskets were also used in ceremonies. Some baskets held food for the feasts. The baskets had different designs.

Rock carvings are fairly common in coastal Alaska. These are called petroglyphs. Rock is harder to carve than wood. The petroglyphs were crude compared to wooden carvings. The drawings usually show clan crests. They served as markers to show clan ownership of land or sites.

In Southeast Native art, many of the designs can only be used by certain families or lineages or with the permission of the families or lineages.

Southeast Natives have many stories. Raven, Thunderbird, animals, and people can be found in the stories. There are tradi-

tional stories of migration and creation.

Speeches and songs are important to the Natives of Southeast Alaska. Good orators are highly respected. Traditionally, good orators would be invited to go to other *kwaans* to make speeches or sing songs. They were paid for doing this.

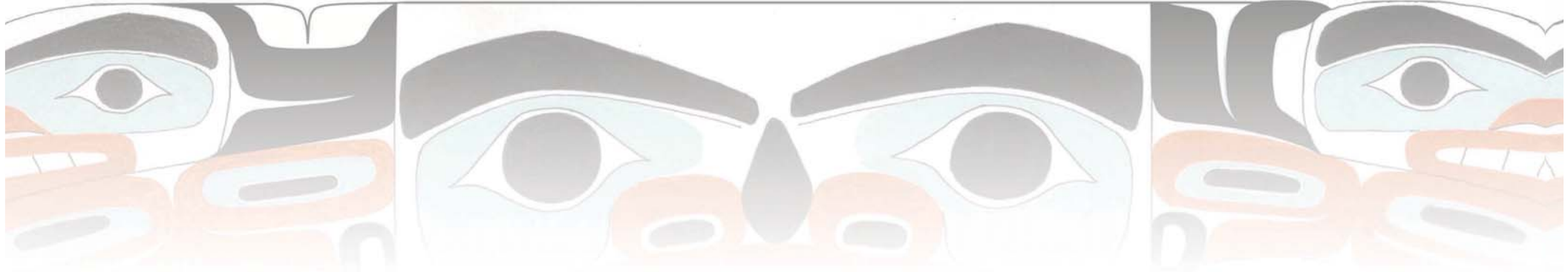
Dances were and are popular among the Native peoples of Southeast Alaska. Rattles and clappers were often used during the dances to beckon spirits. Painted boxes that had pebbles inside were used as drums. People danced at ceremonies. When a person danced, his movements had to be exactly right.

Art is another important part Native cultures in Southeast Alaska. Many of these art forms show eyes, skeletons, animals, birds, fish, people, and legendary characters. These drawings were often painted on or carved into different things. Some things

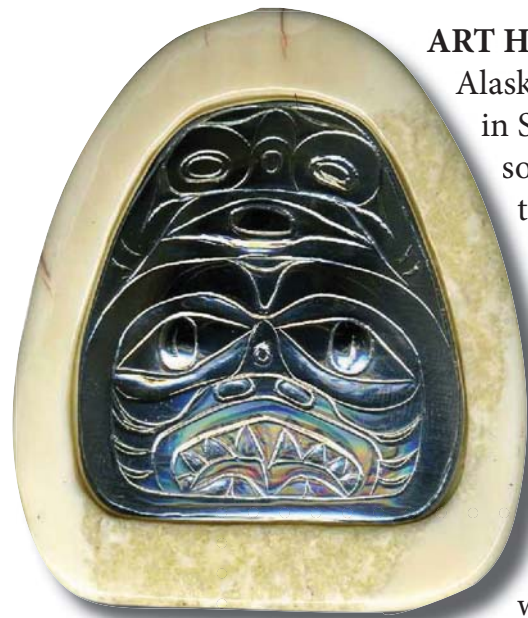


had both carvings and paintings. Black and red were popular colors in Southeast Native art. Weapons, houses, canoes, and masks were covered with drawings and carvings.

In the *On Your Knees* cave on Prince of Wales Island, the bones of a young Native man who died more than 10,000 years ago were found. Many beautiful stone tools were also found. One tool found in the cave was made 10,300 years ago.



## *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Background and Place-Based Activities*



**ART HAS LONG BEEN** an integral part of life for Southeast Alaska Natives. The abundance of food and natural resources in Southeast Alaska allowed for the development of highly sophisticated art forms. While there are variations among the different tribes, many of the Native art forms are similar. In some cases, designs and traditions were borrowed from other groups. Art played varied roles in traditional Native cultures. Art was used to represent wealth, lineages, legends, stories, and other important aspects of life. Today, many of the traditional art forms are maintained; many for commercial purposes.

**Grabber:** Show the students a potato. Tell them that you want to peel it. Have them suggest what tools might be used for this process. Lead the students to suggest a peeler—

- show an example. Use this as an example of necessity leading to invention.
- Relate this to the development of Native tools, noting the necessities that led to their development and the availability of raw materials for their production.

### *Key Vocabulary*

sophisticated  
lineage  
extinct  
decorated  
ornaments  
adze  
labret  
design  
orators  
utensils



## *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Background and Place-Based Activities*

- Have each student identify a contemporary tool. The students should research the origin of each tool, who invented it, and when. When finished, have the students share their findings.
- Invite a resource person to make a presentation to the students about the production of traditional Native tools. Arrange the presentation well in advance so that concrete materials can be collected to enhance the presentation.
- If actual samples of Native art are available, share them with the students. This might include baskets, tools, drawings, paintings, and carvings. Have the students note the materials used to make the different items.
- Have the students research art forms from other cultures in harsher climates than Southeast Alaska. Use this to explore the factors that allowed Southeast Natives to create such intricate art forms. Have the students determine the role played by the fine arts in a society.
- Read the text from the beginning of this unit with the students. Discuss the information contained in the selection with them. Have the students take turns reading the content of the text.



# *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Background and Place-Based Activities*

## SOPHISTICATED



Show the students the picture of the typewriter and the computer at the back of this unit. Have them contrast the two—use the computer to introduce “sophisticated” when contrasted with the typewriter. Use the halibut hook as a sample of a sophisticated Native tool.

