

Changing Perspectives on Sto:lo Coiled Cedar Root Basketry

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Introduction:

The revival of Salish weaving at Sardis during the 1960s, and a subsequent revival at Musqueam in the 1980s, has made Salish weaving a topic of some interest to anthropologists and art historians in recent years. In the process Salish weaving has been transformed into a highly esteemed art form of international renown. The interest that has been generated in Salish weaving has, however, been quite narrow in focus highlighting those weavings which employ wool and other similar fibers to the exclusion of weaving techniques such as basketry which utilize local roots and barks. This paper will address one area of weaving that has been neglected in recent years – coiled cedar root basketry. To avoid confusion, from this point on the term “weaving” will refer only to blankets, tumplines and other similar textiles. Likewise, the term “basket making” will imply baskets made using the coiling method unless otherwise stated.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with an overview of several issues concerning coiled cedar root basketry, including: economic significance; style and function; and transmission of knowledge. The common theme that will unite all of these research topics will be the question of change over time. Examination of the existing ethnographic literature and interviews with contemporary Sto:lo basket makers will be utilized to accomplish this goal.

Contemporary Sto:lo Basket Makers:

A resource booklet on Contemporary Sto:lo Women Artists prepared by Priya Helweg in 1993 was initially consulted to determine the potential for conducting research about coiled basketry within Sto:lo communities. However, the basket makers that were

interviewed for this paper were selected following the advice of Keith Carlson and Sonny McHalsie from the Aboriginal Rights and Title department of the Sto:lo Nation. It should be noted that during the course of this project it was discovered that several of the basket makers listed in the resource booklet mentioned above had since passed away, married and taken new names, or were in fact not basket makers¹. Since almost ten years has passed since the resource booklet was initially compiled it may be time to update it, and perhaps expand it to include profiles of male artists as well².

The seven basket makers that were interviewed for this project are currently members of the following communities: Chehalis; Peters Reserve; Seabird Island; Jimmie or Squiala Reserve; Skwah; and Skowkale. Unstructured interviews were used to collect data for this project. Initial interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, or at their place of work, and were later followed up with a visit to the Museum of Anthropology at UBC to examine baskets in the collection. Transcripts were made available to participants and they were given the opportunity to remove or edit their contributions prior to analysis.

The Sto:lo basket makers that shared their expertise with me were: Elizabeth Herrling, Rosaleen George, Joan Chapman, Minnie Peters, Frieda George, Wendy Ritchie and Rena Point Bolton. Verley Ned of Sto:lo Shxweli also assisted by facilitating interviews with Rosaleen and Elizabeth (Yamolot and Ts 'ats' elexwot).

¹ Deana Francis of Tzeachten and Alvin Jimmie of Squiala were listed in the appendixes of Priya Helwig's resource booklet as basket makers, but when approached for an interview Deana stated that she was not a basket maker. Frieda George (nee Jimmie) informed me that her relative Alvin Jimmie is not a basket maker, but that he is a leather worker.

²Research for this project confirmed that basket making and other forms of weaving are not practiced exclusively by women in Sto:lo communities. The late Robert Chapman of Chehalis was an extremely skillful basket maker, and his son Bruce is currently learning. In addition, Rena Point Bolton has also taught several men from Skowkale this skill.

Elizabeth Herrling
Ts'ats'elexwot

“He used to bring me all the baskets that were kind of worn... He used to call my place the basket hospital.”

– Elizabeth Herrling speaking about Oliver Wells.



Photograph provided courtesy of the Sto:lo Nation Archives.

Elizabeth Herrling, an Elder from Seabird Island, learned basket making as a child from her mother Mathilda Thomas. She has since passed her knowledge to her granddaughter, Frieda George of Squiala. She has taught other forms of weaving, specifically how to make tumplines, to some of the foster children who have lived with her. Elizabeth also used to demonstrate basket making in schools around the Chilliwack area when she was associated with the Coqualeetza Cultural Center. While Elizabeth does not make baskets as often these days, she continues to share her knowledge of Coast Salish traditions with younger generations. Most recently she has been working with textbook writers from Sto:lo Shxweli on a Halkomelem dictionary.

**Rosaleen George
Yamalot**

“We never throw anything away... When we’re splitting the roots, it doesn’t matter how small we put it aside. That goes for the fine basket making. Yeah it’s the one we call ts’a:th’.”

– Rosaleen George on making baskets.



Photograph provided courtesy of the Sto:lo Nation Archives.

Rosaleen George was raised by her grandmother, Sarahphine Leon, of Chehalis. At an early age Rosaleen became determined to learn knitting, crocheting and basket making from her grandmother. Her first task as a basket maker was to manufacture bottoms for her grandmother’s baskets. Later when Rosaleen became an accomplished basket maker she earned her own clothes and even her first bed! After Rosaleen married and moved to Skwah she was asked by the Skwah Band to demonstrate basket making during exhibitions at the Agricultural Hall in Sardis. At these exhibitions she won awards for her basket making. Rosaleen has since given away her awl and retired from basket making, but she continues to be active with her crocheting. She has also been assisting textbook writers from Sto:lo Shxweli with a Halkomelem dictionary.

Minnie Peters

“Up in the Thompson area we use the diamonds and the Indian trails and all different... for good luck”

– Minnie Peters talking about selecting design elements.



Minnie Peters holding a tray which she decorated with one of her family's designs.
Photograph by Sharon Fortney

Minnie Peters is a Nlaka'pamux Elder and basket maker that lives on the Peters Reserve near Hope. When she was fifteen years old her mother, Mathilda Chapman, sent her to Spuzzum to learn basket making from her Great Aunt and Great Grandmother. They taught her how to make the smaller bundle coil baskets which use strands of roots for filler. She later learned the cedar slat technique, which is favored on the Coast, after she married into the Sto:lo community and moved down to Hope.

Basket making is just one of the traditional skills she practices. She also weaves with wool and cedar bark, and knits sweaters. She has recently taught weaving at Xa:ytem and the Emily Carr Institute in Vancouver. She is currently teaching her granddaughter Betty Peters how to make coiled cedar root baskets. Minnie continues to expand her knowledge of basket making, even traveling to the United States with her granddaughter to take courses in different techniques.

Joan Chapman

“Everybody made almost the same designs... I make waves...”

— Joan Chapman talking about designs used by Chehalis basket makers.



Joan Chapman holding cradle decorated with wave design made by her mother Adele Peters.
Photograph provided courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology, UBC.

Joan Chapman of Chehalis learned basket making when she was about nine or ten years old by observing her mother Adele Peters. Joan continues to be very active with her basket making and has sold her work to commercial galleries in Hope, Xa:ytem and the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver. Her work can also be found in the permanent collections of the Vancouver Museum and the Royal British Columbia Museum.

In recent years she made baskets with her late husband Robert Chapman. She notes that her husband just took up basket making after he retired from work; his instruction came from observing his mother Mathilda Chapman as a boy. Joan is currently teaching their son Bruce Chapman of Seabird Island how to make baskets. Her nieces Monica Leon and Marie Felix are also basket makers.

Frieda George

“My grandmother taught me... I used to go and visit her all the time... I liked being with my grandmother because she always taught me. She taught me all of the crafts that I know.”

– Frieda George talking about her grandmother, Sto:lo Elder Elizabeth Herrling.



Photograph by Sharon Fortney.

Frieda George learned weaving and basket making from her grandmother Elizabeth Herrling as a teen. Through her mother, and grandmothers, Frieda became active in the Salish Weavers Guild at an early age and she remains an active weaver today. She has shared her knowledge of weaving with other Sto:lo women by teaching courses in her community. She taught her own daughter Roxanne to weave when she was only three.

While weaving is her favorite handicraft, Frieda continues to exercise her skill in basketry by procuring materials for her grandmother. Frieda generally makes round and square baskets, although she has made triangular ones. She has also learned special finishing touches such as how to adorn the edges with loop work.

Wendy Ritchie

“Today it’s too convenient to just jump in the car, go to the flea market and buy your raspberries there or your blueberries there. You no longer have the need for baskets. It’s now become an Art, it’s not a lifestyle anymore.”

– Wendy Ritchie commenting on why fewer women make baskets today.



Photograph by Sharon Fortney.

Wendy Ritchie first learned to weave when she was twelve years old and active in traditional dance as part of the “Salish Dancers” group. Her mother Rena Point Bolton supervised Wendy and her siblings as they made dance regalia from cedar bark, bullrush and wool. She recently learned how to make coiled cedar root baskets (about five years ago in 1995) when her mother held a mini basket making course at Skowkale. Wendy notes that she was taught the Nlaka’pamux style of coiling since her mother felt that it was easier for beginners. Wendy prefers to do this finer work and uses a bone rather than metal awl. Wendy also works with cedar bark and currently concentrates her efforts on these types of weavings and baskets. Wendy’s first coiled basket was purchased by Xa:ytem.

Rena Point Bolton

“In our country here it was usually the hereditary carrier of the tribe that carried all the knowledge of these things whether it was weaving or singing and dancing.”

– Rena Point Bolton speaking about how knowledge of basket making was transmitted.



Photograph by Sharon Fortney.

Rena Point Bolton is the knowledge bearer for her family and a basket maker of international renown. She learned basket making from her Great Aunt Mrs. August Jim of Ohamil, and her paternal grandmother Mrs. George Phillip of Lytton. She also benefited from the guidance of her Aunt Elsie Charlie of Yale. She is skilled at both types of coiled basketry, and has inherited her family’s knowledge of natural dyes from the Fraser Canyon. Rena has shared her knowledge of basket making with several people at Skowkale in recent years and is committed to teaching anyone from her community who wants to learn. Rena has also represented Canada at international basket weaving symposiums, and has been featured in the National Film Board of Canada film *“Hands of History.”* Her work has been on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery, most recently in their exhibit *“Topographies,”* and several examples of her work are also in the permanent collections of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC.

Origins of Coiled Cedar Root Basketry

It is suggested in the ethnographic literature (Haeberlin and Teit 1928; Johnson and Bernick 1986; Kennedy and Bouchard 1983; Suttles 1987), and by Sto:lo basket makers such as Rena Point Bolton (2000), that coiled basketry was taught to the Coast Salish by their close neighbors the Nlaka'pamux and Stl'atl'imx³. Early research conducted on this topic in British Columbia by ethnographers Haeberlin and Teit (1928:133-34) confirms that the Nlaka'pamux and the Stl'atl'imx each had distinctive coiling techniques. Nlaka'pamux coiled basketry was, and continues to be, characterized as finer work. Nlaka'pamux baskets also tend to have rounded edges while their Stl'atl'imx counterparts generally have squared edges and rectangular profiles. This has to do with the materials the Nlaka'pamux use in the production of their baskets – most notably roots and other available fibers as filler for the coils. By contrast, Stl'atl'imx baskets tend to have larger and flatter coils since Stl'atl'imx basket makers generally use cedar slats made from flexible cedar saplings for the foundation in their coils.

According to Haeberlin and Teit (1928:134) coiled basketry first made it's way to the Sto:lo people through their close neighbors the Nlaka'pamux. They note that initially coiled basketry was only produced by Sto:lo people living in the Fraser Canyon area, where it had spread slowly south from Yale. The Stl'atl'imx likewise shared their knowledge with the Coastal peoples that bordered their territories, such as the Sechelt and Squamish, and the Chehalis people living in the Harrison Lake area. It is suggested that eventually the peoples of adjacent Vancouver Island also learned the Stl'atl'imx method of coiling, although Barnett notes that:

³ I have used Nlaka'pamux and Stl'atl'imx instead of the more familiar terms Thompson and Lillooet.

One or several baskets of this type, with or without imbrication, was to be found in almost every household in 1936. Two Sanetch informants, however, said that they were never made by their people, or by any on the island. All such baskets, they said came from the Fraser River people and from the Sechelt. And, when any individual specimen was inquired about anywhere on the island, it was admitted that it came from across the strait. (1955:124).

This last statement supports the premise that coiled basketry was slowly diffusing from the Interior Salish peoples out to those on the Coast.

The cedar slat technique of the Stl'atl'imx is reported to be the first method of coiling adopted by the people of the Fraser Valley (Haeberlin and Teit 1928; Bolton 2000), but it is now often used in conjunction with the bundle coil technique of the Nlaka'pamux. The introduction of coiled basketry is thought to have occurred fairly recently in Sto:lo history; possibly at the beginning of the 19th Century (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:133). Since several Sto:lo basket makers informed me during interviews that they used Nlaka'pamux or Stl'atl'imx methods, and no archaeological evidence of coiled basketry exists for this region (Bernick 2000), the sequence of events presented above seems quite reasonable. However, it should be noted that Wilson Duff records that his "informants believed that the Stalo have always made coiled and imbricated baskets of cedar roots (1952:57)." Yet one of his informants, Edmond Lorenzetto of Ohamil, differentiated between the types made by the Stl'atl'imx and the Nlaka'pamux.

While I did not encounter any origin stories for coiled cedar root basketry during my research, I did find specific references to it while reading through the ethnographic literature on the Sto:lo and in a collection of research materials compiled by Oliver Wells⁴. In fact, Wells is reported to have collected a great deal of information on Sto:lo basketry during the 1960s (Gustafson 1980:103), but it has been suggested that these

⁴ These research materials and transcripts are held by the Sto:lo Nation Archives in Sardis, BC.

notes which were housed at the Coqualeetza Cultural Center have since been lost (Herrling 2000).

Sxwo:yxwey mask origin stories which make specific references to coiled cedar root baskets have been recorded by both Wilson Duff and Charles Hill-Tout. The following is an excerpt from Charles Hill-Tout's work. It was collected while he was working with the Pilalt.

