

χρεῦᾶτρ, χάραι'αι TREE OF LIFE

Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) is known as the tree of life (χρεῦᾶτρ in hənqəminəm and χάραι'αι in skwxwú7mesh) to the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tsilil-Waututh) Nations, on whose unceded land Vancouver occupies.

A must-read, *Cedar* by Hilary Stewart describes how cedar wood is used to build post and beam houses and master carvers create ocean-going canoes or story poles from a single tree. The fragrant, naturally insect-repellant and rot-resistant wood is also carved into ceremonial masks or steamed into bentwood boxes. Woven clothing, bedding, floor mats, rope and fishing tools are crafted from the bark, roots and branches. To protect the tree of life for future generations, First Nations peoples developed a way to harvest wood planks and bark from a tree without killing it.

In the Pacific temperate rainforest, from Alaska to northern California, **the tree of life can live for over 1,000 years and reach 70 metres (230 feet) tall.** After death, decaying cedar stumps or "nurse logs" nurture new life – moss, fungi, ferns, shrubs and seedlings of the next generation of trees.

Cypress Family – Cupressaceae | Conservation status: Least Concern



Huu-ay-aht First Nations cedar canoe, Barkley Sound, Vancouver Island.



Seed cones and scale-like leaves.



Old growth western redcedars, Cathedral Grove, Vancouver Island.