## LINEAGE



Have individuals name their parents, grandparents, and so on. Use this to represent lineage—show the picture from this unit for lineage.

## EXTINCT



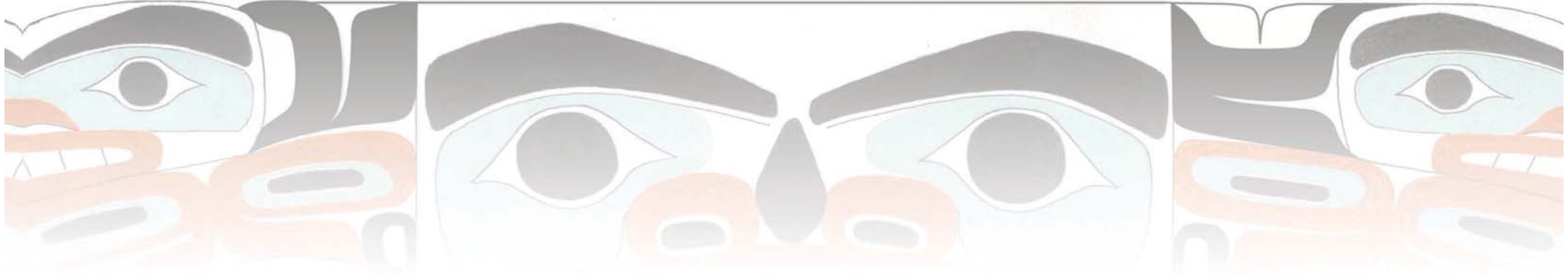
Show the students the picture from this unit for extinct. Have the students suggest what art forms might be made from the mastodon tusks. If a sample is available, show it to the students.

## DECORATED



Collect a few plates and dishes with distinct patterns. Share them with the students. Show the basket picture for “decorated” from this unit. Have the students suggest other things that are decorated.





## *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Background and Place-Based Activities*

### ORNAMENTS



Collect samples of common jewelry. Lead the students to suggest why people wear such ornaments. Show the picture for “ornaments” from this unit. Show the labret picture as an example of another ornament.

### LABRET



Show the picture for “labret” when introducing ornaments to the students. If available, show pictures of other types of labrets from different cultures.

### ADZE



Show the picture from this unit that shows the adzes. Looking at the picture, have the students suggest their uses. Have them imagine what the adzes would have been made out of traditionally.

### UTENSIL



Show a knife, fork, and spoon. Have the students imagine what types of utensils would have been used traditionally. Have the students suggest the materials used for the utensils.

# *The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: Background and Place-Based Activities*

## DESIGNS



Collect clothing samples, dishes, etc. that have designs. Have the students compare and contrast the designs. Show the picture for “designs” from this unit.

## ORATOR



Show the students the picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., at the back of this unit. Determine their knowledge of his input into the civil rights movement, in particular, his strong abilities as an orator. Relate the role of orator to Native cultures.



Sealaska Heritage Institute is a great resource for historical photos and documents related to Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures. Go to [www.sealaska-heritage.org/collections](http://www.sealaska-heritage.org/collections) to search our archival catalog or to view photos in our “digital collections” section. Above: Photograph postcard inscribed “Native Alaska Baskets” by P.E. Kern, Skagway, Alaska, circa 1900.

# Language and Skills Development

## LISTENING

### Turn and Face

Mount the vocabulary pictures on the walls and board. Group the students together in the center of the classroom. Say one of the vocabulary words and the students should turn to face the picture for the word you said. Depending upon the size of your class, this activity may be done in small groups. This activity may also be done in team form. In this case, have a player from each team stand in the center of the classroom. When a player faces the wrong direction (i.e., the wrong picture), he/she is “out” until a later round of the activity. Repeat until all players have had an opportunity to participate.

### Picture Hold Up

Before the activity begins, prepare a stencil that contains small versions of the vocabulary pictures. Provide each student with a copy of the stencil. The students should cut the pictures from their copies of the stencil. When the students’ pictures are cut out, say a vocabulary word. Each student should then hold up the picture for the vocabulary word that you said. Repeat this process until all of the pictures/vocabulary words have been used in this way.



### Whisper

Mount the vocabulary illustrations on the chalkboard. Group the students into two teams. Whisper a vocabulary word to the first player in each team. When you say “Go,” the first player in each team must then whisper the same word to the next player in his/her team. The players should continue whispering the vocabulary word in this way until the last player in a team hears the word. When the last player in a team hears the word, he/she must rush to the chalkboard and point to the illustration for the word. The first player to do this correctly wins the round. Repeat until all players have had an opportunity to identify a vocabulary illustration in this way. When a player has identified a vocabulary illustration, he/she should rejoin the front of his/her team.

### Illustration Hold Up

Before the activity begins, prepare a page which contains small versions of the vocabulary illustrations. Provide each student with a copy of the page. The students should cut out the illustrations. Say a vocabulary word. Each student should then hold up the illustration for the vocabulary word that you said. Repeat this process until all of the illustrations/vocabulary words have been used in this way.

# Language and Skills Development

## SPEAKING

### Right or Wrong?

Mount the vocabulary pictures on the board. Point to one of the pictures and say its vocabulary word. The students should repeat the vocabulary word for that picture. However, when you point to a picture and say an incorrect vocabulary word for it, the students should remain silent. Repeat this process until the students have responded a number of times to the different vocabulary pictures.

### Hand Tag

Group the students in a circle on the floor. Have the students place their hands on the floor, palms down. Stand in the center of the circle with the vocabulary picture and a flashlight. The object of the activity is to attempt to tag a student's hand or hands with the light of the flashlight. The students must pull their hands from the circle when they think they are about to be tagged. When you eventually tag a student's hand or hands, he/she must then say a complete sentence using the word for a vocabulary picture that you show. Repeat this process until many students have responded.