Shortly after, he sent his sister to the lake to fish, and bade her use feathers for bait, and not to be frightened at anything she heard or saw. She did as he bade her and threw in her line, and presently felt that the bait had been seized. She drew in the line, and the water people came up to the surface wearing the *sqoiagi* and using the rattle. They danced for awhile, and then presented her with the *sqoiagi* and *cilmuqtcis*. After this they descended again, and she went home with her gifts. Her mother then made a skoam (big basket) in which the girl put away her presents. (1978:66)

Hill-Tout uses the Halkomelem term “skoam” which he translates as “big basket” to describe the basket in this Pilalt story. I believe that this is similar phonetically to the Halkomelem term, *shxwq`oim*.⁵ Sto:lo Elders, Elizabeth Herrling and Rosaleen George, translate *shxwq`oim* as meaning water basket⁶. It seems likely that Hill-Tout is referring to a coiled cedar root basket in this narrative, regardless, since a bark basket would not make as durable a container for objects of this size.

Wilson Duff's expanded account, obtained from a Chilliwack informant named Robert Joe, is very similar in form. Since Robert Joe's mother was originally from the Pilalt area (1952:9), this similarity in narratives is understandable. The references to coiled cedar root basketry are more specific this account as the following passage indicates:

⁵ Halkomelem spelling provided by Verley Ned.

⁶ Water baskets are tightly woven, Nlaka'pamux coiled baskets.

When he got home, his sister saw him and told his mother, then came out and spoke to him and took him inside. “Where have you been?” asked his mother, but he would not tell. “What cured you?” “I’ll tell you after a while, but now I want you to make me a large cedar-root basket.” “Why?” asked his mother. “I got paid when I cured people. They paid me the sxwaixwe, and I want the basket to put it in.” ... When the basket was finished, it was time to get the sxwaixwe. (Duff 1952:124)

While the narrative is about the sxwo:yxwey mask, the cedar root basket has a special role as an appropriate container for the regalia. The significance of the basket likely stems from the materials that go into its manufacture, specifically cedar – a purifying agent. The following excerpt supports this assumption:

The man drew himself out of the costume, and the young man wrapped it up in the blanket and put it in the basket. Strangely enough, after coming out of the water, the whole costume was dry. He took it home, but didn’t take it into the house. He hung the basket in a cedar tree (Duff 1952:124).

Baskets appear in several other oral narratives recorded by Charles Hill-Tout (1978:60, 141,147), and in a transformation story common throughout the Sto:lo area (Carlson 1997:55). This account:

tells the story of the origin of the cedar tree. It goes like this: At one time there was a very good man who was always helping others. He was always sharing whatever he had. When Xexa`ls (the transformers) saw this they transformed him into a cedar tree so he would always continue helping people. And so to this day he continues to give and share many things with the people – cedar roots for baskets, bark for clothing, and wood for shelter. (1997:55)

I believe that it is significant that this narrative, and those discussed previously, make specific reference to the cedar tree and cedar root baskets. These oral narratives raise some interesting questions about the age and origins of this technology. I suggest that the evidence provided by oral narratives can be interpreted in two ways: (1) the technology of coiled cedar root basketry predates the introduction of sxwo:yxwey masks in Sto:lo territory and may be significantly older than previously suggested or; (2) after its

introduction cedar root basketry became incorporated into ritual contexts, as well as daily life, and thus because of its importance into associated narrative accounts.

Economic Role of Cedar Root Baskets

Coiled cedar root baskets are abundant in museum collections throughout the world, and are still a common sight in the homes of many people in British Columbia and Washington State today. Their presence in large numbers is indicative of the prominent role that these objects once played in local trade, and in exchange networks that branched throughout the Northwest, in the recent and distant past. Contemporary basket makers agree that coiled baskets are made in fewer numbers today, stating that this once basic necessity has become instead a form of artistic expression (Bolton 2000; Ritchie 2000; George, F. 2000). Despite this fact the intrinsic value of these objects remains economic as well as aesthetic (Chapman 2000).

The role of coiled basketry in the economies of British Columbia's First Peoples was investigated, by Haeberlin and Teit, in the early part of the twentieth century for their 1928 publication *Coiled Basketry in British Columbia and Surrounding Region*. For this report they amassed a great deal of information on the topic, and note that:

Long ago there was considerable trade in the finished products, not so much between individuals in the same band or between neighboring bands and tribes as between people living near the Cascade Mountains and those inhabiting the arid country farther east. For reasons given elsewhere the Cascade people had developed a great basket industry, while the eastern tribes manufactured very few pieces. For instance, the Upper Thompson did not make enough to supply their own wants, therefore they could not trade with the tribes east of them who had even fewer than themselves (1928:156).

The people living in the Upper Thompson area likely had difficulties obtaining sufficient quantities of cedar roots for basket production⁷. However, people living in the Lower Thompson and Fraser River areas were ideally situated to procure the necessary materials to support a basket industry. They were also able to produce surpluses, which could be exchanged with peoples to the east and probably with the Island Halkomelem to the west – who did not have the knowledge to produce these baskets for themselves (Barnett 1955). Haeberlin and Teit note that:

Very few Lower Thompson baskets went up the Fraser, because at that time the people living along its banks made all they required. Moreover, the trade route for basketry from their region was interrupted by a cross route from the direction of the Lower Lillooet, which reached the Fraser River at Lillooet and at Bridge River. For similar reasons very few Lillooet specimens traveled south, because in this direction and to the east the Lower Thompson controlled the situation. (1928:156-157)

From this passage we can discern that early trade networks were very organized and that the movement of trade goods occurred in a predictable manner.

The goods, themselves, were exchanged in a manner characteristic of a market economy – in that the baskets were commodities with fixed values. This is in keeping with modern exchange patterns among the Coast Salish which demonstrate “increases in the proportions of commercial exchange and negative reciprocity among distant and non-kin (Mooney 1976:342).”

The following information as to prices paid by the Spences Bridge and Nicola people to those of Lytton and Lower Thompson about 1850 comes from old Spences Bridge informants. The largest burden basket was exchanged for any of the following:

- One secondhand buffalo-skin robe.
- One secondhand man's buckskin shirt with fringes.
- One secondhand woman's skin dress with fringes.
- One large dressed buckskin of the best quality.

⁷ Shirley Sterling, a Nlaka'pamux Elder from Merritt, notes that cedar trees are not found in their area, and so basket makers would have to have traveled to other areas for supplies or traded with neighbors for them.

One medium-sized dressed buckskin and half of a doeskin.
One and one-half fathoms of flat disk-shaped beads.
Two and one-half fathoms of flat disk-shaped beads, alternating with large blue glass beads.
Two and one-half fathoms of dentalia.
Twelve packages of Indian hemp bark.
Six packages of Indian hemp twine.
Ten cakes of service berries mashed and dried.
Ten cakes of soapberries mashed and dried.
Ten bundles of bitterroot peeled and dried.
One Hudson's Bay tomahawk or ax.
One second hand copper kettle of medium or small size.
One steel trap (?).
One secondhand flintlock musket.

These were only the principle commodities which could be traded for baskets. Many others were also media of exchange. One average size basket brought –

Two good-sized woven mats of tule or rushes. These were for food, bed or floor.
Two woven bags of Indian hemp or elongangus twine.
One pair of secondhand long leggings with fringes.
One good doeskin.

One small basket (probably the smallest burden basket or span'nek) was exchanged for –

One pair of secondhand leggings of Hudson's Bay cloth (red or blue).
One second hand Hudson's Bay cloth coat (white or blue).
One pair of men's ordinary new moccasins.
One piece of heavy buckskin, enough to make a pair of moccasins for a man.

Two of the largest-size baskets, burden or kettle shapes, or one large .stluk [storage basket] imbricated all over, together with one small basket, purchased one 2-year-old male broken horse.

All of the baskets were new, of good material and workmanship, and imbricated [decorated with grass or cherry bark by folding these elements into the basket as it is made]. (Haerberlin and Teit 1928:157-158)

Decoration and workmanship continues to be a determining factor when setting prices (George, F. 2000).

Today, as in the past, basket makers know the value of their baskets and set prices for themselves. Frieda George discusses the criteria used for pricing baskets, stating: "they would judge it by what they put on it. If it's got a lid and a handle, and how big it is, and then that's how they would charge and know how much to charge (May 25,

2000).” She suggests that a medium sized basket⁸ would likely fetch \$300. Joan Chapman gave similar estimates for baskets of the same size. However, prices can vary depending on the basket maker. A similar sized basket made by Rena Point Bolton would retail somewhere in the area of \$1500⁹.

In the 1870s, baskets became an important commodity for exchanges at local trading posts and with newly arriving settlers. “By 1890 ornamental Indian basketry was being sold in specialty stores in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Victoria (Knight 1996:156)”. During this period the basket industry flourished. Andrea Laforet sums up the situation in Spuzzum during the late 1800s as follows: “Amelia York also made baskets, as did virtually every woman of her generation and her daughter’s generation (1998:97).”

During the early portion of the twentieth century Sto:lo women commonly visited the homes of neighboring white women to exchange baskets for secondhand clothes¹⁰. Many families formed large collections during this period. For example, Mrs. Hawkens, a resident of Vancouver, has inherited a large collection of baskets from her paternal grandmother. They were made in New Westminster between the years 1911-1918. Her grandmother, Mrs. Alexander Lamb, obtained some of these baskets through trade. Mrs. Hawkens notes that she was told that clothing for men and boys were especially in high demand during this period.

Other baskets in the collection were made as special gifts to thank her grandmother for letter writing services during the war. Mrs. Lamb would write letters for

⁸ Frieda defined a medium sized basket as one that would be about a foot square in size.

⁹ Basketry cradles were said to sell for this price now.

the local native women to their husbands who had gone overseas to fight, and would read them the letters that they received in turn. Mrs. Hawkens notes that her grandmother occasionally had to edit the content of some of the letters while she read, since some of the soldiers who wrote them for the native men would include rude comments in the text¹¹.

Sto:lo Elders, such as Rosaleen George, Elizabeth Herrling and Minnie Peters, recall learning to make baskets in order to earn clothing and other household items during this period. Rosaleen George states that:

That's why I had to learn to make baskets, because I had to earn my own clothes. Even I earned my own bed with basket weaving. A lady came to the house one day and I said I'm busy picking up my blankets. She asked me what I was doing and I told her I'm picking up my bed. Oh you don't have no bed she says. If you make me a shopping basket I'll let you have a bed, she says. I made her a shopping basket (May 29, 2000).

Minnie Peters shares a similar experience:

I was about fifteen years old when my mother sent me to my great grandmothers, great great aunt I should say and great grandmother. And they took me up the mountain and I helped her dig the roots and she split them and she started me off on a basket. And she made me make a tray and then I had to take it to the store. These were... this was the year, in the thirties, you know when there was no money. So she went and traded my basket for material and she cut it out and then I had to sew. She cut out my dress and I had to sew it by hand, and then if I didn't do it right she made me take it apart again. She made me just sit down until I got my basket made and then that's the way I was taught how to get the materials for getting baskets. (June 8, 2000).

¹⁰ According to Sto:lo Nation accession records, local collector Mrs. Dusterhoff amassed a collection of approximately 100 baskets during the 1920s-1930s from local Sto:lo women. She obtained her collection of baskets by trading clothing.

¹¹ This research was conducted for Andrea Laforet and is the property of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It should not be reproduced without their consent.

As these excerpts demonstrate, baskets were mainly exchanged for other goods in the earlier half of the twentieth century. Today they are mainly exchanged for money. Joan Chapman notes that:

My mom used to just ... people used to trade her off a bunch of old clothes, yeah... I don't do that I sell mine for money. Like this size [indicating an unfinished oval base, approximately 15cm in length] I can get like a hundred dollars when it's done (May 18, 2000).

While coiled baskets have always been “valuable” objects, their monetary value has also increased greatly in the past century. The following excerpt from an interview at Sto:lo Shxweli demonstrates this change:

Elizabeth: My mom used to trade people over in Agassiz there. Groceries for baskets. Yeah... Now it's hard to get the material and then the baskets are getting more expensive.

Rosaleen: Yeah. It goes into the hundreds now.

Elizabeth: Yeah, before I used to make a great big basket for about ten dollars. (May 29, 2000)

One reason that baskets have become more “expensive” is the decrease in the number of practicing basket makers. While conducting my research I encountered several people who had the knowledge to make coiled cedar root baskets, but only a few of them did so on a regular basis¹². In addition, older women, such as Elizabeth and Rosaleen, stated that they seldom made baskets anymore since it was difficult to get the materials around Chilliwack. Many of the larger cedar trees are located on private land, and the owners might charge them with trespassing. This corresponds well with other information I received on this subject, since the women that remain actively engaged in basket making

¹² Those basket makers were Rena Point Boton, Joan Chapman and Minnie Peters. Joan Chapman reported that she works at basket making daily when she has the materials she needs.

live in less urban areas, and have younger family members nearby to assist with the gathering of materials.

During the 1960s, many researchers suggested that basketry was becoming a lost art (Hawthorne et al 1960; Laforet 1969; Krimmel 1976; and Wilson 1964). They stated that it had disappeared from most Coast Salish communities, and where it did exist it was only in the repertoire of elderly ladies. Until recently the basket makers of Mount Currie, near Pemberton, were thought to be the last stronghold of coiled basketry production in British Columbia by researchers of this topic.

While basket making has not been eradicated, it has gone into decline in the later half of the twentieth century. Wilson Duff anticipated this change, stating that:

The amount of labour involved in digging and splitting the roots and weaving the baskets is great, and the wage to the craftswoman is small. Younger women find little incentive to take up the craft. Probably the volume of production will continue to decline until these fine baskets become collector's items, when the craft will enjoy a revival (1997:115).

