

# Northwest Coast Images

1

## Form Line Structure

- 2 basic colors = black and red.
- Black is primary color, used for the form line, a strong contoured line that provides structure and the basic outline of the anatomy of the subject.
- Secondary lines are usually in red.
- Tertiary lines are usually blue-green.

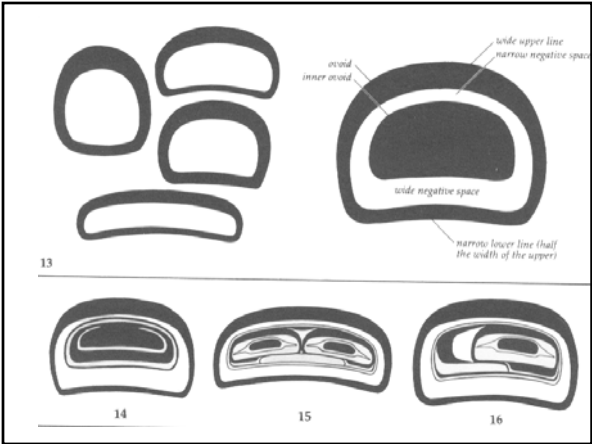
2



## Ovoid

- Single, most characteristic shape.
- Takes several forms
  - ◆ Elongated to compressed variations
  - ◆ Inner material
    - Double eyes
    - Heads

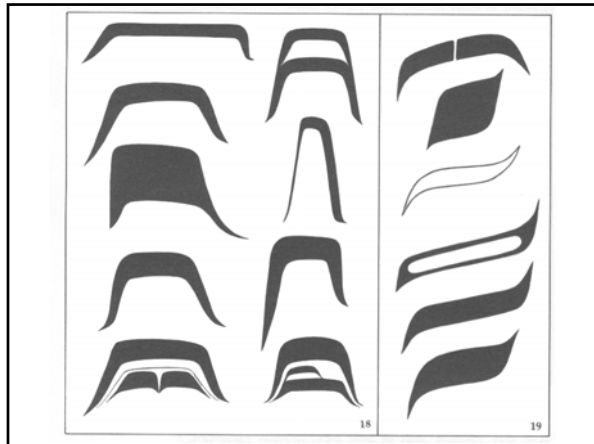
4



## U and S Forms

- U forms very common
- Vary tremendously in proportion
- Part of form line in ears, tail
- Also fills spaces in feathers
- S forms used to fill spaces
  - ◆ Connect elements
  - ◆ Series of S forms as ribs

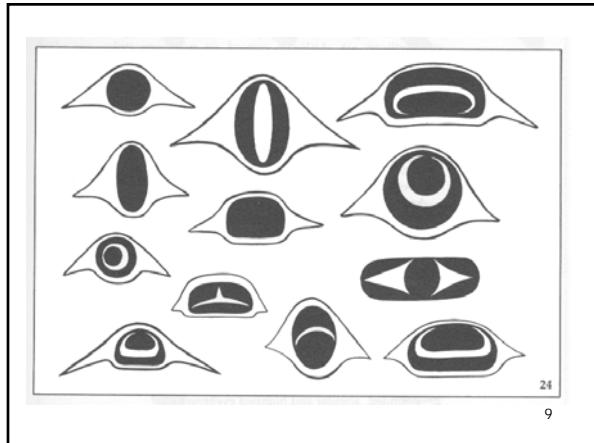
6



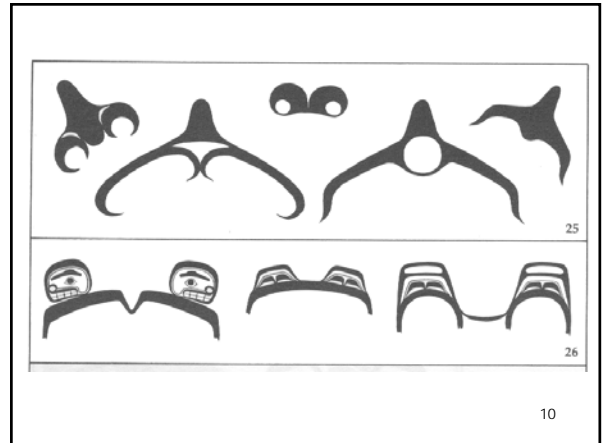
## Anatomical Parts

- ✦ Eyes facing front are circular or ovoid, with great variation.
- ✦ Noses can be large and flaring, small and curled, or broad.
- ✦ Ears usually U forms with varying position and size. Similar forms used for "ear" or crest of major birds.