### High Card Draw

Give each student in the class a card from a deck of playing cards. Mount the vocabulary pictures on the board and number each one. Call two students' names. Those two students should show their cards. The student who has the highest card (aces can be high or low) should then say a complete sentence about a vocabulary picture you point to. The students may exchange playing cards periodically during the activity. Repeat until many students have responded.

### High Roller

Give a die to each of two students. When you say "Go," the students should roll their dice. The student who rolls the highest number on his/her die must then say a complete sentence about a vocabulary picture that you show. Repeat this process until many students have responded with sentences of their own.



The background features a decorative border at the top with stylized, colorful faces in shades of blue, orange, and grey. Below the faces, an open book with yellowed pages is shown at an angle, casting a shadow.

# *Language and Skills Development*

## READING

### **Funny Face**

Have two students stand, facing one another. The object of the activity is for the students to look at each other without laughing. The first student to laugh must identify a sight word for a graphic that you show. If both students laugh at the same time, then call upon each student to identify a sight word. Repeat with other pairs of students until all students have participated.

### **Flipped Out**

Mount the sight word cards on the chalkboard. Give each student a penny. Keep one penny for yourself. The students should carefully toss their pennies into the air. Toss your penny into the air at the same time. Call the side of your coin that is showing (heads or tails). The students who have the same side of coin showing must stand and point to sight words for pictures you show. Repeat.

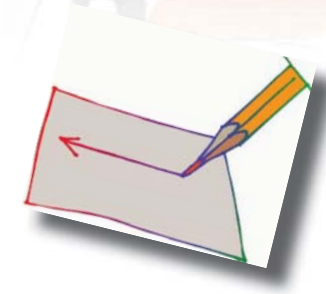
### **Sentence Completion**

Provide each student with a copy of the sentence completion version of the story. The students should read the text and say the missing words. When finished, review the students' work.

### **Letter Encode**

Give the students their cut out letters, prepared earlier in this program. Show a vocabulary picture. The students should use their letters to spell the word for that picture. Repeat, using the remaining pictures from this unit. You may wish to show pictures from other units to review their spellings.

# Language and Skills Development



## WRITING

### Alphabet Code

Assign a number to each letter of the alphabet. Write the letters across the top of the chalkboard, and write the numbers for them underneath (one number for each letter). Provide each student with writing paper and a pen. Spell one of the sight words, using the numbers for the letters rather than the letters themselves. The students should write the numbers you say on their sheets of paper. Then, when the word has been spelled in this way, each student should write the word you spelled, using the letters for the numbers dictated.

### Descriptions

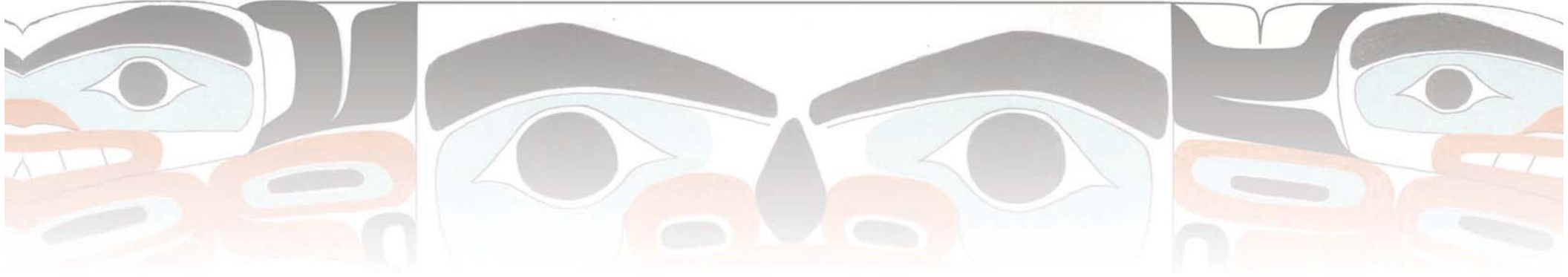
Place an art form at the front of the room. Provide the students with writing paper and pens. Each student should then describe the appearance/uses etc. of the art form. When completed, have each student read his/her writing to the others.

### Sentence Completion

Give each student a copy of the sentence completion version of the text from this unit. The students should write in the missing words. Afterward, review the students' work.

### Syllable Time

Provide each student with writing paper and a pen. Say a syllable that is found in one of the sight words. Each student should then write the sight word that contains that syllable. Depending upon the syllable that you say, more than one sight word may be correct. Repeat this process with other syllables. Afterwards, review the students' responses.