Wendy Ritchie offers a different perspective on the decline, stating that:

Today only certain families or women carry out the basket making, most likely because it's the choice of the other people not to. When you're subsidized with going to the store and buying baskets or buying pots and pans, and buying your berries already picked in flats you have no need to or want to... to want to make baskets. And a lot of them the lifestyle was that you needed to do those things - that was your survival, that was your way of life. Today it's too convenient to just jump in the car, go to the flea market and buy your raspberries there or your blueberries there. You no longer have the need for the baskets. It's now become an art, it's not a lifestyle anymore (May 29, 2000).

Regardless of the reasons for decline, it seems highly unlikely that coiled basketry will become a lost art form anytime soon. All of the basket makers I spoke with had passed their knowledge on to younger family members.

Transmission of Knowledge

Since baskets were utilitarian objects it might be assumed that all women were basket makers in the past. This does not, however, appear to be true. Ethnographers, Haeberlin and Teit (1928), found that all of the women in the Lower Thompson area were basket makers, but in other areas this was not the case. In a recent interview, Sto:lo basket maker Rena Point Bolton provided support for their research, stating:

No, not everybody wants to make baskets. You know how it is, you can't force people to do something that they don't want to. It was the same in the old days. There were women who didn't particularly want to learn or there might be some women who would want to learn and then they were taught. But usually it was passed through women who already carried it and it was passed down to their daughters or their granddaughters. This way, it was like in the old country if you were a shoemaker you'd pass your trade to your son or you were a baker you'd pass that on to your son, or whatever. Whatever people did they passed on to their children and this is how things, trades were passed through the ages. But in our country here it was usually the hereditary carrier of the tribe who carried all the knowledge of these things whether it was weaving or you know, singing or dancing. Or whatever... carrying the names. It came through her and then it was given to her family. Other families had their own means of carrying and if their parents didn't teach them then that's their problem. You can't force people to learn if they don't want to. (June 22, 2000)

Thus while basket making certainly flourished between the years 1870-1920, with women from almost every household involved, it was not a skill that was practiced by everyone in the past (Gustafson 1980:88).

Nor were all the basket makers women. While references to men weaving fish traps and other similar items is made in some of the ethnographic literature (Barnett 1955), Sto:lo basket makers recall older male relatives and spouses who were skilled basket makers in their own right. Joan Chapman of Chehalis remembers that her husband, Francis, took up basket making one day after he had retired from work. He did this without any formal instruction. He acquired his knowledge in the traditional manner by

observing his mother, Mathilda Chapman, at work when he was a boy. Today, Joan is transferring her knowledge to their son Bruce.

Basket maker Rena Point Bolton has also transferred her knowledge to several of her sons and daughters. She notes that basket making is strenuous work, and that:

Long ago men used to make baskets, because it's...hard work. If you'd ever tried you'd realize...You have to have strong pull and you have to be strong here [in the upper arm-shoulder region] because you're sewing with roots and you can't use roots that will break so they have to be quite tough. And you're poking a hole in the previous round that you've made and you've got to pull that root through without breaking it. Now you have to have a certain pull and that pulls up here [upper arm-shoulder region] and a lot of women don't like [that] because then they're aching all the time. But men, I remember one of my uncles – his name was George Jim, he not only made baskets but he used to knit. He knitted socks, because he couldn't get around too well so rather than just sit around and do nothing, they didn't have television in those days, he'd be making baskets and he'd knit socks. And my brother, who also had an accident when he was young, he had a lot of problems with his legs. He got into basket weaving and he liked it, yeah. So there were many men who did weaving, but most of the men wove fish traps and things of that nature, you know. Outdoor things, while the women wove the little baskets... but when they had nothing else to do they'd sit down and start doing bottom work or whatever. But to try and convince men today that it's a craft that they could get into, they sort of hem and haw, to them it's a lady's thing. (June 22, 2000)

In fact, many men prefer to participate in a supporting role by gathering materials and making awls for their female relatives and wives (Chapman 2000; George 2000).

Hill-Tout suggests that girls began learning skills, such as basket making, during the month and a half that they were in seclusion following their first menstruation (1978:104). However, Old Pierre of Katzie suggests that girls learned basket making after puberty. He notes that once they began menstruating they underwent a four-day period of seclusion, followed by a ceremony on the fourth day at which two priests:

danced and rubbed the girl, each time with a different bunch of ferns. They then offered her various kinds of food, from which she bit off morsels to throw away in the woods as offerings, just as was customary with boys. But when she carried her

morsels of food to the woods, she carried also fragments of mats, baskets, blankets and other objects that she would make in later life, and she hung these fragments on trees, praying Him Who Dwells Above to grant her skills in mat-making and in the weaving of baskets and blankets (Jenness 1955:80).

While these excerpts suggest two different scenarios, it must be remembered that Jenness was working with a Katzie informant, and Hill-Tout with informants from Chehalis and Scowlitz and that different families have their own way of doing things¹³. Contemporary basket makers indicate that a great deal of individual choice is involved in the decision to begin learning this skill. Basket makers are taught when they demonstrate an interest.

For example my grandmother Maryanne Pollner, a member of the Klahoose band, learned basket making before she went to school when she was maybe five or six years old. Similarly, older Sto:lo basket makers report learning prior to adolescence; while it was reported that the younger women were generally older when they learned. Rena Point Bolton of Skowkale began learning as a child, Rosaleen George at Chehalis “while she was still growing,” Elizabeth Herrling at Seabird Island when she was 10 years old, and Joan Chapman at Chehalis when she was 9 or 10 years of age. Minnie Peters, whose mother Mathilda Chapman was Nlaka’pamux, began her instruction as an adolescent around the age of 15 at Spuzzum. Younger Sto:lo basket makers, such as Wendy Ritchie and her siblings, began learning as adults. While Frieda George reports learning at the age of 16 from her grandmother.

While it is not uncommon for cedar bark weaving to be taught in communities and at cultural sites such as Xay:tem, coiled cedar root basketry is generally only taught

¹³ Barnett reports on a Comox ceremony which is similar to the one described by Jenness (see 1955:172).

to relatives. Usually this is done at the request of the younger person or when a parent or grandparent notices their interest. During an interview Frieda recalled that:

I started... sixteen, when I started. Could be younger, but that's probably when I actually started learning how to make baskets. My grandmother taught me. She lived in Sardis, and she taught me when I used to go and visit her all the time. And that's like where I used to spend all my time. Every weekend I'd go there and just never did stay home here, because... It was just... I liked being with my grandmother because she always taught me... She taught me all of the crafts that I know. (May 25, 2000)

While Frieda has tried to teach some of her nieces and sisters, they have not shown an interest. Her grandmother Elizabeth states:

No. She's the first one of my granddaughters that learnt. Learnt real fast, the other ones watched but they didn't learn how to make 'em. Frieda she went out and got her own cedar roots, went out and got them when I told her to. (May 29, 2000)

Likewise, Rosaleen George and her sister began learning when their grandmother noticed them watching her. She got them started making bottoms for her baskets (George 2000).

Each family also has their own way of doing things. While the roots and decorative materials must be gathered in the spring and early summer when the sap is running in the trees, each basket maker prepares their materials in a preferred way – usually the way they were taught by their relatives. Roots must be collected in areas without rocks that can cause kinks in them, but beyond that they may be split in different ways and are set aside to dry for different lengths of time¹⁴. While roots may be purchased in bundles for \$40.00¹⁵, basket makers prefer to split their own. Elizabeth Herrling recalls a niece bringing her a bundle of purchased roots:

She brought me a sample of it. Little - a small little bundle. It was all split the wrong way. I told her, I said you can't use that, I says. So I showed her how it

¹⁴ Some basket makers, such as Minnie Peters, dry their roots for 6 months. Rena Point Bolton dries her roots for a year, using last years roots. The reason for drying the roots is to allow for shrinkage.

¹⁵ According to Elizabeth Herrling roots can be purchased near Laidlaw for this price, in the past they were sold for \$5.00 a bundle.

was supposed to be, and I had a few other pieces and I told them, I says if you go up there, I says you show them or... tell them it's got to be split like this. I says not the way they've got it. Instead of... they cut the roots in half with the... they just kept on splitting it. (May 29, 2000)

Wendy Ritchie also suggested that it was necessary to prepare your own materials.

My mom told me that it's always best for you to get your own roots. Because you're the one that is going to put your sweat into it, you're the one that knows the type of roots that you like to work with. And if somebody else gets your roots for you then it's not going to be the same as if you got it for yourself. And they're not going to be the quality that you like. And I totally understand where she's coming from because somebody gave me a bundle and they split them wrong, according to how I was taught, and I shouldn't even say wrong. They split them differently than how I was taught, so I have to use the whole bundle for filler. I couldn't use them for weaving (May 29, 2000).

When women are unable to gather materials for themselves anymore, they rely on their relatives. Joan Chapman gets many of her roots from her brothers and sons and has taught her daughter-in-law to split them for her. Likewise, Frieda George gathers materials for her grandmother.

Basket making is both guided by family knowledge and the personal preferences of the basket maker, although "you're taught by what your mother was taught traditionally" (Ritchie 2000). Thus some Sto:lo basket makers practice the Nlaka'pamux style of coiling while others are taught the Stl'atl'imx way, and others use a combination of the two styles. A family's community relationships can be reflected in the baskets made by its members.

Contemporary Sto:lo basket makers¹⁶ will say that designs can be used by anyone, that they themselves use "just any designs" or "whatever comes into your head." Yet

¹⁶ Wendy Ritchie, Joan Chapman, Rosaleen George, Elizabeth Herrling.

many of their comments suggest that ownership of designs existed in the past¹⁷. For example, Rosaleen George states “I did my own design... a tree. I make tree designs. That, I got that from my Aunt down Musqueam (May 29, 2000).” While Elizabeth Herrling recalls:

I got a basket once from a little elderly lady. A friend of ours up, from up at Yale, and... It was about this high I guess and it was quite big and round and it had a certain design on it. And I was sitting there and was wondering how I was going to finish this basket because she didn't tell me how... what it was going to look like and so I got it made and I brought it down to one of the ladies that worked with us. And she says... she says, “That's not your design.” And I says, “I know”, I says “it belonged to the old lady from up at Yale and she started this, so I just finished it.” (May 29, 2000)

Elizabeth also identified a design on a tray at the Museum of Anthropology as being one made only by the “Emory”, presumably of Emory Bar near Yale. These examples clearly suggest that designs were inherited and that ownership was recognized in the past.

The ambiguity expressed on this topic by Sto:lo basket makers may support Haeberlin and Teit's recent introduction theory. They suggest that:

The theory that the Stalo acquired their knowledge from the Lower Thompson seems to be confirmed by a study of their designs, which are not only the same but arranged in a similar manner. Where interpretations of designs are available, they prove to be practically identical with those of the Uta'mqt (Lower Thompson). (1928:133-134).

Interestingly enough, basket makers with close family ties to the Nlaka'pamux were the ones that tended to differentiate between Sto:lo and Nlaka'pamux designs. Minnie Peters, for example, stated:

The designs down here are the animal patterns. More like the ravens or the eagle, they put them on. And up in the Thompson area we use the diamonds and the Indian trails and all different... for good luck and everything like that. And the stars, they use the stars down here (June 8, 2000).

While Rena Point Bolton provided testimony pertaining to inheritance, stating:

¹⁷ Wayne Suttles discusses hereditary designs on ritual equipment in *Coast Salish Essays* (1987:108).

most basket weavers just put designs on that they like, that's pleasant to the eye. And maybe there's designs that their mother carried or the grandmother carried. Sometimes an auntie will give you a design and say this is for you, you can use it, but that's kind of mostly lost now. People sort of just use whatever's pleasant... I'll probably pass all the designs I've invented, or were given to me, I'll give them to my daughters to use. Or whoever else wants to use them, doesn't matter there's not too many people out there that want to make baskets. I would just say to them go ahead and use whatever design that appeals to them. I don't think there's any one person that can just say those are mine and I don't want anyone else to use them. I don't think it's that important (June 22, 2000).

From this last comment it would appear that inheritance of the knowledge associated with coiled cedar root basketry is becoming less private and more public since older basket makers are more open to the idea of sharing their knowledge with people outside of their own families. This change may be necessary as fewer people have time to develop this skill, or in some cases the interest.

It has also been mentioned recently in the ethnographic literature that many women have spirit helpers that provide them assistance with special skills – such as weaving and basketry (Bierwert 1999; Jenness 1955; Suttles 1987). Yet other accounts suggest that women did not “require” such assistance (Barnett 1955; Hill-Tout 1978). My research did little to clear this matter up since I thought it would be rude to ask too many questions on this subject. However, there does appear to be a spiritual aspect to basket making. For example, basket makers are required to burn or give away their first basket.

When Frieda George completed her first basket she gave it away. Her grandmother recalls:

She gave it to her sister because she asked me what she was going to do with it. That's... your first basket I says, you either got to give it away, I says, or you've got to burn it. I'm not burning it she says. It's too hard work, she says. I says, well you've got to give it away. So she gave it to one of her sisters and her sister left it over at my place. (May 29, 2000)

Basket maker Wendy Ritchie also reported giving away her first piece. “It was my pot holder that I made first... I gave it away to my sister-in-law (July 6, 2000).” There appears to be no further guidelines regarding the disposal of subsequent baskets.