8



9



10

## Feet and Claws

- ✦ Hands, flippers, and claws tend to be substantial, while legs are often minimal.
- ✦ Feet often hinged in flexed position.

11

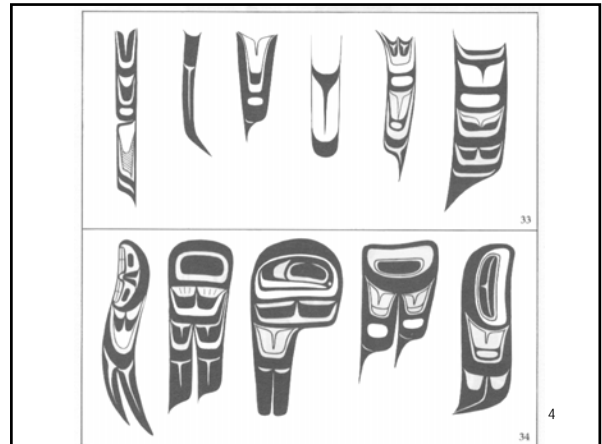


12

## Feathers and Wings

- ✦ Bird feathers usually elongated U form with U forms inside.
- ✦ Bird wings usually start with ovoid and continue with U forms.

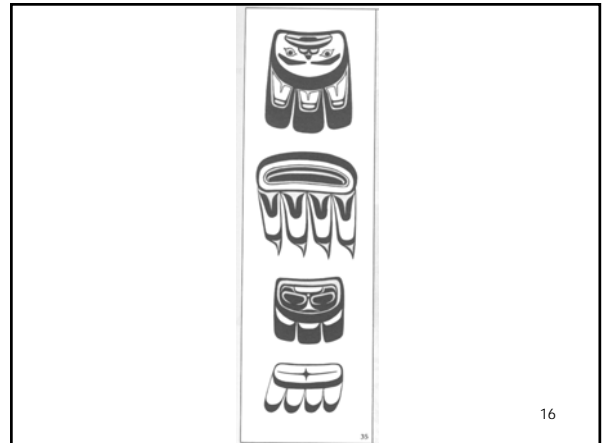
13



## Bird Tails

- ✦ Bird tails usually have feathers extending from ovoid.

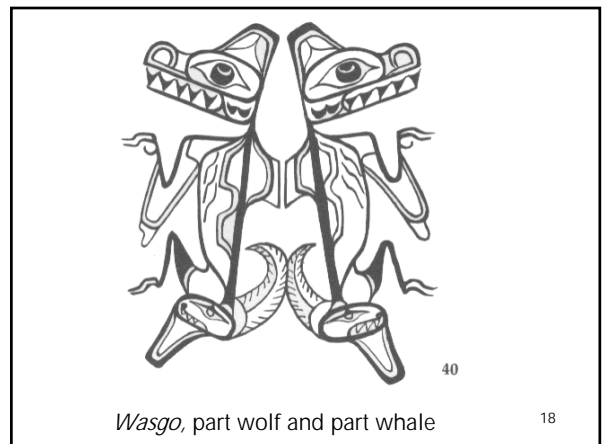
15



## Split Figures

- ✦ Often figures appear split, as though the animal has been split down the middle and laid out with half to each side.
- ✦ Often occurs with hats, boxes, and bracelets.

17



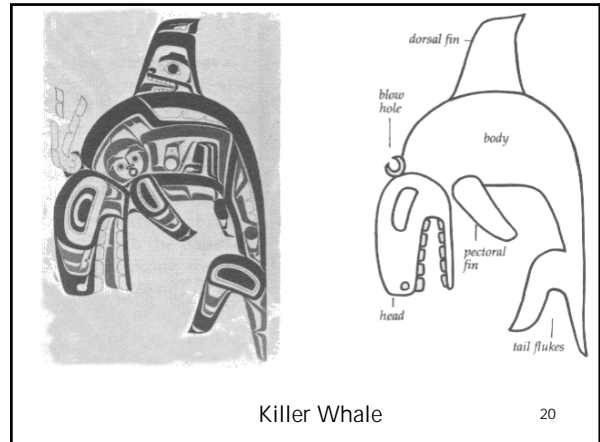
Wasgo, part wolf and part whale

18

## Killer Whale

- ➔ Many people of NW hunted whales.
- ➔ Whales also clan symbol.
- ➔ People feared being dragged under by whales while hunting.
- ➔ Invariable features:
  - ◆ Round snout with large mouth and lots of teeth.
  - ◆ Blow hole
  - ◆ Dorsal and pectoral fins
  - ◆ Tail with symmetrical flukes.