## *Reading and Writing: Sentence Completion*

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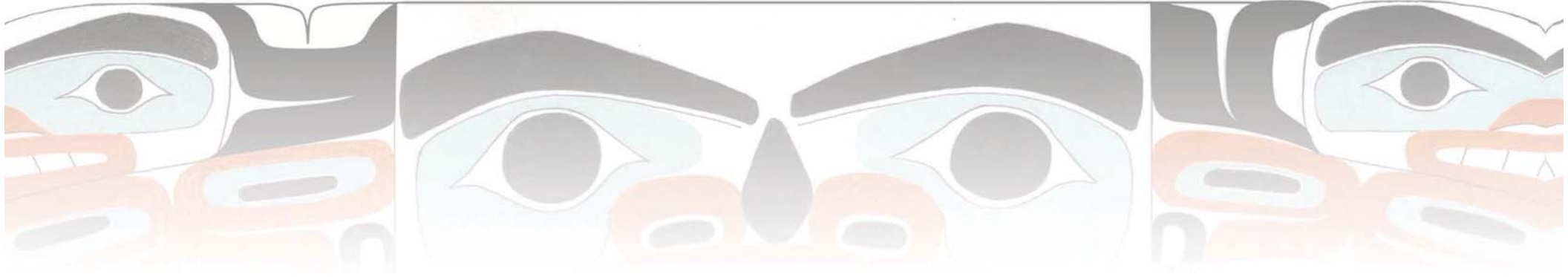
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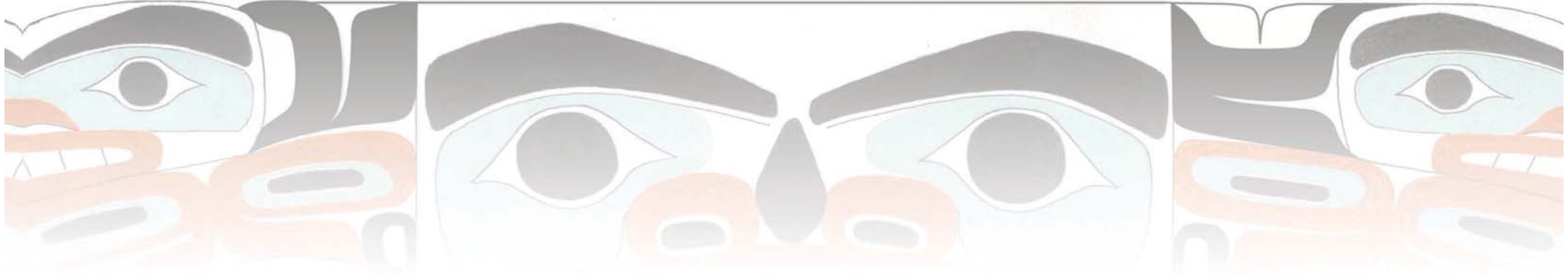
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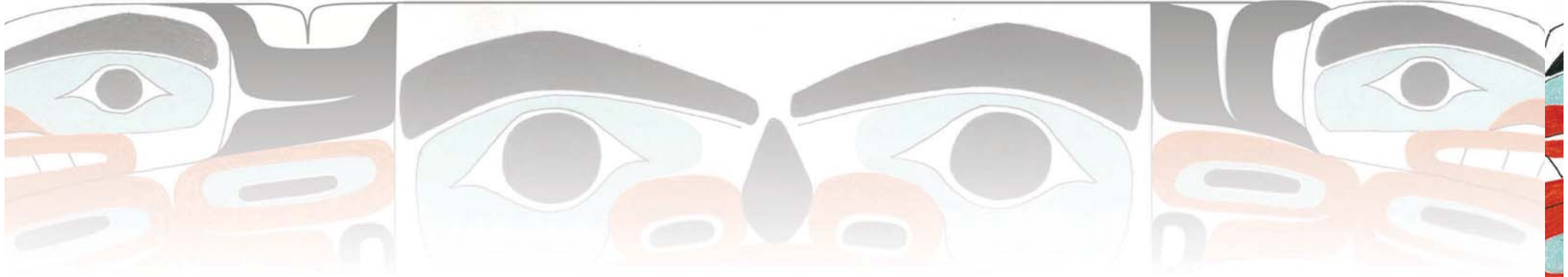
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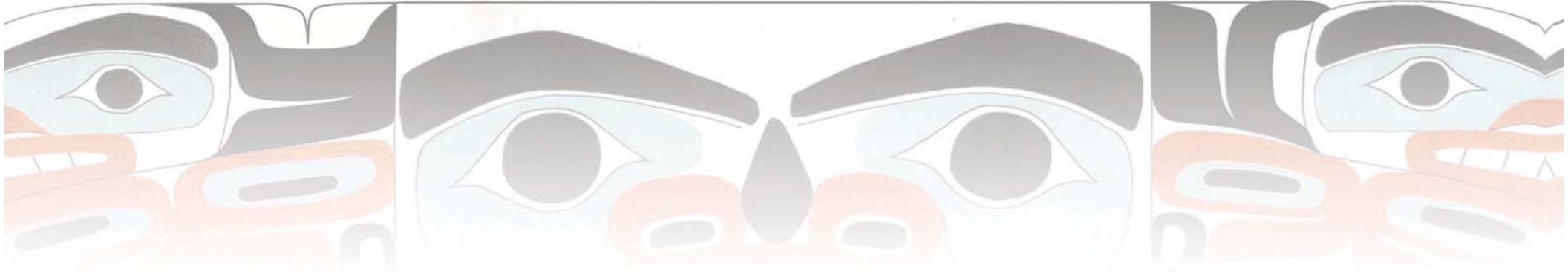