Style and Function

Coiled cedar root baskets are made in a variety of shapes ranging from small trinket baskets to large trunk-shaped storage baskets. In the last century, as basket making flourished, a variety of specialty shapes appeared, including teacups, tables, shopping baskets and suitcases. A stylistic analysis done on well-documented baskets in museum collections by Joan Megan Jones¹⁸ in 1968 found that a gradual change towards smaller baskets in unusual shapes occurred in the early and middle portions of the twentieth century. This change in form is no doubt related to the inclusion of non-aboriginal trading partners into trade networks, and commissions by early collectors for forms which suited their household needs and their desire to own unusual pieces.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that several variations on shape and size existed prior to contact. Haeberlin and Teit identify ten different “traditional” forms as being common in British Columbia:

Group I. Burden baskets

1. Tsi.'a, common large burden basket
2. Tsi.he'tsa, shallower and smaller form of burden basket, generally two-thirds to three-quarters the size of the tsi.'a.
3. Spa'nek, small burden basket about half the size of the tsi.'a.
4. Spa'pEnEk, smallest burden basket, about one-quarter the size of the tsi.'a.

Group II. Round baskets, basins, pails, bowls, kettles

¹⁸ This report while useful for looking at other types of basketry, is less reliable in terms of the coiled baskets it discusses since Jones ran a stylistic analysis on “Salish” basketry, but did not differentiate between coiled and twined forms. In some time periods her sample has as many as 83% coiled baskets, while in others as few as 27%.

5. .nko'EtEn, a large circular basket (kettle).
 6. .nko'koEtEn, a small circular basket, the size of a large bowl.
- Group III. Nut- and pot-shaped baskets
7. .sikomoxe'lEmox, small round basket
 8. Sikapuxe'lEmox, nut-shaped basket
- Group IV. Storage baskets
9. .stluk, large storage basket, oblong with rounded corners, high shoulders.
 10. .stlu.lk, smaller size of same shape, workbasket (?).
- (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:197)

The peoples of the Fraser River were reported to have made the types of baskets represented in Group I, burden baskets, and to have produced other “odd shapes” such as food dishes, washtubs and basins, rattles, and spoons (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:206-209; Hill-Tout 1978:48).

Many people in the Lower Thompson and Fraser River areas also used water baskets¹⁹. These coiled baskets were made using the Nlaka'pamux method of coiling which produced watertight coils. Sto:lo Elder, Elizabeth Herrling (2000) reports that the interiors were sometimes treated with beeswax, which was collected from dormant hives during winter months, to further enhance water retention. These watertight baskets were also used for cooking (Duff 1952:74). It is reported that hot rocks from the fire would be placed inside these baskets to boil water to prepare dried meats and other foods (Duff 1952; Peters 2000).

Another basketry form which is commonly found in Sto:lo homes, and museum collections, are basketry cradles. Cradles are reported to be a recent addition to the material culture of the Salish people²⁰, replacing wooden cradleboards (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:210; Laforet 1999; Hill-Tout 1978:106). Ethnographic evidence suggests that basketry cradles were virtually unknown in the adjacent areas of Vancouver Island and

¹⁹ Charles Hill-Tout reports that the Chehalis did not use these water baskets, but instead used a cedar bucket (1978:118).

Puget Sound during the early portion of the twentieth century (Barnett 1955:131-132; Haeberlin and Gunther 1930:44).

Cradles were often only decorated on one side, since the other would rest against the back of the mother and would not be seen²¹. Pounded cedar bark would be placed inside to keep the infant dry (Peters 2000), and some cradles had a urinal made from a hollow wooden tube which would drain out through a hole at the foot of the cradle. Marian Smith recorded in her fieldnotes that “when traveling or visiting a dug out wooden container was placed at the hole to catch drippings (c.1950:n.p.)”. While contemporary basket makers suggest that this was only common in cradles made for male children, Marian Smith’s fieldnotes suggest that these accessories may also have been employed for girls.

Haeberlin and Teit (1928) reported that basket makers from different regions had distinctive ideas as to what constituted a well-made basket. Basket making was and continues to be very individualistic, in that basket makers have personal preferences in terms of size and shape. The final product, however, is also influenced by community standards and the techniques employed. Contemporary basket maker Rena Point Bolton describes the process as follows:

I just go by how I feel. I imagine the basket that I’m going to make and I make the bottom and then from there I decide what is it... if it’s a round basket it’s a little easier, but if it’s a square basket or an oval basket then you have to figure out. I have to put two designs on the sides, one on each end, so you’re always mentally conjuring up what its going to look like and then if the design that you started out with doesn’t quite fit then you have to fill in with something else. If there’s too much of a gap there, if it doesn’t balance or something, then you have to umm, there’s a word I can’t think of it. You have to fill in anyway so that the basket

²⁰ Illustrations made by Paul Kane in the early 19th Century depicting scenes from daily life show wooden cradleboards resting in the background.

²¹ Reported by basket makers from Mount Currie during a visit to the Museum of Anthropology in the 1980s, and by Haeberlin and Teit (1928).

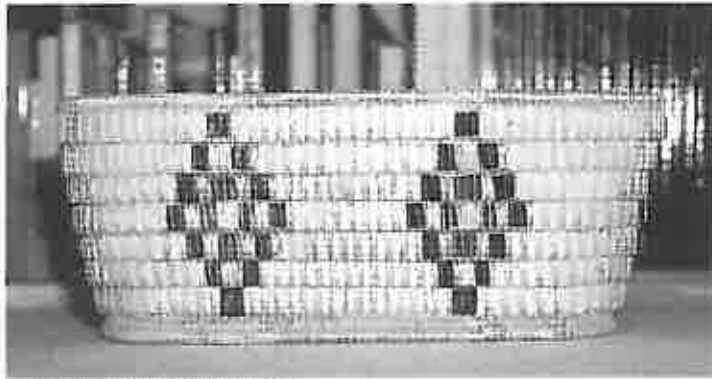
looks balanced. You don't want to clutter it up much, but you don't want it to be too empty either. Everything must balance. (June 22, 2000).

Similar attention is paid to the proportions of the basket as well. Haeberlin and Teit's informants suggested that when making burden baskets "the width should be a little more than double that of the bottom, while it's length should be a little less than double the corresponding measurements of the base (1928:214)." One way to measure the proportions is to use the forearm. This ensures that each woman's baskets are made in standard sizes, but will also cause them to differ in size from those of their neighbors. This method of measuring is still use by basket makers in some communities²² today.

There are several decorative elements that are commonly used to adorn baskets. Many of these techniques serve practical as well as aesthetic purposes. For example, "the foot" which is placed on the bottoms of various baskets is said to lengthen the life of the basket by protecting its base from wear. This decorative element "seems to have only come into use about 1800 (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:191)." It is constructed in two ways: by adding two extra coils to the bottom of the basket or by adding a more decorative "loopwork" foot²³. Handles are also indicative of later work. They too are made using a variety of methods, and a wide range of materials – leather, metal, wood, basketry coils (1928:194).

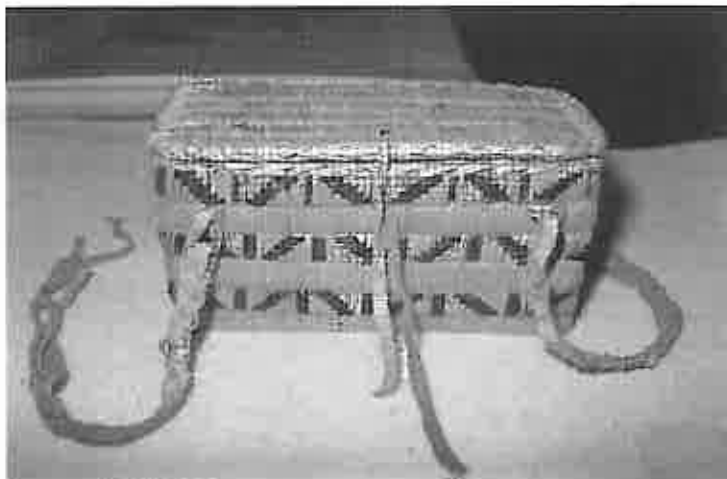
There are also three types of rims used to finish a basket. The oldest type is thought to be the plain or overcast one, "which is merely a continuation of the wall coil, and which is finished off usually by a gradual reduction in size until it disappears almost imperceptibly (1928:181)."

²² A basket maker from Squamish, B.C. reported using her forearm to measure dimensions for cradles and other baskets in an interview at the Museum of Anthropology in August 2000.



Basket with Overcast Rim and Foot made by Rena Point Bolton.

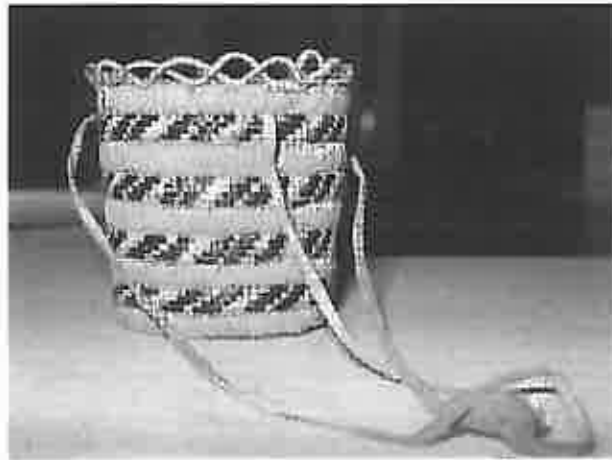
In the Lower Thompson and Lytton areas braided rims were also used, although not as commonly as the plain ones. While Haeberlin and Teit suggested that this method of finishing had “fallen more or less into disuse (1928:182),” many contemporary Sto:lo baskets have been finished using this method²⁴. The third method of finishing is loopwork. This is reported to be a very old form, and is documented among the Sto:lo, Stl’atl’imx and western Washington peoples (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:184).



Basket with braided rim and leather handles made by Eva May Nahanee of Skwah and Capilano Bands.

²³ See Haeberlin and Teit (1928:193) for description of methods.

While this technique was less common in older baskets, since it was less durable, it became more popular in the twentieth century in correlation with the greater degree of decorative pieces being produced.



Basket with loopwork rim made by Eva May Nahanee.

Loopwork has also become a popular design element for constructing the walls of contemporary baskets. While such baskets do not have the strength typical of other types of coiled baskets, they are useful household items. Wendy Ritchie, provides a possible explanation for the persistence of this decorative technique while commenting on a basket at the Museum of Anthropology:

I've seen my mom do that so many times. And I just want to do it sometime soon. It's so neat. Shaped almost like a berry basket, however with a design like that [openwork], it's for storing so that air can get in there. Probably storing like – herbs. Then they just cover it with...material. (July 6, 2000)

Thus like other decorative features discussed previously, this form of basketry performs a practical function.

²⁴ Eva May Nahanee of Skwah, Joan Chapman of Chehalis and Alice Williams of Chehalis use this method of finishing.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper was to provide the reader with an overview of the topic and to identify the many areas requiring additional research. One topic which I have not resolved to my satisfaction concerns the relative age of coiled basketry within the Sto:lo territories. The ethnographic evidence is ambiguous. There is a lack of archaeological evidence to suggest antiquity and informants often discuss baskets in terms of “Thompson” or “Lillooet” styles. Similarly the absence of this form of basketry in the Puget Sound area and on Vancouver Island during the twentieth century supports a late diffusion model. However, oral traditions from the Lower Fraser suggest an earlier presence of coiled basketry in this region, and Haeberlin and Teit (1928) note that the older loopwork technique was a common style among the Sto:lo. Yet while the relative age of these baskets is not clear, it seems fairly evident at this point that this method of weaving originated in the Interior.

The following table summarizes the methods used by the contemporary Sto:lo basket makers whose work I studied.

Basket Maker	Community of Birth	Community of Residence	Coiling Method	Instructor
Rena Point Bolton	Skowkale	Terrace, BC	Both	Great Aunts; Grandmothers
Wendy Ritchie	Skowkale	Skowkale	Nlaka'pamux	Mother
Rosaleen George	Chehalis	Skwah	Nlaka'pamux	Grandmothers
Alice Williams*	Chehalis	Chehalis	Stl'atl'imx	Unknown
Joan Chapman	Chehalis	Chehalis	Stl'atl'imx	Mother
Eva May Nahanee*	Skwah	Capilano	Stl'atl'imx	Grandmother
Elizabeth Herrling	Seabird Island	Seabird Island	Both	Mother
Frieda George	Jimmie Reserve	Jimmie Reserve	Stl'atl'imx	Grandmother
Francis Chapman*	(?)Nlaka'pamux	Chehalis	Nlaka'pamux	Mother
Minnie Peters	(?)Nlaka'pamux	Peters Reserve	Nlaka'pamux	Great Aunt; Grandmother

* Deceased.

What this table suggests is that within the Sto:lo territories both methods of coiling seem to be equally represented and that basket making is transmitted through maternal relatives. This table also demonstrates that basket makers from the same communities often practice different methods of coiling supporting earlier claims that knowledge is transmitted through families rather than communities as a general rule.

This paper also demonstrates that coiled baskets were a central component in indigenous trade networks prior to and following contact. These baskets which were extremely durable, and sometimes waterproof, containers were highly valued commodities and gifts. Early ethnographic research attests to their “value” as trade objects (Haeberlin and Teit 1928:157-158; Haeberlin and Gunther 1930:29). With fewer people engaged in basket making as an economic activity today, the commercial value of this form of basketry is steadily increasing.

Transmission of knowledge concerning basket making is also changing as fewer individuals have the time or interest in learning. While it is not yet common for this form of weaving to be taught in community centers and other cultural venues, as are other forms of weaving, it seems only a matter of time before it too becomes accessible to all.

