



Dancers of Damelahamid

We are an Aboriginal dance collective from the Northwest coast of British Columbia, Canada. We are the Royal Dakhumhast House of the Gitksan Nation. Our masked dances are thousands of years old and the lyrics in the songs retell our Adaawk, our oral histories that connect us with our creator and the protocols that govern our way of life. The newer songs describe the events leading up to contact with Europeans in the 1800's. There are also the traditional songs

used to welcome guests to a feast hall, our traditional ceremonial house.

We perform masked dances that belong to Simoiget Hagbegwatku, Kenneth Harris, who is the head chief of the Dakhumhast House. The songs have been passed down generation to generation, performed in the feast hall as an expression of his authority and are the most valued form of wealth in Gitksan culture.



Performance Description

Each song/dance averages 5 minutes and involves distinct regalia (traditional dress) and masks for each piece. We wear traditional First Nations button blanket regalia with elaborately carved masks and Emylites (crowns). The regalia we wear is adorned with crests and is used to identify members from the House. We have many styles of dance ranging from high energy line and circle dances to dramatic dances that reenact stories. We introduce all of our dances by describing the cultural significance of our oral histories so that the audience can gain an understanding and appreciation of our culture.

Mandate

Our mandate is to revive First Nations heritage in order for our ancestral knowledge to be maintained by future generations. We strive to further cross-cultural acceptance and to foster a greater understanding of the richness of First Nations culture in Canada. For the past forty years our collective has performed to audiences across Canada, the United States and Japan. First Nations dance and culture is so diverse in our country and we are striving to gain recognition for our unique identity.

If you would like to learn more on our collective, you can visit us at our website at www.damelahamid.ca



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