# VOCABULARY PICTURES

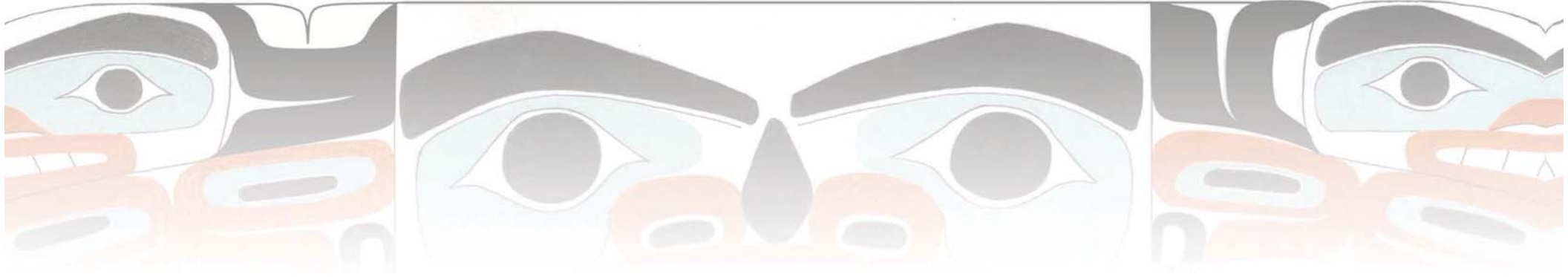






## ADZE

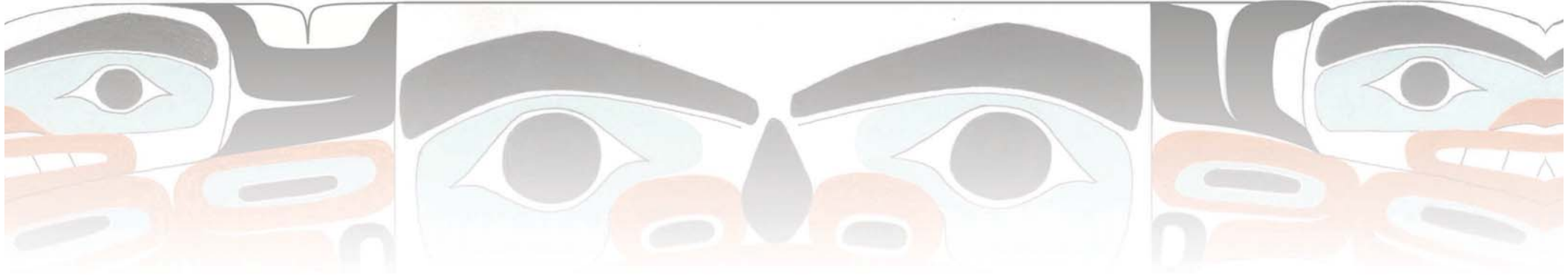




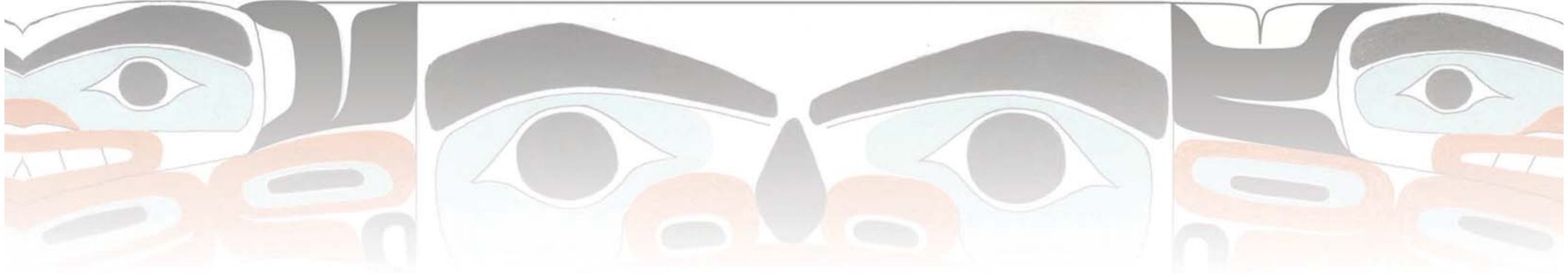
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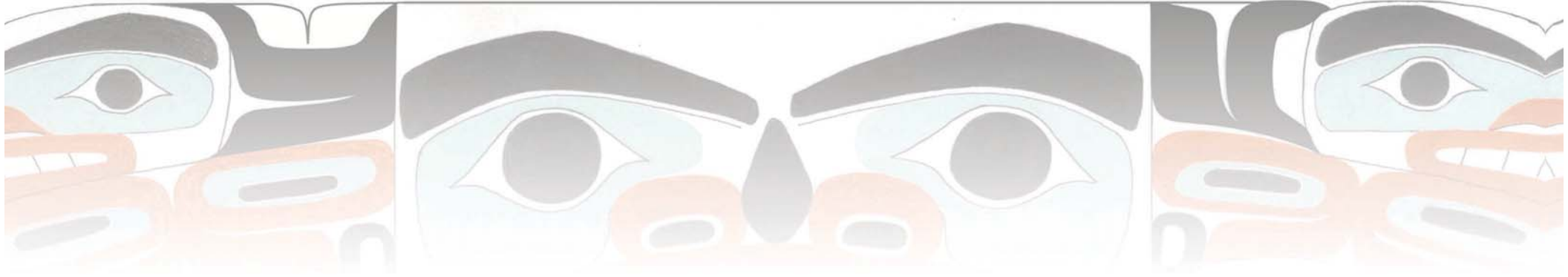