While several younger people have learned this method of basket making, few of them practice it with any regularity. Older women, such as Rena Point Bolton, may make between 2-10 baskets per year. But many younger women may make baskets only once every few years. The younger women who practice this “art” form often practice several others as well, and tend to focus their energies on one form exclusively²⁵.

Finally, styles of coiled basketry have also undergone a change in the last century. While Joan Megan Jones (1968) suggested that baskets had become smaller and

more unusual in shape, this would appear to be only partially true as larger objects such as suitcases and tables appeared in private collections and homes. Older styles of baskets continue to persist as well and are often inherited as family heirlooms as I myself can attest to.

²⁵ For example, Wendy Ritchie concentrates on cedar bark weaving and Frieda George on her loom.

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Transcript of Sharon Fortney interviewing Joan Chapman.
Interview took place in Chehalis on May 18th, 2000.

Sharon: Okay, so today is May 18th and I'm interviewing Joan Chapman in her home.
Okay, so I'll just put this over here [the tape recorder on the coffee table].
So, I guess I would like to start with when did you learn to make baskets?

Joan: I just learned on my own, about nine or ten years old.

Sharon: Nine or ten? [Sometime around 1943-1944]

Joan: Yes.

Sharon: And who taught you?

Joan: My mom.

Sharon: Your mom?

Joan: Yeah.

Sharon: When people teach basket making is it generally to people in their own family, or...?

Joan: Yeah.

Sharon: Have you ever taught anybody?

Joan: No. Just my ... one of my daughter-in-laws but she died. He knows how too [indicating her second oldest son].

Sharon: Do men make baskets too?

Joan: My husband did, but after he retired from ... working.

Sharon: Is that traditional? Or is that only more recently?

Joan: No it's just lately that he's ... [listened to? background noise] to his own ... [background noise] and he used to make baskets in it. Good baskets.

Sharon: Are there other people in your family that make baskets?

Joan: My niece.

Sharon: Your niece?

- Joan: Yeah...
- Sharon: What's her name?
- Joan: Monica Leon.
- Sharon: Monica?
- Joan: Yeah...She showed me one this week.
- Sharon: And who did she learn from?
- Joan: Her mom, my sister. Yeah.
- Sharon: So, umm ... if younger people in the community wanted to learn to make baskets they would have to call on somebody in their family?
- Joan: No. Somebody to teach that's all.
- Sharon: Oh?
- Joan: They have somebody that just learned to ... she's teaching them.
- Sharon: But in the past it would have just been through your family?
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: And do families have like ... special knowledge or skills that they just keep to themselves or...?
- Joan: No, I think they're all the same. It depends on what their... Like my mom, she used to ... everybody made almost the same designs.
- Sharon: So ... so would everybody here in Chehalis would they ... would they use a common design, or ...?
- Joan: Yeah, just anything. Like umm, me, I make like waves, eh. My daughter, my granddaughter has my ... Karen made an album of all her pictures that's of our baskets. My granddaughter took the album and she's supposed to get it ... put it on the Internet, or whatever.
- Sharon: Oh ... that's neat.
- Joan: Yeah.

Sharon: Hmm...what else should I ask... Are there certain shapes or styles that you like to use?

Joan: Yeah, anything. I make baby baskets, vases, trays... little jewelry baskets...

Sharon: Oh?

Joan: Yeah ... I've got some baskets up at Hope, in that store ...

Sharon: Is there a store up there?

Joan: Yeah... M-- Gallery. She's buys my work.

----- [Brief pause]-----

Sharon: I'm sorry, I'm not very organized...umm, I'm trying to think what else ... Somebody [Keith Carlson] suggested to me that maybe baskets were made in standard sizes, for trade in the past, like when people exchanged things? Like maybe fish, or things, or berries ... that, you know, so many baskets might equal ... [background static] one basket of something else? Do you think that there's any truth to that?

Joan: There used to be long ago.

Sharon: Like a weights and measures, or...?

Joan: Yeah.

Sharon: They did things that way?

Joan: Yep, my mom used to just ... people used to trade her off a bunch of old clothes, yeah ... I don't do that I sell mine for money. Like this size [indicating an unfinished oval base, approximately 15cm in length] I can get like a hundred dollars when it's done.

Sharon: When it's done.

Joan: Yeah...

Sharon: How high will that be?

Joan: About eight or nine rows high.

Sharon: Yeah ... Do you make baskets all year round, or...?

- Joan: Yeah, if I have the roots.
- Sharon: Do you have to dig the roots at a certain time of year...?
- Joan: Yeah, just like now.
- Sharon: It's sort of ... in the early summer?
- Joan: Spring.
- Sharon: Spring.
- Joan: It's umm, ... the bark from it umm, it's easy to come off when it stops raining.
- Sharon: And do you go to special places, or...?
- Joan: Where there's no rocks. My brother John gets me all my roots, and one of my boys – Danny. [Brief pause] This is a cedar tree too... [Indicating a long narrow strip of wood on her coffee table].
- Sharon: Do you do like, umm, slats or...?
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: You use the slats? [Background noise] Is that the common method for this area?
- Joan: Yes. The fine work is Thompson work from up country.
- Sharon: Is there anything else you can tell me about that?
- Joan: Yeah, you have to have the bark, the straw ... The straw it's all grown now. There's lots around the roads. It's this stuff [indicating some hollow grass that is lying among the other supplies on the coffee table]. That's wild stuff, that's all ... lot's around the highways.
- Sharon: What do you do with this part?
- Joan: Soak it and split it open, and ... it's real white.
- Sharon: Is it for the designs?
- Joan: Yeah.

- Sharon: Oh! Okay, it looks different. I've seen it on those [baskets], but I've never seen it like this ... Do you use, like umm, cherry bark too?
- Joan: Yeah. I have to get some now. That stuff that's in the box there now it's not too great.
- Sharon: Do you dye it, or does it come black?
- Joan: No, the red you have to [static]... put them all in a barrel and put all the bark in there ... and fill it up with cold water and rusty stuff. It takes about four or five months.
- Sharon: Like nails and things?
- Joan: Yes.
- Sharon: Oh!
- Joan: Then it turns black and it's black forever.
- Sharon: Really.
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: When people made baskets in the past were some people specialists at it, or...?
- Joan: Yeah. Certain people made it not everybody. My mom was good at it until she went blind.
- Sharon: What kind of tools do you use for it?
- Joan: Oh... awls mostly, it's all full of junk around here [on the coffee table]. That's all I use is the scissors
- Sharon: And that paring knife?
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: And is this your awl? [Looking at a small tool, approximately 10 cm, with a round knob-like handle on one end and a long narrow metal point at the other end.]
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: Is that made from like... a nail?

- Joan: Yeah, my brother made that.
It's got to be soaked, then when it's opening you scrape it and it gets flat. Then I can cut it to whatever width I want, so it will fit good. [Background noise] You see there, I was just going to start my designs on this row [Indicating the unfinished oval basket].
- Sharon: Do you make like a basket everyday almost, or...?
- Joan: Yeah. I can finish one almost today. I have umm, small mini papoose baskets.
- Sharon: For what?
- Joan: Yeah. I've got none in the car. Who bought that? [Question directed at her son across the room] Yeah, yeah... I made, umm, ten for Christmas and I get twenty-five dollars for one. That's work.
- Sharon: It looks like a lot of work.
- Joan: Yeah, it is.
- Sharon: Are there very many people interested in basket making anymore?
- Joan: I tried that it's a bracelet. I need long roots. [Indicating a bracelet worn by her son, consisting of one coil decorated with beaded design].
- Sharon: That's really nice.
- Joan: I gave that to his wife. How come you've got it? [Question directed at her son. His response not in range of microphone]
- Sharon: I'm going to look at my notes and see if there was something else I was supposed to ask you. [Brief pause].

So when I was in Alberta, people there they would dream designs and things like that. For umm... to put on moccasins, or clothing, or tipis ... and those designs they would only belong to them, or their families, and I was wondering if that ever happened with baskets. You know with specific designs on baskets?
- Joan: No, I don't think so.
- Sharon: Because I read, umm I don't know if it's true because it was something that was written almost a hundred years ago, and they said that the Thompson area that that was true there.

- Joan: Yeah, they had their own designs, like each family or ... it was each family.
- Sharon: Oh, but that wasn't so around here?
- Joan: No.
- Sharon: Did basket making get borrowed from there, or did everybody had their own ways?
- Joan: I think everybody had their own ways. I wish my sister was... my niece was home. Nobody has baskets, just Robin isn't it? [Question directed at her son.] She could have showed you. There's only two over at the Sto:lo Nation, eh?
- Sharon: Yeah. They have some other baskets that aren't identified, like they don't know who made them. [I'm referring to the Dusterhoff and Pervis collections]
- Joan: Oh?
- Sharon: They have about... oh I don't know, but I think about four pages of the stuff. I left it [the list] in my other bag. Yeah, they have four pages of an inventory of baskets that they have. They're in the interpretative center and only one of them was identified.
- Joan: I wonder who made it?
- Sharon: I can't remember. It might have been Minnie Peters? Does that sound right?
- Joan: Minnie Peters, that's my sister-in-law.
- Sharon: Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know, because I had some people talking to me yesterday... that she was your sister-in-law, so maybe I got confused. [The identified basket belongs to Mary Williams.]
- Joan: Yeah, Minnie Leon she was my sister. She was a basket weaver. Her husband's still alive. He's got some of her baskets over there yet too. Yeah, he's quite old. He's over eighty, almost ninety isn't it?
- Sharon: Is there a lot of families living in this community, or are most of them related?
- Joan: Yeah, I think there's... Everybody's related.

- Sharon: So there's only two basket makers in the community here, now?
- Joan: No, there's the young girls they're trying to learn, but they get started and they forget about it.
- Sharon: [Laughs] Other things to do I guess.
- Joan: Yeah. Me I have nothing else to do my kids are all grown up. So I make baskets just for extra money.
- Sharon: You worked on that *Through My Eyes* exhibit that was at the Vancouver Museum.
- Joan: No.
- Sharon: I can't remember, maybe I got the name wrong because I just moved here [Laughs]. Yeah, Sonny McHalsie showed me this picture.
- Joan: Oh, maybe it was...
- Sharon: Yeah...he said that you saw some baskets...
- Joan: This is my work here.
- Sharon: Is that at the Vancouver Museum?
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: Have you ever gone to UBC and looked at theirs?
- Joan: Yep...that's Minnie there. [Indicating a photocopy of a letter sent to Sonny with Joan Chapman, Elsie Peters, Minnie Peters, Elizabeth Herrling and Rosaleen George featured in a photograph.]
- Sharon: Umm, they're [UBC's Museum of Anthropology] going to hire me in the summer to get some people in to look at their baskets and see if they can find any of theirs, so would you be interested?
- Joan: Oh. Yeah. [Still looking at photocopied photograph] This is the same design as... as Karen has this up there [referring to Karen McNeil her daughter]. I think that's mine. Karen has that... Nope, that picnic basket. That's it isn't it? Cause I didn't really finish that design on the top row - that's how come I know. [Coughs.] I'm just getting over a bad, ugly cold.
- Sharon: I think I'm just starting one.

- Joan: Are you? Oh, it's awful to get.
- Sharon: Yeah, I think I was snoring last night...keeping everybody awake [Laughs].
- Joan: Oh? You stayed right in the smokehouse.
- Sharon: Yeah, over at Frank Malloway's.
- Joan: Did you sleep just on those ...?
- Sharon: Yeah, on those bleachers. Yeah, I brought a little foam mattress to sleep on.
- Joan: Oh, a lot of you stay there?
- Sharon: Yes, umm... six, six other people. And then there's a family living there too.
- Joan: Really?
- Sharon: Yeah, but they're living in the room behind it. [Background noise] I don't know what their last name is, but his name is Rocky. He's a carver.
- Joan: Rocky La Rock?
- Sharon: Yeah, I think so. He's from here isn't he?
- Joan: Yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah he's staying there.
- Joan: Oh, for goodness sakes.
- Sharon: Yeah, he's carving a pole.
- Joan: Yeah... [Brief Pause]... There's that woman that's gonna, that's Elsie Charlie and that her sitting [?], and that's her there. Rosaleen and that's Mrs. Herrling and Minnie. I don't know who this is. [Indicating the photocopy of a photograph featuring Joan Chapman, Elsie Peters, Minnie Peters, Elizabeth Herrling and Rosaleen George referred to on page 8 of this transcript.]
- Sharon: Their names are on there, you know, on the other side. I numbered them... Sonny numbered everybody, so I put numbers by them [by where the names appeared in the letter].

Joan: That is me! Shoot. It is! Yep... Yeah, that's when we went down to that – Vancouver.

Sharon: Yeah, when they did that really big exhibit. I missed it. I didn't live here then. I was living in Calgary.

Joan: Oh.

Sharon: Everybody said that it was really good though.

Joan: Yeah, I found my basket down there. I never even ... I never sold any to the museum and...

Sharon: Oh, somebody must have donated it

Joan: Yeah, he said he paid megabucks – the guy.

Sharon: Oh, did he?

Joan: I think I only sold that basket for four hundred. He said that the people doubled their price when they sold it to them.

Sharon: Really.

Joan: Yeah.

Sharon: Is that a recent basket, or?

Joan: No. My husband was alive when I made that. It's like the one that Val's mom has. It's the same as that.

Sharon: Is it more than ten years old?

Joan: Yeah. My husband died about five years ago. Yeah, he used to make really nice baskets.

Sharon: Yeah, I saw one above – they have it above the elevator upstairs [The third floor in building 1 at the Sto:lo Nation].

Joan: Yeah, its pretty good.

Sharon: Yeah, it was.

