# Totem Pole Colors

The Indians originally used pigments made from clay and roots. The colors were very bright and faded a bit after the pole had weathered several winters. The symbolism of the colors changed a little in different parts of the United States. The following only a general meaning to the main colors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Symbolism</th>
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| **White** | *White* is used, along with other light colors, as a background and predominating shade.  
As a rule it symbolized the skies and spacious heavens.  
It also stood for purity, peace, and death. |
| **Red** | Generally *Red* stands for blood, war or valor.  
Sometimes it is used as appears in nature, such as the crest of a red-headed woodpecker, the scarlet tanager or frequently the tongue of an animal. |
| **Blue** | *Blue* was most commonly used as the symbol for the rivers, waters, and lakes, also the skies.  
Certain tribes even used used it for mountains in the distance.  
*Blue* stands for sincerity and happiness.  
Berries formed a large portion of the natural materials for this color. |
| **Yellow** | *Yellow* reflects the symbol of the sun, light and happiness.  
The natural abundant materials made *Yellow* a very popular and predominating color.  
Clays, tree moss, roots, and tannic barks furnished the natives with dyes. |
| **Green** | It may easily be realized that *Green* represents the earth, the hills, the trees, and mountains, so common in all Indian legends.  
*Green* is made by mixing two primary colors, *Yellow* and *Blue*, or it may be made from simple acid action on copper.  
In certain sections of the west and northwest copper was rather abundant.  
Other parts of the country used the juice of grasses. |
| **Purple** | *Purple* stood for mountains in the distance and general conventionalized signs  
Huckleberries give a very good substance for dyeing, and the Indians commonly used them to make *Purple*.  
*Purple* is an excellent color for recessed portions of the carving and for symbols of a reverent nature. |
| **Black** | As a rule, *Black* stood for power  
Mud from sulphur springs and other earth deposits made *Black* available to the Indian. |