## DESIGNS

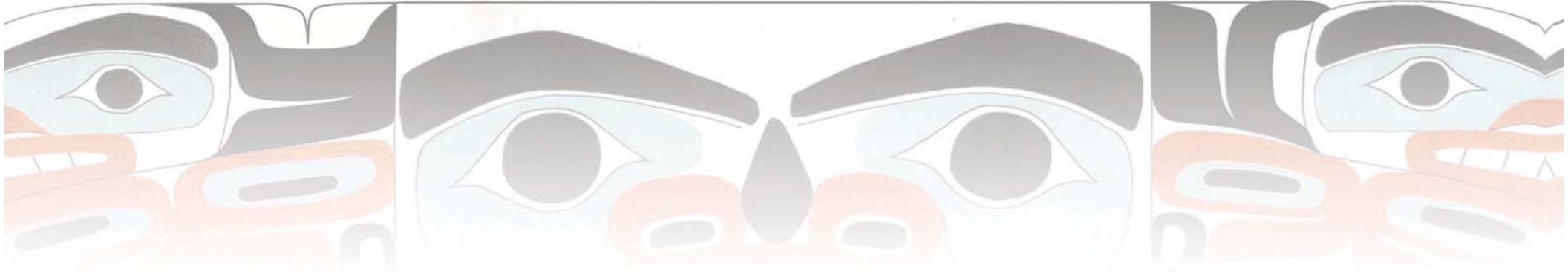




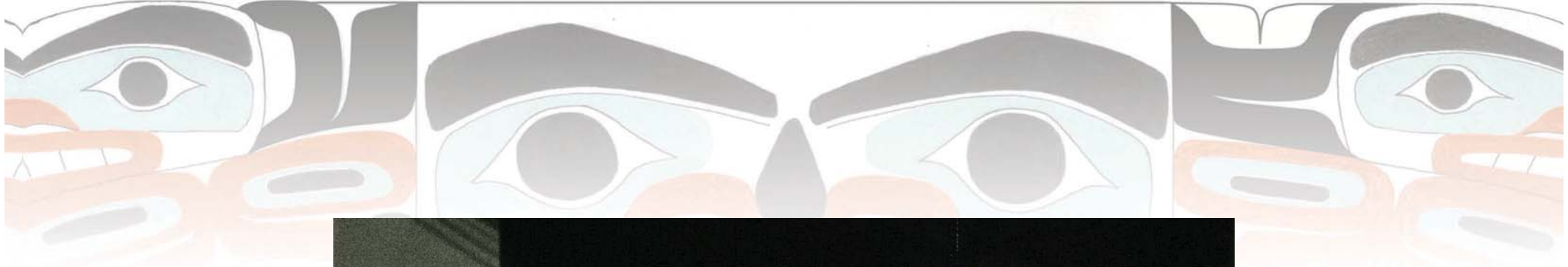
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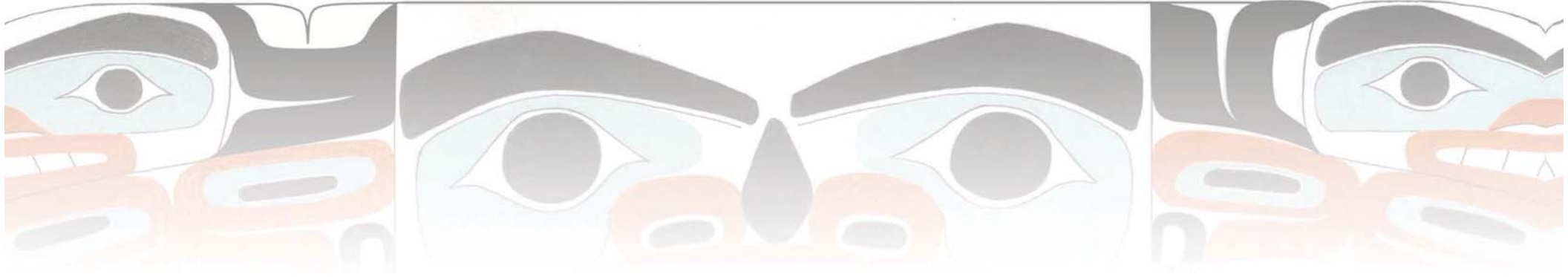


"Skak-ish-tin", Native, over 100 years old. Wrangell, Alaska, Photo by Worden.



## LABRET

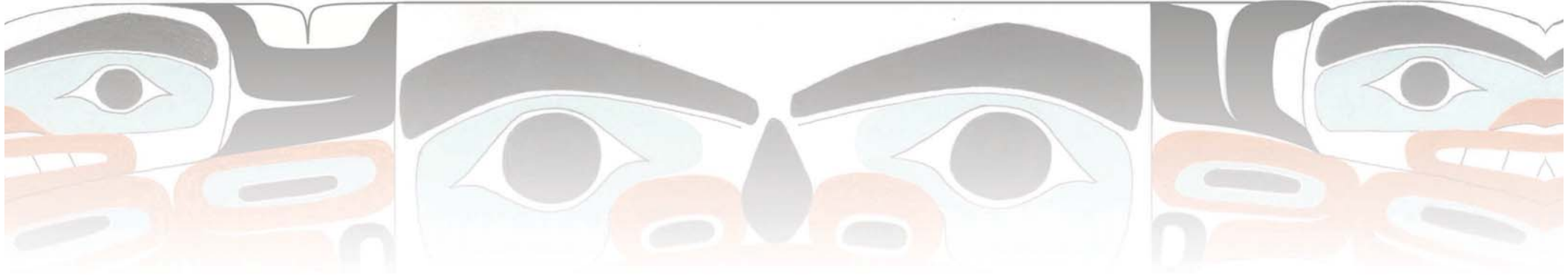




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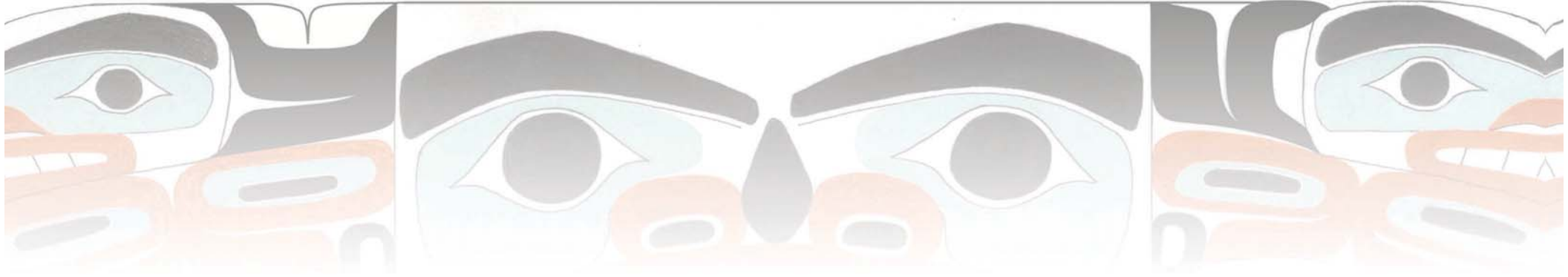