Joan: I made some of those I'd say...[brief pause]... Yeah my book which Lorraine [?] has. Yeah, my granddaughter took all... she has a little album

eh. She wanted to borrow pictures of the baskets she bought off us. She buys our baskets too.

Sharon: Your daughter?

Joan: Yeah. Her kids has them... in their place too, they live... Kristy has a house. She took some of my baskets, my grand kids, [?] took some.

Sharon: Are they going to learn how too?

Joan: I don't think so. There's no time for them.

Sharon: Oh.

Joan: Like him, he makes pretty good baskets, but I don't think he's really into it. [Referring to her son]. He can't work – he's got something with his heart... He's go to do easy work, that's all...

Sharon: So people probably they don't learn at the same age as they used to?

Joan: No, not likely.

Sharon: Older now, like adults...?

Joan: Yeah, yeah... When I was young I could hardly go play and do stuff, now nobody makes the kids do anything, like... it seems like it.

-----[Brief pause]-----

Sharon: Yeah, my Great-grandmother made some [baskets] that we have that were for my grandmother's wedding. My grandmother learned, but then she went to residential school, so then she didn't make any after that I guess. And she said, near the end – she died last year, she would like to make some baskets. She said she was going to teach me, but I lived in Calgary then. I moved back, but she died a couple of months before I moved back.

Joan: On the Island?

Sharon: Yeah, she lived in Nanaimo, but she was from the Toba Inlet. But that's just where she grew up, she was born at Squirrel Cove. That's on Cortes Island.

Joan: I've got some sister-in-laws living over on Vancouver Island. Margaret Reid... I don't know, Connie lives out there too. Fay [?] lives in Sechelt.

Sharon: I'd like to go up there too sometime. In 1990 my grandmother got a couple baskets up at Powell River when she was visiting people.

Joan: Oh?

Sharon: Yeah, and up there they umm – the ladies don't have anybody to dig roots for them. They have to buy them from the lumber companies and they have to pay \$20 for a little bundle or something. Isn't that horrible? They [the lumber companies] don't even use the roots for anything anyways.

Joan: I'm lucky so far.

Sharon: I don't think they're as good, you know, because they're probably dried out.

Joan: Yeah, you can't get them anywhere. You can't dig them too close to the tree or they get too stiff. They feel like they're splinters [?] [Background noise]

Sharon: I hear that you have to dig really deep too...

Joan: Yep, yep.

Sharon: Sonny McHalsie. He's just started to make.

Joan: Oh! Is he?

Sharon: Yeah, he's just started to make a little coil or something.

Joan: Oh.

Sharon: Yeah, and he was saying that you can't get them off the surface or they don't split very well.

Joan: Yeah... You have to get them where it branches out. That's where you have to dig. If you go in too close to the tree you can't use them. They won't bend real good. You soak these, they get soft and you trim them off... Lot's of work.

-----[Brief pause]-----

Sharon: Did they make special shapes for special functions? Like maybe for ceremonial use or something?

Joan: I don't know. I don't... They use to a long time ago, but now... I don't think anybody does that now.

- Sharon: Were they [baskets] for presents or special occasions?
- Joan: Yeah, they used to be. Now I make them and people buy them to give for gifts.
- Sharon: Oh, that's really nice.
- Joan: They wanted me to go to Lummi and teach some Elders down there how to make baskets, but I have to go to Bellingham and get a ... social insurance number.
- Sharon: Oh?
- Joan: I have to go down once a week. I don't know, I don't think I would.
- Sharon: That's a bit of a drive.
- Joan: Yeah, it is...It's a long ways, my cousin Robert Kelley works...He's living [?] [Background noise].
- Sharon: It would be nice to go for a week, maybe they could find you a place where you could stay and do it intensive.
- Joan: Yeah, tell them to give me a place to stay for a week. Work like five days, isn't it? If I go to the place for a week. It seems like if I go for just twice a week they'll lose interest. You get something finished then. One of my daughter-in-laws, she finished one basket like that – in one day. And she had perfect work. She was real good. [Brief pause].
- Sharon: Well I can't think of what else to ask you right now.
- Joan: It's kind of hard, heh?
- Sharon: Yeah, well I did my degree in Archaeology and we don't talk to anybody. I did a lot of stuff in laboratories, you know where you look at things and catalogue them. And I worked in a museum, but I didn't have a lot of work to do with people. I did more of the "go get this" or "move that"...[Background noise] ...I sort of did more stuff with the collection... [Background noise]... Oh well, I'm not in a rush. I just take my time... But I'm hoping that... the Museum will probably be able to give me some money for later in the summer [Background noise, but at this point I am explaining that the Museum of Anthropology would like to have some people come and view their collections so that they might identify some of the baskets in it. I explain that they will pay an honorarium and provide lunch and pay the mileage].

Transcript of Sharon Fortney interviewing Frieda George.
Interview took place on the Jimmie Reserve, Chilliwack, BC on May 25th, 2000.

Sharon: So today is May 25th and I'm interviewing Frieda George in her home. So, I'll just put this here [the tape recorder on the table]. Okay, I guess I wanted to start with when did you to do basket making?

Frieda: I started... sixteen, when I started. Could be younger, but that's probably when I actually started learning how to make baskets.

Sharon: In this community? On the Jimmie Reserve?

Frieda: No. Umm, my grandmother taught me. She lived in Sardis and she taught me. When I used to go and visit her all the time, and that's like where I used to spend all my time. Every weekend I'd go there and just never did stay home here, because... It was just... I liked being with my grandmother because she always taught me... she taught me all of the crafts that I know.

Sharon: And does she do a lot of different crafts?

Frieda: Yeah.

Sharon: And her name is Elizabeth Herrling?

Frieda: Yeah, but she lives in Seabird now. And she taught me how to do... how to go dig for the roots, how to peel the root, like split it and do everything on it.

Sharon: Split them by hand or with a tool?

Frieda: Nope, by hand.

Sharon: By hand. I hear that's really hard.

Frieda: No actually it's not. Everybody says like doing it, like basket making or weaving or anything is hard but its not.

Sharon: Oh, it's just practice...

Frieda: You just need to... like if you have the artistic eye for stuff nothing's hard. You know, it's just take your time and have patience...

Sharon: Are there other people in your family who do basket making?

Frieda: No.

- Sharon: Just your grandmother and yourself? And so do you... Do people usually learn from a relative, or...?
- Frieda: Well, my grandmother's mother taught her how to do this, but I don't know about before that. But then I always watched my grandmother and she said "Well, if you want to learn then like you better come here and learn then." So I did, and I would sit there for a long time watching. You know, I think I can do that and it looks easy. So she taught me and so sure enough I just caught on just like that.
- Sharon: So is basket making something that you do all year round or is it seasonal?
- Frieda: You can, you can do it all year round but you need to go and dig enough roots at the proper time to last you for the season... like for all year round.
- Sharon: Do you dig roots in the spring?
- Frieda: Yeah, and then you just... and then you have to get the tree that does the bottom part of the basket.
- Sharon: Oh for the slats?
- Frieda: Yeah, for underneath and then the cedar root and then the cherry bark and the white grass. You need to pick enough for that.
- Sharon: Is the bundle coil type of basket, is that done in the Thompson area or is that done around here too?
- Frieda: The bundle coil? No, I don't know that one.
- Sharon: Where they use the roots, the root bundles and the branches... They're sort of rounded coils...
- Frieda: Oh, like that one [indicating a small round basket across the room].
- Sharon: Yeah, I guess that would be one.
- Frieda: Yeah, that's... [brief pause as the basket is retrieved]... she'd get mad at me [her grandmother – because it has stuff in it].
- Sharon: You should see my grandmother's. Hers are all billowed out funny from all the stuff that she kept in them.
- Frieda: Oh yeah... Hang on a second. Do you want a coffee?

-----[Brief break while we get coffee]-----

- Sharon: So, I was wondering too about styles. Like if different communities have their own styles or shapes of baskets that they use?
- Frieda: Not that I know of. Like I was telling you there is... like I only have the two [styles] that I do. The round one and the square... oh and the triangle.
- Sharon: And do you use specific designs?
- Frieda: Yeah.
- Sharon: And do you do the loop work too?
- Frieda: Yeah, and then we put lids on them with the handles. And it's a lot of fun. I should actually get into it a little more. I gave just recently all my cedar work to my grandmother, because she loves to do it and she's eighty-seven. And she still does it, and she keeps bugging me "You have to go and get some more stuff". Yeah, because she wants to go out there but she scared that she's going to collapse. Because of the ground, she can barely walk now. So I said "No just stay home and I'll go out and get it."
- Sharon: Is it...are there special places that you have to go and get the roots?
- Frieda: Yeah, if you dig the roots it has to be flat ground. There can't be any little trees coming up around it. It's got be flat with no...just grass that's it. And then you dig.
- Sharon: And then you dig away from the base of the tree?
- Frieda: Yeah, you start from so many feet away from the tree and then you start digging...you find the root and then you start digging.
- Sharon: And they have to be fairly deep too?
- Frieda: Well depends, some can be just like so far away and some can be like...
- Sharon: Because I heard...Sonny McHalsie told me that if they are on the surface then they're not...
- Frieda: Oh yeah, no you can't go right on the surface. No. Because then it'll be too dried out.
- Sharon: I read in this one book too, by Hillary Stewart, that Cedar book, have you heard of that one?
- Frieda: No.

- Sharon: She says you have to dig like three to six feet down or something...
- Frieda: Oh my god, I've never had to do that!
- Sharon: She also says that it has to be by a river and with sand and all these things...
- Frieda: I've never had to do that either.
- Sharon: I don't know, maybe she was talking to someone...
- Frieda: Maybe it's her own way and belief then. Everybody has their own way...
- Sharon: She's white.
- Frieda: Oh?
- Sharon: [Unclear portion of tape]... They don't say. She's like an artist, she draws pictures, she puts photographs in her books. In that book Cedar she's got drawings of people peeling the bark off of trees and stuff like that...It's an interesting book.
- Frieda: Oh, that's the other basket making.
- Sharon: The bark. And they do weaving for clothes and stuff...
- Frieda: Yeah, they do the clothes, but I just do the baskets and the bigger ones.
- Sharon: Yeah, mostly I'm just focusing on that right now.
- Frieda: See this is the other kind, this is what my daughter learned. She took basket, this kind of making, it's umm...
- Sharon: Twill weave?
- Frieda: Yep...it's, they have craft classes down here. We always have it every winter and we have a lady down here she teaches those and its replacing the cedar. [Referring to learning to weave paper rather than cedar]
- Sharon: [Unclear portion]...because it's easier?
- Frieda: Yep, it's easier for the kids to learn on paper. If they get mixed up or wreck it or something. They can always start over.
- Sharon: Is there a lot of people in the community doing that? On the Jimmie Reserve here? Doing basket making?

- Frieda: No, just me. The other lady does this type of basket [not cedar root, but bark].
- Sharon: And what's her name?
- Frieda: Cathy, Cathy Jimmie. She teaches over at the Sto:lo longhouse.
- Sharon: Okay, somebody told me that I should take program this summer. She's teaching basket making over at the longhouse.
- Frieda: Oh? They're teaching now. I didn't know that.
- Sharon: Yeah. I heard it was going to be one day a week, and you can go on either Wednesday or Thursday for two hours a day. It'll be through July and into the beginning of August...
- Frieda: I know there's another lady. I don't know... I think her name is Tweety. Tweety... Charlie? I think. I know she works in that Sto:lo longhouse and she does the baskets too.
- Sharon: Yeah, I just went there yesterday to see their baskets. They want to try and identify some of the makers.
- Frieda: Where?
- Sharon: At the Sto:lo Nation. In the Interpretive Center they have a bunch of baskets...
- Frieda: Oh, I didn't know that.
- Sharon: Yeah. They have four pages of an inventory.
- Frieda: Oh my god.
- Sharon: Yeah, and there's some that are in a little display case over in the government building... [unclear portion]... yeah, there's only one identified one. On the print out it's Alice Williams. I don't know...
- Frieda: My grandmother would probably know her.
- Sharon: And then there was another one that had a tag that said "Made by Rosy Wallace".
- Frieda: Really.

- Sharon: It wasn't on the print out. And then I saw a basket that looks like one I saw at UBC, like the design on it. It's a star. It looks like, umm, Eve Nahanee [of Skwoh].
- Frieda: Hmm, you know like ...my grandmother she can pick out anybody's work.
- Sharon: Can she! Oh, I'd like to talk to her.
- Frieda: And she'll know her own work. Like even me, I have my own style and work, and like in my weavings, like even in the baskets. Everybody has...they can pick out their own style or say, umm, or like my grandmother will go "Oh! That's so and so's basket." You know...
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Frieda: When we went to Vancouver, she can pick...
- Sharon: Yeah that's what I'm hoping to get at, something like a little guide to help people... You know sort it out before the people are gone...
- Frieda: Before it's too late.
- Sharon: Because, I'm sure there are people who've passed that there's still people around who recognize their work. It would be helpful for that.
- Frieda: Yeah, it is.
- Sharon: I worked at the Glenbow Museum and they had like three hundred baskets and they didn't know who made any of them.
- Frieda: Oh no.
- Sharon: Not one of them was identified as to maker. And I see like letters where they collected baskets for museums, you know where they said...you know... They collected a whole bunch of stuff from the community, but they say "just write down about the important stuff" and then they follow with don't worry about the unimportant stuff, like the baskets..." Now there's a shift, you know a focus towards women and this stuff that's just sort of been neglected, it's just sitting there waiting for people to look at it.
- Frieda: My god...
- Sharon: They have all these tumplines too, for the baskets, [unclear portion].