19



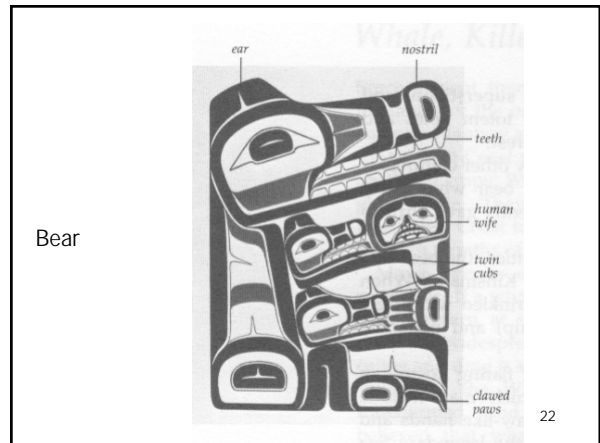
Killer Whale

20

## Bear

- ➔ Bear is subject of many legends and stories.
- ➔ Seen as having human-like qualities.
- ➔ Defining characteristics:
  - ◆ Small ears
  - ◆ Large flaring nostrils
  - ◆ Wide mouth and large teeth.
  - ◆ Claw-like hands and feet.

21



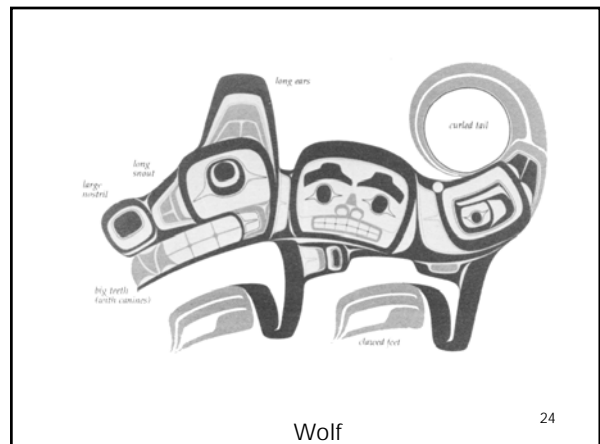
Bear

22

## Wolf

- ➔ The wolf was revered as a good hunter and often associated with spirit power necessary for men to be good hunters.
- ➔ Wolf usually depicted in profile.
- ➔ Main features:
  - ◆ Elongated snout with flaring nostrils.
  - ◆ Many large teeth, sometimes prominent canines.
  - ◆ Large ears.
  - ◆ Curled tail.

23



Wolf

24

## Mountain Goat

- Mountain goats sometimes descend from mountains when snow becomes too deep. Hunting was possible at those times.
- Mountain goat wool used for Chilkat Tlingit blankets.
- Features:
  - ◆ 2 slender curved horns.
  - ◆ Small hoofed feet.

25

Mountain Goat



26

## Beaver

- The beaver is a frequent figure in NW legends, probably because of its skill in living in rivers.
- Features:
  - ◆ Small ears
  - ◆ Rounded nostrils
  - ◆ Big, flat, crosshatched tail.
  - ◆ 2 large incisor teeth.

27



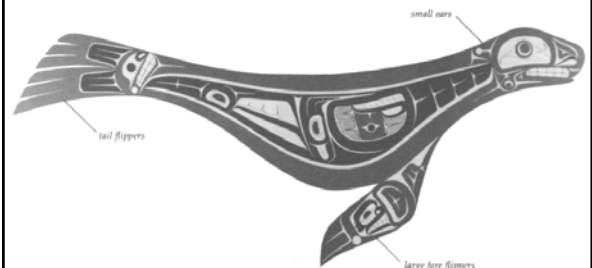
Beaver

28

## Sea Lion

- Sea lions hunted in northern waters.
- Thick whiskers used for crown-like effect on top of headdresses.
- Features:
  - ◆ Larger, more slender than seal.
  - ◆ Small external ears.
  - ◆ Longer tail flippers.
  - ◆ Large fore flippers.