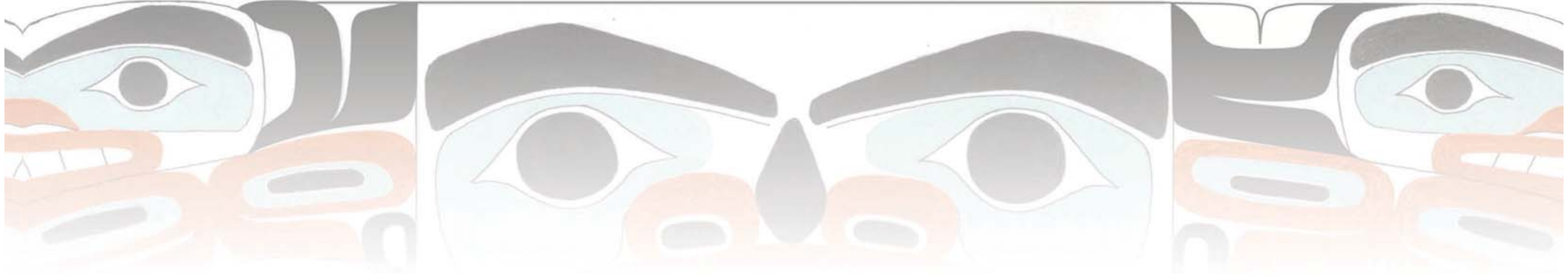


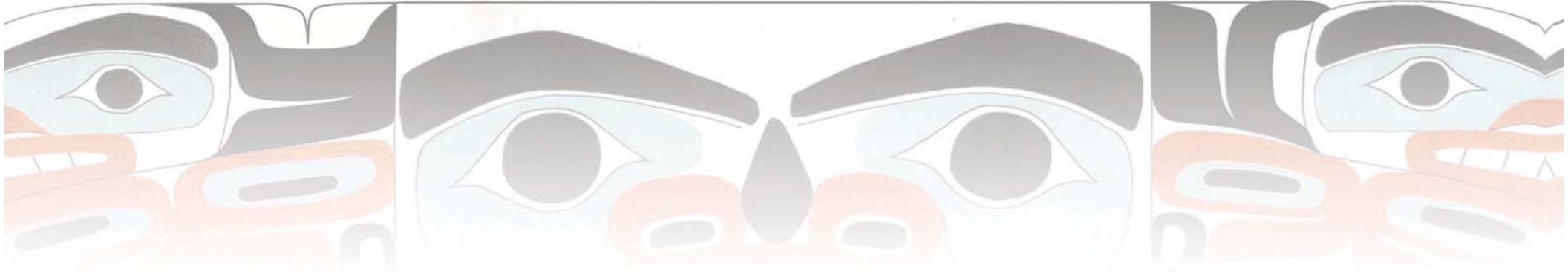
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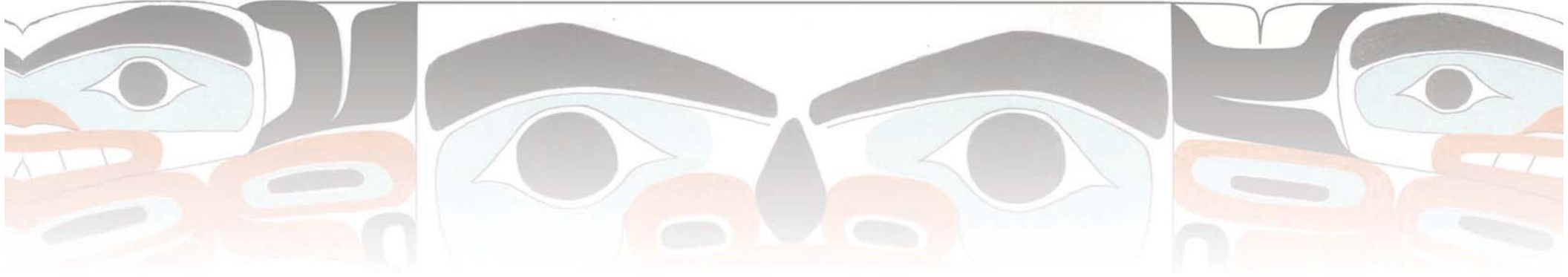