- Frieda: That's what we've done. I've made those, and my grandmother makes those. And my mom used to make those. I'll show you...[getting photo album].
- Sharon: Yeah, I sort of got my choice when I went there if I wanted to work on the baskets or the tumplines.
- Frieda: Oh!
- Sharon: I chose the baskets because I really like those.
- Frieda: See these are pictures of...this is my great grandmother, that's my grandmother's mother. She's doing a weaving on a sack.
- Sharon: Oh! Like those bags that they have down in Washington? [I was thinking of corn husk bags like you see in the Interior, but this was of something like a flour sack being used for weaving].
- Frieda: Yeah, but this is going to be for the floor.
- Sharon: Oh, I see.
- Frieda: Yeah. This is me. These are the Salish weavers, these are pictures from back in the seventies.
- Sharon: Oh! Okay.
- Frieda: Then this is my mom there, and that's me there. But when I was sixteen? Like twenty years ago...
- Sharon: Those are really nice. Do you do the weaving now too, or?
- Frieda: Yep, that's mainly what I do right now, is weaving.
- Sharon: Yeah, because people always say that the weaving is only happening in Musqueam now.
- Frieda: Oh really?
- Sharon: Yeah, you hear that a lot - that there's not that much weaving going on around here.
- Frieda: Not around here. I know there's me...two, three... I know for sure there's three of us.

- Sharon: When I was at the Malloway's, I noticed that they had there, one of those spindles or whatever...?
- Frieda: A loom?
- Sharon: No.
- Frieda: A spinning machine?
- Sharon: Yeah. It was like a spinning machine and there was wool on it.
- Frieda: Oh, I have a spinner too. [Returning to the photos] See this is my grandmother and she's doing a tumpline. That's back in the... I think she was, oh... That's back in the seventies, anyway.
- Sharon: Umm, those designs. Would you use the same designs on a tumpline as you would use on a basket?
- Frieda: No.
- Sharon: No?
- Frieda: They're different.
- Sharon: So the textiles would be different from the basket weavings? Is there ownership of designs too?
- Frieda: Yeah, usually there is. Like we have... umm, certain styles that we do, and we only to stick to it. We don't go to other styles.
- Sharon: And is it like a family thing? [Unclear portion]
- Frieda: Yeah, it's usually the family. A few of the designs I've had to ask. Like there was one weaving that...this is my other grandmother, she's dyeing wool [indicating photo album].
- Sharon: Oh, what do they dye it with?
- Frieda: Everything. Anything.
- Sharon: Lots of stuff. I hear that you can dye the cherry bark with nails and things to make it black.
- Frieda: Yep.
- Sharon: Do they do that with the wool too?

Frieda: I never done that. No. Usually they just... [unclear].

-----[Brief Pause]-----

Frieda: This is a manual I use when I teach weaving.

Sharon: Oh. Do you teach at the extension program or just here?

Frieda: No. A few times we... I just set up a course and my sister-in-law did all the planning and everything and then we rented a hall and I taught.

Sharon: Oh, that's [good ?].

Frieda: Yep. I was just going to show you these. These are the designs that we use for weaving. Here it has the meanings of what these designs mean. And then we've got here... This is the old way.

Sharon: Is that [the illustrations] out of that book by Oliver Wells?

Frieda: Yeah. And right in the back here it gives you the stories of how you can...of what you need to use to dye the wool. See here's a cedar bark skirt. Yeah, so this is what I...what we do now. This is in my craft room right now because I'm busy with...I've got an order for four of those.

Sharon: Oh! It's expensive to do that sort of stuff, just to knit a sweater, the wool's expensive.

Frieda: Well I always keep everything on hand you know, I don't run out of anything. This is my work. This is back in '95, but it's gotten different since then.

Sharon: Oh, that's pretty.

Frieda: That's one of my recent ones and then I...

Sharon: Do you sell your work?

Frieda: Yeah.

Sharon: In a shop?

Frieda: No, just by orders.

Sharon: Is that for ceremonial?

- Frieda: Yeah, that's a ceremonial blanket. [Displaying a white wool blanket-robe with 2 red vertical stripes and fringed edges.]
- Sharon: That's really nice.
- Frieda: Thank-you. That's my daughter. That's my mom. This is when she was five [her daughter], she's eleven now.
- Sharon: [unclear portion]...I'm just trying to figure out... my last interview afterwards I was reading the transcript and I thought: "Oh, I should have asked this, I should have asked that."
- Frieda: You should have little notes, just beside you and just...because I know you always think of something after and then you go "Oh I should write in my...", it's good then to just have your little note to go by and things will go smoother.
- Sharon: Yeah...and different people [at the Sto:lo Nation] they have different interests. Like they're interested in change over time, like how it's different now from then, and are people learning at a different age and why is that?
- Frieda: Yeah, because I was the only one in my family that really wanted to learn the craft culture, because I know...I can do almost anything now.
- Sharon: Is that because people spend all their time working, like outside the community or...?
- Frieda: No.
- Sharon: No?
- Frieda: They're just not interested. No, because I've been trying to teach my nieces.
- Sharon: Not interested?
- Frieda: No.
- Sharon: It could just be the age.
- Frieda: No. No. This one she's twenty-four and one's just turning twenty, and there was one younger one, but she's ... She doesn't come around anymore, but she was interested but...
- Sharon: Maybe she'll come back.

- Frieda: Yeah, maybe. But I've even told my sister...I've told her come over and you know I have like six looms downstairs I can teach you, but they're not interested.
- Sharon: Not in the basket making either?
- Frieda: No. No. They're just... I don't know what they do...It's just not their thing, I guess.
- Sharon: With like material objects that are made on the Plains and that, people would, sometimes they would dream an image, they would own that design and they would use it on their stuff. Does that happen with baskets? Do people like...
- Frieda: Dream of what they're going to make?
- Sharon: Yeah, and keep that design ...[Unclear portion too far from microphone]...does that ever happen? Because you mentioned like that your family makes the same designs?
- Frieda: Yeah. We do, but not other people...like I think a lot of basket makers or craft makers they have, umm...what do you call it? They don't go and like take other people's designs. They'll go and ask before they can use it. Yeah and a lot of people they honor that, that way. Like all crafts people are like that, because I won't even copy other people's designs.
- Sharon: I guess it's like...like art.
- Frieda: It is. Yeah. That's one good thing about this work... You have your own ways and you're honored to do that.
- Sharon: So that could be a way to identify specific families and their work?
- Frieda: Yeah. That's how my grandmother knows a lot about basket makers, because she goes: "Oh that's so and so's work". Even the style, the way they make it. You know everybody has their own way of making baskets.
- Sharon: Like I've seen a few [baskets] that look really distinctive to me in museum collections. I don't know who made them or where they came from. It's hard.
- Frieda: Like if I got to see everybody's work I could tell who they [the basket makers] are after. But right now I don't see anybody's work, so I couldn't point out who did this and who did that. Back when my grandmother did she knew a lot of ladies who that did it, did the work and seen their work.

Because before they used to get together and sit in a big... community and do work, but now people are on their own.

Sharon: What's your grandmother like? Would she only train people like...you because you're her granddaughter. Like would she train other people who weren't from your family, because I heard that elders quite often won't train people...

Frieda: Yes. A lot of people don't do that.

Sharon: Is that by community? Or just by individual practice, or is it just the way it is?

Frieda: The way the elders are. You just don't teach other people, but the family. Because that's...when I wanted to learn how to do the ceremonial blanket and I asked this lady and she refused, and I said okay. I just want to learn about it, I don't want to upset you or anything and that's when I went to another lady and she's my umm, my husband's cousin. So she said okay sure, and so she came over and she taught me and it took me six hours to do that.

Sharon: Because they told me... I went to Chehalis and I was told that there's a younger woman there that's just learned to make baskets and so she's teaching all the girls how to do it. [Brief unclear portion].

Frieda: Yeah, I think that's probably Tweety.

Sharon: Oh.

Frieda: She's about my age, yeah.

Sharon: And I talked to Joan Chapman when I was up there and she said how she just teaches people in her family, but now its changing I guess?

Frieda: Oh yeah, everything's changing. Everything. Yeah people have their own ways, their own beliefs, and the culture.

Sharon: For like umm,... Are some baskets made for ceremonial uses, like...

Frieda: They could be.

Sharon: Because I read in a book that there's a cleansing ceremony involving a basket and I wondered if those would be made differently than the other baskets.

Frieda: I've never ever heard of that one.

- Sharon: Oh. I read this book [Coast Salish Essays by Wayne Suttles] and all it said was that there's a cleansing ceremony where there's a basket in the middle of the room or something like that, and so I wondered if that basket would be made ...
- Frieda: I would imagine that it would just, it would be shaped like that [indicating a basket made by her grandmother], but rounder and I think rounder. And it might have a lid to... because if they had something inside it and they want to cover it and keep it safe - for another ceremony maybe. That's what I would think, but I've never actually seen one.
- Sharon: Oh...and Keith Carlson over there at the Sto:lo Nation, he was saying that... I don't know if you've been in that building over there, it's called building one... They have baskets hanging over some of the doorways and things and he says that stops bad energy and that bad spirits get caught in the baskets and that they periodically get cleansed by a shaman.
- Frieda: Oh really... Well yeah, cedar is a cleansing. That's what cedar... like if you go to some places they have cedar boughs hanging around their house and that's for cleansing, that's to keep the spirits away...
- Sharon: And I've seen those sticks too, with like prickles on them.
- Frieda: That's devil's club. That's what they use for their paint when they become a smokehouse dancer, a winter dancer. That's what they use for paint. They have to like burn it, like to charcoal, and then they crush it down. I don't know how they mix it. You know I don't know what they put in it to make it thicker.
- Sharon: Yeah, sometimes I think they put fat and grease in it. Well they do on the Plains, I don't know about here. I lived there for eight years in Alberta and I got painted there and they used ochre and lard. Yeah, it's hard to get off. You have to use lotion, you can't use soap or it just starts running all over the place. It makes a big mess. You can't take it off, they tell you that you can't take it off until the sun goes down.
- Frieda: Holy, I didn't know that.
- Sharon: Yeah, and you're supposed to... if you use a tissue then you're supposed to bury it outdoors somewhere, you're not supposed to throw it in the garbage. Yeah there's a lot of things... I went to this Sundance and I got painted and we were staying in this little hotel and so I had a bath when we got back and there was this horrible ring in the bathtub. I thought, "Oh no, they're going to think that that girl only has a bath like once a year." It's a reddish brown color and I thought "Oh no, I'll check out really fast tomorrow". [Laughing] It's funny... Also Keith was mentioning to me

that he was wondering if there are standards sizes of baskets for things. For like trade in the past, like I read that umm, one goat hair blanket was worth like twenty Hudson's Bay Company blankets [Paula Gustafson's book on Salish Weaving]. I was wondering if there was any kind of similar relationship with the basketry? Because a lot of them are standard shapes or sizes and I wondered if that was like a weights and measures type of system?

Frieda: Well it depends on the sizes and how much they would ask for. Like say with my weavings, its so much a square foot.

Sharon: Right.

Frieda: And baskets, they would judge it by what they put on it. If it's got a lid and a handle, and how big it is, and then that's how they would charge and know how much to charge.

Sharon: Did they function like, for the trade of fish or berries, would they equate certain amounts. Like three baskets of fish for... I don't know twenty baskets of berries, or something like ...I don't know...

Frieda: Well, if they had one basket that was a nice sized basket that would probably go...like if it was so big that would probably go like ten fish.

Sharon: Really?

Frieda: Yeah.

Sharon: Wow.

Frieda: Yeah, because the basket's so big...

Sharon: Like a foot?

Frieda: Yeah, say a foot square, with a lid...It's – that's plenty of work. At least over three hundred.

Sharon: And like basket makers, were they specialists? Was it all women that made baskets?

Frieda: No.

Sharon: Just some women?

Frieda: There's a lot of women, but there's a few men.

- Sharon: But the men, is that a historical change or is that traditional with the men?
- Frieda: I think it was a change. Yeah, because traditionally it was just the women that did it.
- Sharon: Like now some women carve?
- Frieda: Yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah, one of my grandmother's friends does it.
- Frieda: I'd like to try that. That's just one thing I've never done – carving, but I do all this other stuff too. I've got a lot more crafts in that box there [a storage container sitting on the floor in the living room]. I make necklaces and dream catchers and you know baby moccasins, out of leather. Yeah I sell them all as quick as I get them.
- Sharon: Have you ever made those cradleboards?
- Frieda: No. I tried.
- Sharon: Are they hard?
- Frieda: No it's not hard, it's just that I couldn't get into it. I just, I guess it just wasn't meant for me to make that type – the cradleboard, because I had all the materials. I had everything all set to go and I looked at it and I go...It didn't feel right so I just gave it to my cousin and she went "Oh let me try it" and so she did it, just like that. And I said, "I just couldn't do it". It just wasn't meant for me to make those things. I left it alone.
- Sharon: Are those like new too? Are they like a new shape of basket that have only come into use recently?
- Frieda: Well, yeah because like before they used to be just straight and round at the tops. But now they have these like designs that go straight around and they have a lot of different styles now.
- Sharon: Some people [Andrea Laforet] are guessing that basketry cradleboards only came in around 1900 or so, [unclear portion] but I was wondering if they weren't used before what they did use?
- Frieda: Before they just used ...made out of basket, but a different style of basket.
- Sharon: Oh, so they just changed it.
- Frieda: Yeah.