29



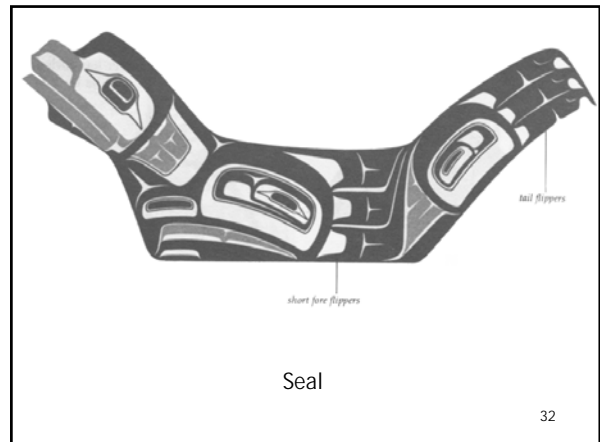
Sea Lion

30

## Seal

- Seal hunting very important.
- Seal used for meal and oil, and skins used as water-resistant hides.
- Features:
  - ◆ Shorter, thicker body than sea lion.
  - ◆ More prominent snout.
  - ◆ Short front flippers.

31

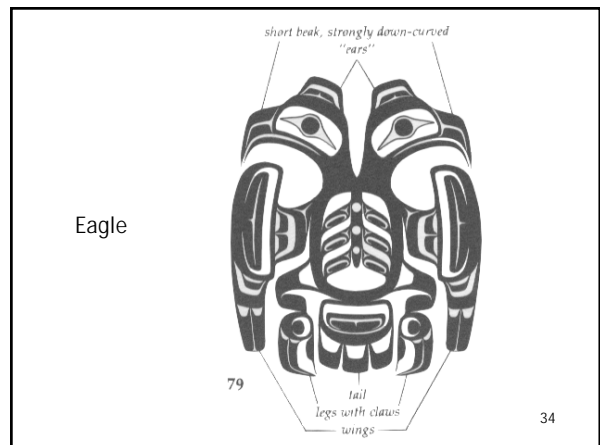


32

## Eagle

- The eagle is another frequent figure in legends.
- Eagle feathers used in ceremonies and on masks and headdresses.
- One of main Haida crest images.
- Features:
  - ◆ Beak shorter than raven and terminates in downward curve.
  - ◆ Tongue often shows.
  - ◆ Small crest, or "ears" on head.

33



34

Eagle with  
Salmon

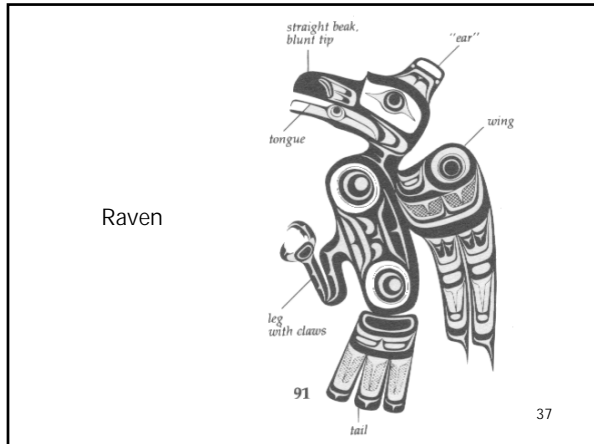


35

## Raven

- Raven is most important creature.
- Transformer, trickster, cultural hero.
- Gave people sun, moon, fire, trees.
- Features:
  - ◆ Long, straight beak with blunt end.
  - ◆ Sometimes visible tongue and sun.
  - ◆ Small crest, or "ear" on head.
  - ◆ Leg with claws.

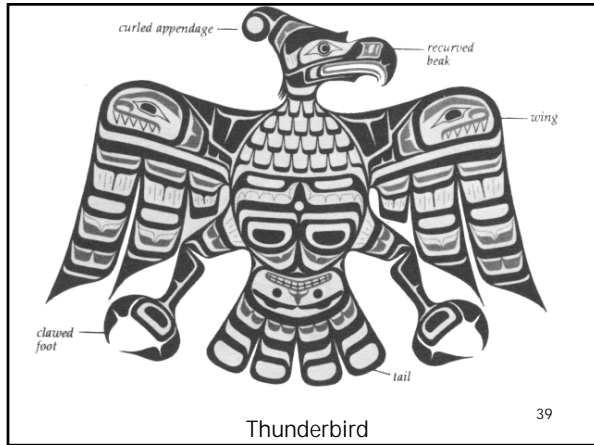
36



### Thunderbird

- Most powerful of the spirits.
- Only most powerful and prestigious chiefs could display the thunderbird.
- Thunderbirds of legend ate whales, so potent symbol for whale hunters.
- Features:
  - ◆ Similar to Hawk, but with sharply recurved beak.
  - ◆ Curled appendages on top of head.