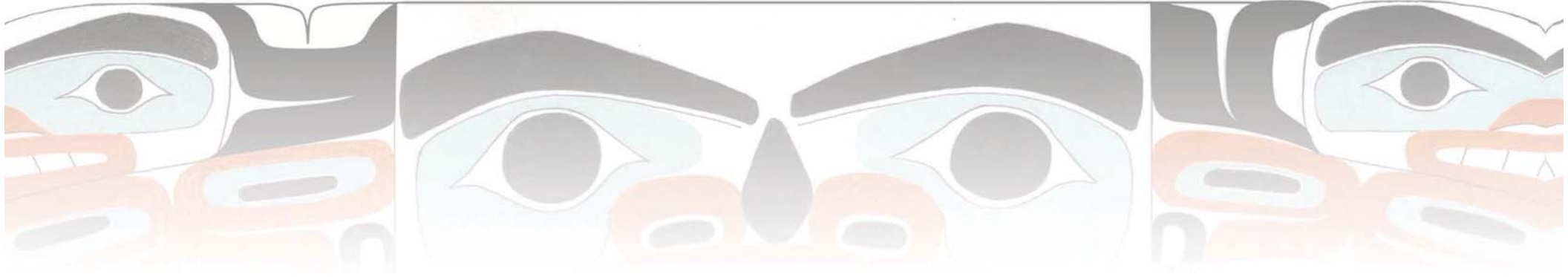
## ORNAMENTS





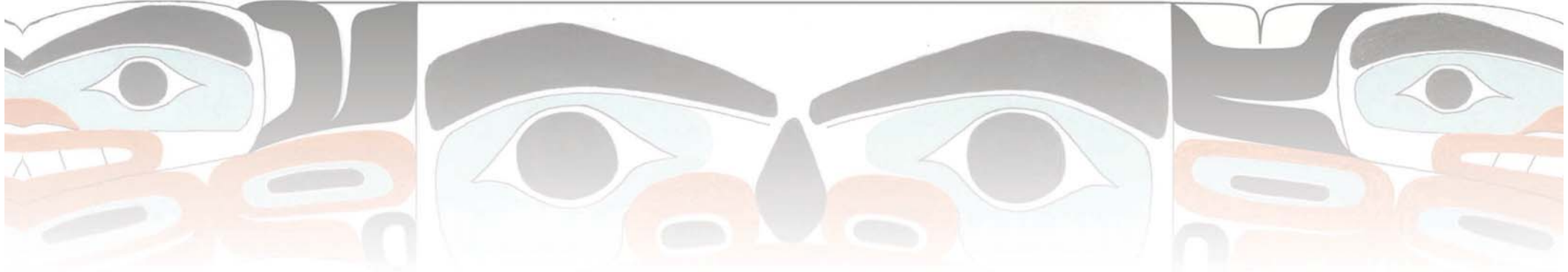
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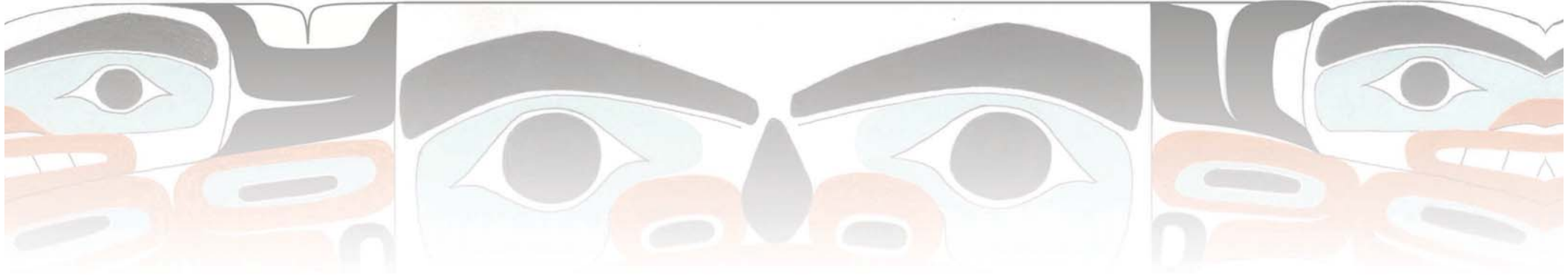




## SOPHISTICATED

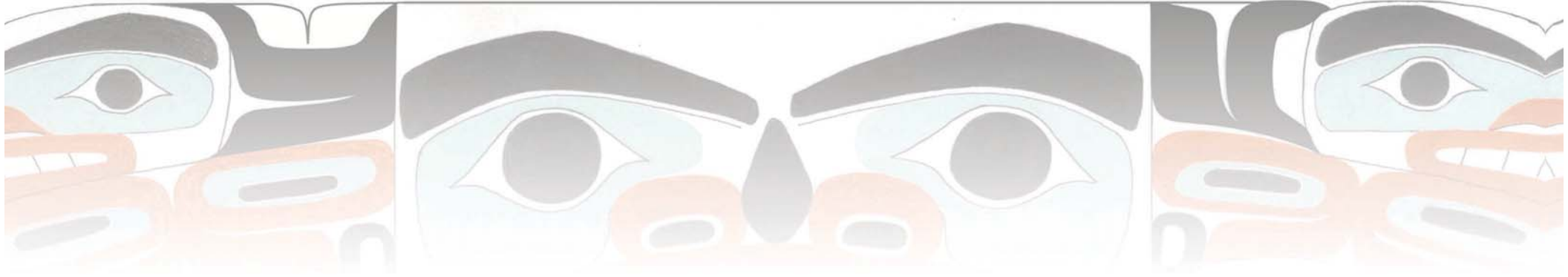




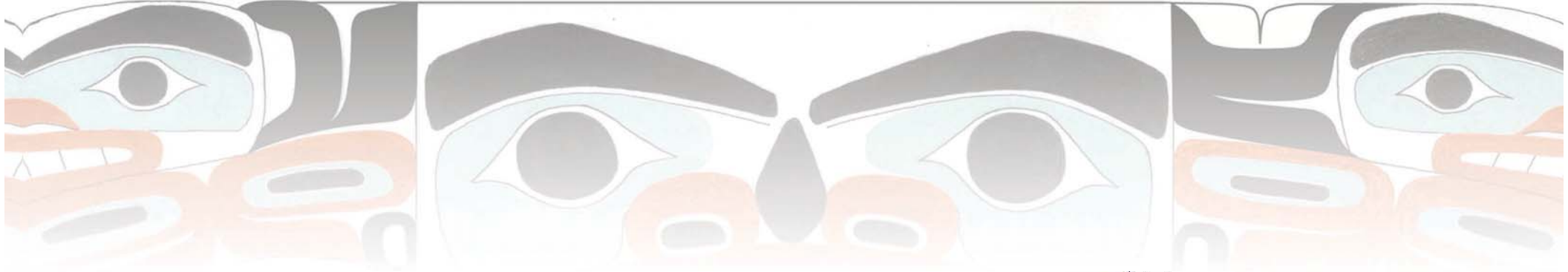


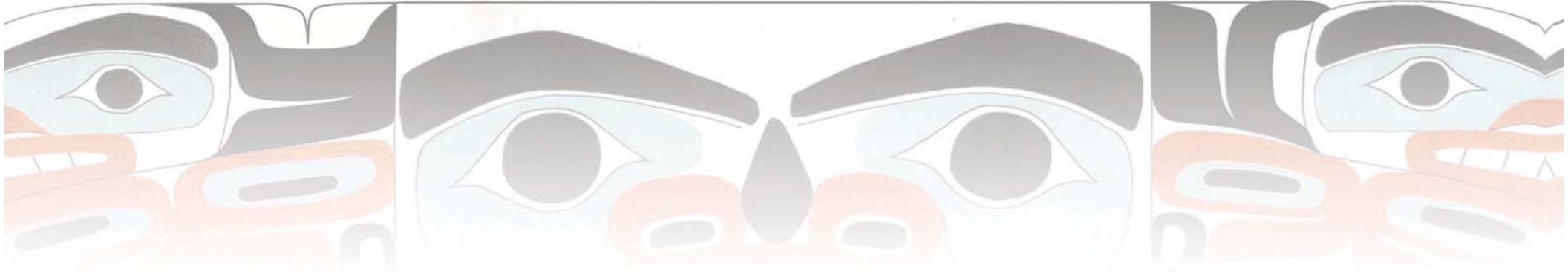
## **TYPEWRITER**





## COMPUTER





## MARTIN LUTHER KING