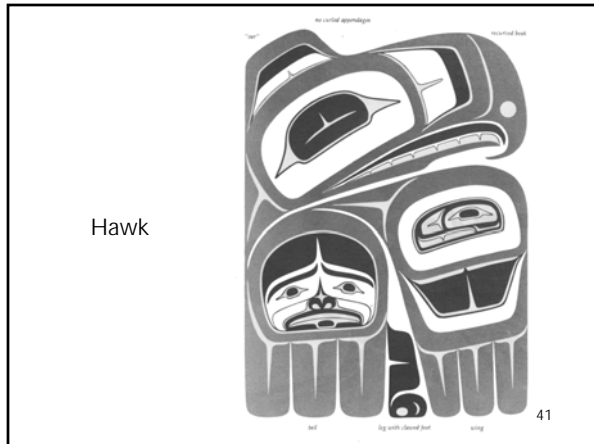
38



### Hawk

- Depicted less often than raven, eagle, or thunderbird.
- Features:
  - ◆ Resembles thunderbird except in beak: recurved tip continues below lower jaw.
  - ◆ No horn-like curls emanating from head.

40



### Owl

- Owl often associated with death.
- Features:
  - ◆ Large, round eye sockets.
  - ◆ Short, sharp beak
  - ◆ Wings and tail.

42



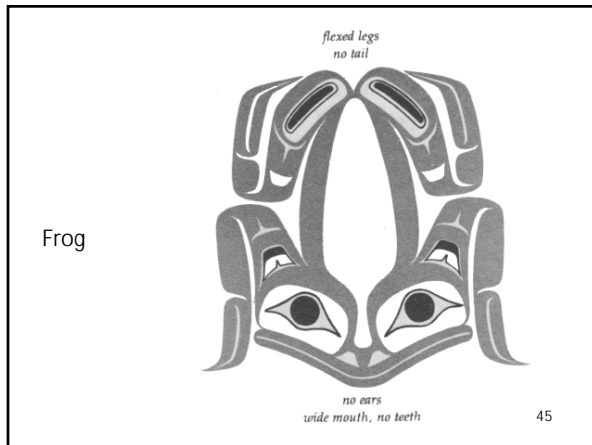
Owl

43

## Frog

- ➔Frogs are both clan symbols and figures in legends.
- ➔Features:
  - ◆Large mouth with thick lips.
  - ◆Legs flexed with toed feet.
  - ◆No tail or ears.

44



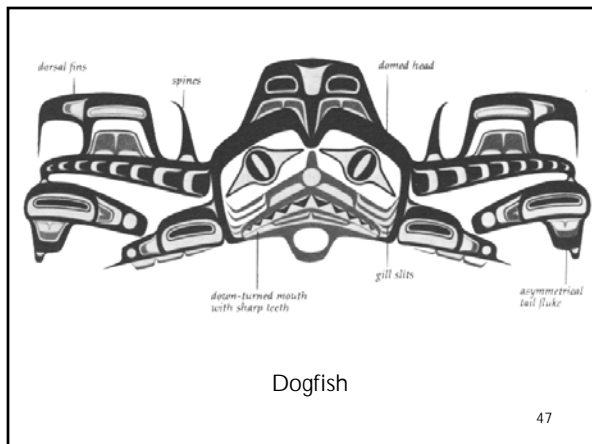
Frog

45

## Dogfish, or Shark

- ➔Image often used for ceremonial clothing.
- ➔Labret, a lip ornament, marks this as a female figure.
- ➔Features:
  - ◆High domed head
  - ◆Down-turned mouth with sharp teeth
  - ◆Gill slits
  - ◆Two small nostrils
  - ◆Vertical pupils
  - ◆Sharp spines

46



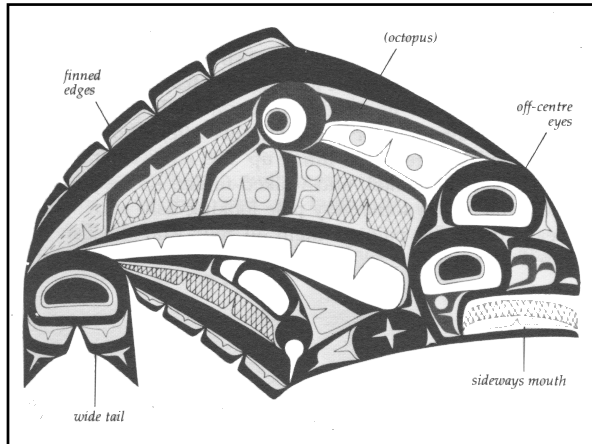
Dogfish

47

## Halibut and Octopus

- ➔Often pictured together, as octopus used to bait hooks in halibut fishing.
- ➔Halibut is flat fish with 2 eyes on one surface - - thus eyes are on one side in depictions.
- ➔Other features:
  - ◆Oval body shape
  - ◆Fins on back
  - ◆Spread tail
  - ◆Sideways mouth

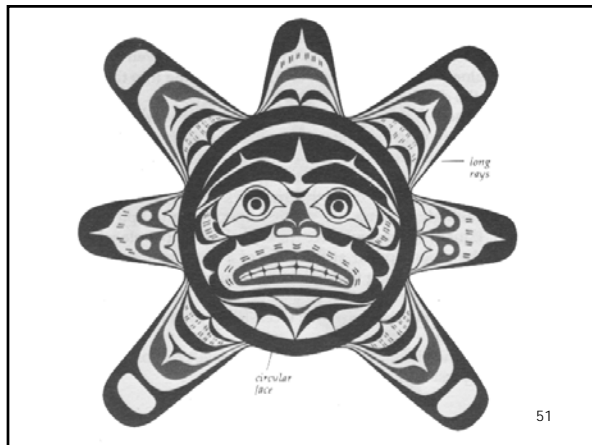
48



## Sun

- ➔ At the beginning, the world was in darkness because a powerful chief held the sun in a box.
- ➔ Raven stole the sun from the chief and released it into the sky, bringing light and life.
- ➔ Features:
  - ◆ Circular center
  - ◆ Long rays

50



## Moon

- ➔ Raven also stole the moon to lighten the darkness of night.
- ➔ Features:
  - ◆ Much like the sun with a face in a circle, but no rays.

52



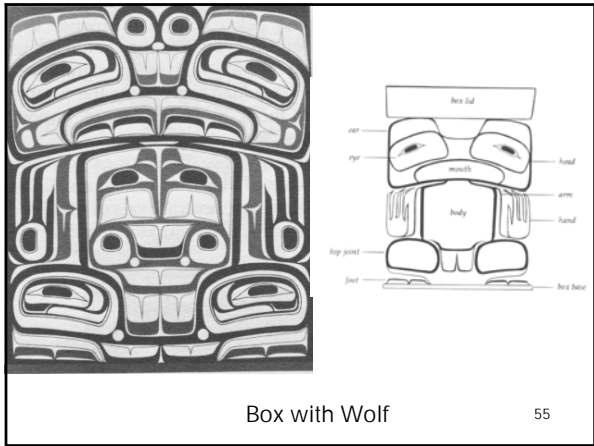
Moon

53

## Box Designs

- ➔ When decorating boxes, screens, and other objects with limited area, the designs are compressed to fill the available space.
- ➔ The key features remain visible, but in compressed form.

54

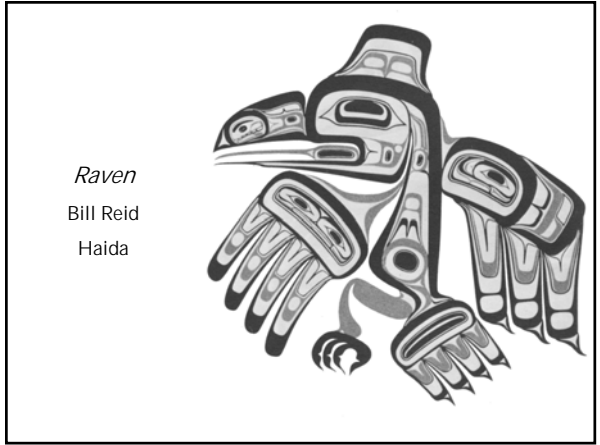


Box with Wolf

55



57



*Raven*  
Bill Reid  
Haida