- Sharon: It's just like you see those little teacups that they make and the fruit plates that you never see before...
- Frieda: Yeah. This is my great-grandmother's.
- Sharon: Oh, that's the kind of star that I've seen before on a basket.
- Frieda: Yeah, they do that. These are the other designs that we did. [I believe we were looking at photocopies of Oliver Wells' book.] You can barely make out the pictures, I guess I didn't see them here. I thought I did. So this is an old basket maker, she passed away.
- Sharon: Oh, Martha Jules [?].
- Frieda: Oh, its' not in there. I though I saw that old style...Oh yeah, here it is. This is the old style, but you can barely make it out [looking at a photocopy of one of Paul Kane's sketches depicting a infant carrier].
- Sharon: Oh, like a board and then just the head is sort of bound
- Frieda: Uh huh.
- Sharon: Okay, yeah I thought I would get a book out of his stuff and have a look at his paintings and see if I could see anything useful.
- Frieda: Yeah.
- Sharon: So you said your cousin was a basket maker too? Or that she made that cradleboard?
- Frieda: Yeah. Oh my cousin she's... no she doesn't do it out of like cedar, it's out of leather.
- Sharon: Oh, leather.
- Frieda: Yeah, because I tried to do it... and I couldn't do it. I guess it wasn't meant to be.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Frieda: Part of me...
- Sharon: That's like me, sometimes I'll think I want to do some sort of craft, and then it'll just sit there for years and years. [laughs]

- Frieda: Yeah. It's like my ceramics right now...About six years ago I started painting ceramics. Like the eagles and the animals. And I would do like good on it, but in the past year it's just... the color wouldn't come out on it. It's just sitting downstairs right now. [laughs].
- Sharon: Well those sort of things I always figure that they don't go bad. You can always... go back to them.
- Frieda: Yeah, you can go back. Yeah, because I've got all the paints. Like my craft room is awful right now, because I've been like sticking to my weavings and...Lately I've just been doing weavings right now, because I've been getting a lot of orders. Some people...just like you found me, from Sto:lo. They just go to Sto:lo and they ask for me and then they give them my number.
- Sharon: There was a girl from UBC [Preya Helwig] she did a project in '92 or '93 where she made a little book about all the artists, in all the communities...
- Frieda: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: So your name was in there, but it was... they had you down as...
- Frieda: Jimmie?
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Frieda: My maiden name.
- Sharon: Oh!
- Frieda: Yeah. Everybody knows me.
- Sharon: They had Alvin Jimmie down too.
- Frieda: He's the leather maker, right. Moccasins.
- Sharon: Oh...they had him down as a basket maker... in this book.
- Frieda: Really!
- Sharon: Yeah, there's a lot of flaws. It's really sloppy I guess.
- Frieda: You'll have to ask him.
- Sharon: Oh no! There was another girl [Deana Francis] and her name was on there, and Sonny goes "Oh, she works in my...", she was like sharing an office

with him. She does...[unclear portion]. So I went back to interview her and she goes like "I don't make baskets!"

Frieda: [Laughs], Oh my god!

Sharon: I was so embarrassed. [Laughs] I was sort of relying on this other girl's work to like get me started. It's really not...

Frieda: Not accurate?

Sharon: No, she's got people in the wrong communities and she's got down saying that they are something that their not.

Frieda: Oh no.

Sharon: And even she did a couple of artist profiles and they're like... they have typos and spelling mistakes in them.

Frieda: Oh my god.

Sharon: They're not even complete sentences. Some of it... I'd been embarrassed to hand in something like that.

Frieda: Yeah. Especially if you're not accurate and sure enough of those artists.

Sharon: Yeah...because I'm hoping to... umm, I'm hoping to talk to people maybe a couple times, you know...

Frieda: Yeah, because questions might come up later that you want to... you know.

Sharon: Yeah, I'd like to...like the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, I don't know if you ever visited there, but they...

Frieda: Yeah, I think I did. That was the one I was telling you about. Is that the one with all the basket down in the bottom? In the basement there?

Sharon: That's the Vancouver Museum.

Frieda: Oh...

Sharon: Yeah, because I know that your grandmother went to the Vancouver Museum for an exhibit?

Frieda: Oh yeah, that's the one I went to too.

- Sharon: Yeah, there's...further out near Musqueam, there's...at the university.
- Frieda: No, no I've never been to that one then.
- Sharon: The University, they have their own museum and they hired me for a project – for the summer to interview basket makers for them.
- Frieda: Oh...
- Sharon: So, they're just getting their funding together.
- Frieda: This is a good start for you then.
- Sharon: Yeah, I thought... like I'm doing this sort of... fieldwork project...right now and I thought that's a good introduction.
- Frieda: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: And then they'll have funds to pay people to come in and look at the baskets.
- Frieda: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: It would be good, if you are interested, to come and look at theirs...[unclear portion speaking to quietly]...It would be really nice and we could maybe invite your grandmother too.
- Frieda: Oh yeah, I like going traveling with her because she ...I still to this day learn a lot from her, because she knows a lot about everything you know. People and...
- Sharon: Well, I think they're looking to sort of develop some sort of long-term relationships with people... I think they might be hoping to train people from the Sto:lo Nation [unclear portion] ...They were talking about something the other day, so...
- Frieda: Yeah. Yeah, I think they were, but I thought they did have one though and that... Where their gift gallery is there...
- Sharon: Yeah, the Interpretive Center. I heard that they were making arrangements to transfer some of the collections up to the University.
- Frieda: Oh.
- Sharon: Maybe they want to get a bigger one, I don't know...

- Frieda: Well I heard they were supposed to be building a great big cultural center.
- Sharon: That would be cool.
- Frieda: Yeah, like right in the back – in the field there, behind the longhouse there.
- Sharon: Oh, right...
- Frieda: Yeah, but I'm not sure. Like that's...that's talk. I'm not sure if it's going to go through or not.
- Sharon: [Laughs] That's where I'm staying right now in that longhouse.
- Frieda: How you doing that? I didn't know they had...
- Sharon: There's these UVIC people here, and they're doing a field school, and they made arrangements to stay in that longhouse. So, I'm just staying with them.
- Frieda: In the...In the cold?
- Sharon: Yeah. I was so cold last night!
- Frieda: Oh my god!
- Sharon: We stayed at Frank Malloway's last week, because there was an Elders conference going on...And they [the UVIC people] moved there Monday, and I just came back yesterday and I...
- Frieda: So how long are you staying in there?
- Sharon: I'm just going to stay tonight, and then they're having this boat trip tomorrow and then I'm going to go with them on that then I'm going to go home. [Laughs]. I'm supposed to start this job next week, on Thursday, June 1st. So I want to type up all my transcripts...[unclear portion] on Monday.
- Frieda: Oh that's good.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Frieda: God that must be cold. Are you sleeping in a sleeping bag?
- Sharon: Yeah...[unclear portion]

Frieda: Yeah, because I keep my heat off. Like I kept it off last night and I got cold. I had to get up and close all my windows. Geez!

Sharon: And then there was this squirrel running around in there...and like this morning I heard him scurrying around above me and I look up and he's right over my head [laughs].

-----[We continue talking about the long house/Coffee Break]-----

Sharon: Well that's most of the things that I'm thinking about right now.

Frieda: Oh yeah, that's okay.

Sharon: Yeah I just checked my notes, like you said, and it looks like most of the things I'm thinking of right now I've sort of covered.

Frieda: Yeah, the best... The one that you'll probably get a lot from is my grandmother, Elizabeth Herrling. And she works... I don't know what her hours are, but she works a lot at that language program at Sto:lo there.

Sharon: Oh! Does she?

Frieda: Yeah.

Sharon: Oh. I didn't know she worked there.

Frieda: Yeah, she does all the transcribing of the transcripts with changing...like in books there are a lot of Indian words that are there, but she... They're transcribing it into English.

Sharon: Oh.

Frieda: And my grandmother and another lady, Rosaleen George, and Elizabeth Phillips...I think. They're the ones that are transcribing it all.

Sharon: I met a lady there [Tess Ned from Nanaimo]. I think her name was Tess, but she was teaching the orthography...how to pronounce Sto:lo words. I think it was Tess, I don't know I got invited along at the last minute and nobody told me what her name was.

Frieda: Yeah, probably Tess. I've never really met her, but if I was to be taught the Halkomelem language I would want someone from...that knows the language. A lot of people they learn it, but it's not pronounced properly.

Sharon: And it's different down river too, I guess.

Frieda: Yep.

Sharon: I was thinking of taking Musqueam next year, because they offered it and I thought it would work everywhere, but...

Frieda: No.

Sharon: But I hear that it's just their dialect...

-----[We continue talking about this for a minute or two and then I turn the tape off]-----

Transcript of Sharon Fortney interviewing Elizabeth Herrling. Rosalee George and Verlie (Tess) Ned also present. Interview took place in the Building 17, Sto:lo Nation, Sardis, May 29th, 2000.

Sharon: So I'm just going to start my tape now. So today is May 29th and I'm interviewing Elizabeth Herrling at the Sto:lo Nation and Rosalee George and Tess Ned are present. I'll just put that there [the tape recorder on the table]. So I guess I'll just start... and I was wondering when you learned to make baskets?

Elizabeth: Why I learned how to make baskets when I was ten years old.

Sharon: Did you learn... who did you learn from?

Elizabeth: My mom.

Sharon: Your mom. And what was her name?

Elizabeth: Matilda Thomas.

Sharon: And did she live around here?

Elizabeth: Yeah, Seabird.

Sharon: Seabird.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Sharon: So you've been making baskets for several years.

Elizabeth: Yep. Off and on, not very often because I can't get the materials. Really hard to go out and get them.

Sharon: Have you taught other people besides Frieda how to make baskets?

Elizabeth: No.

Sharon: Just her?

Elizabeth: No. She's the first one of my granddaughters that learnt. Learnt real fast. the other ones watched but they didn't learn how to make 'em. [laughs]. Frieda she went out and got her own cedar roots, went out and got them when I told her to.

Sharon: Right.

- Elizabeth: I showed her how to split the roots, get it ready for her baskets.
- Sharon: So is it common with basket making...Does...is it usually a relative that teaches the person how to become a basket maker or can anybody in the community teach them?
- Elizabeth: Quite a few of them over in Seabird there. They have a... basket making certain evenings.
- Sharon: Oh, in that community center with... is it Eleanor? No. Evelyn.
- Elizabeth: Evelyn.
- Sharon: Evelyn, okay. Yeah I met Evelyn.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, she does...I don't know if she does that, but somebody else I think was teaching over there.
- Sharon: Oh...so are a lot of people interested?
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, because my mom...That's all my mom ever did.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: Same with my grandmother that's all she ever did.
- Sharon: Did you have any sisters or brothers that learned?
- Elizabeth: Nope, just me.
- Sharon: Just you... I heard that you're really good at identifying baskets made by different people. Is that...
- Elizabeth: Yeah, we did that down in Vancouver one day. They took us down there and then we had a...pick out some baskets that they put on display. I seen a couple of my mom's work down there.
- Sharon: Oh. That would be nice.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, they're really old ones.

- Sharon: What sort of features about it like made you able to recognize it? Was it because you are familiar with her work or?
- Elizabeth: It's that certain people make their own designs.
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: Yeah. Just like people from up...up country there they have a different design.
- Sharon: So people from Seabird, from that community there, would they have their own design that...
- Elizabeth: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: Does that still hold true or?
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: Do they make special shapes or?
- Elizabeth: They make trays and my mom used to make tables. Coffee tables. She made one for a couple of people in Agassiz. It's kind of hard work but I guess she used to do it all the time.
- Sharon: Did she have special designs that she used to use?
- Elizabeth: Yep.
- Sharon: I've seen some baskets over at the Interpretive Center with tree like designs on them are those familiar to you?
- Elizabeth: I don't know what she has.
- Sharon: Like are their certain designs that were put on the baskets that would differentiate baskets from this part of the Fraser Valley from those that were made in the Thompson area?
- Elizabeth: I've got a bunch of pictures from... a long time ago when we was started that Coqualeetza thing there. We had a bunch of... Mr Wells he had all the pictures and everything for the... everybody that made different things, baskets and whatever.
- Sharon: The Salish weavers...

Elizabeth: Yeah. Yeah. They had a whole bunch of books, they had there. They lost it all.

Sharon: Did they. Yeah, I've been looking through the stuff in the archives here, but there hasn't been very much on the basket makers.

Verlie: Did your mom or your grandmother make special designs on your basket like diamonds or things...?

Elizabeth: Mom used mostly diamonds, and the star. She put stars on those trays they have...trays, serving trays. Some of them are quite long and she put the star in the middle.

Sharon: Right.

Elizabeth: I made a couple of them.

Sharon: Did you use the same designs as your mom?

Elizabeth: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah.

Sharon: Did people own specific designs? Like did you have a dream or something and the design would that be yours. Other people...

Elizabeth: I don't know. I don't know much about that.

Sharon: That's just something I... I was living in Alberta for awhile and that's common there where people dream designs and then its only theirs and they put it on moccasins or tipis and stuff.

Elizabeth: Yeah. I know I got a basket once from a little elderly lady. A friend of ours up, from up at Yale, and I thought it was... The basket was about near... It was about this high I guess and it was quite big and round and it had a certain design on it. And I was sitting there and was wondering how was going to finish this basket because she didn't tell me how... what it was going to look like and so I got it made and I brought it down to one of the ladies that worked with us. And she says... she says "That's not your design." And I says "I know", I says "it belonged to the old lady from up at Yale and she started this, so I just finished it." [Laughs].

Sharon: So the materials, they have to be collected in the Spring. Is that right?

Elizabeth: Yep.

Sharon: The roots and ...

- Elizabeth: The roots.
- Sharon: And the bark, and... ?
- Elizabeth: You have to get the... Well you can get the roots any time. The bark you gotta get... the straw you gotta get it early in the spring.
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, because it grows in the water. It looks like grass.
- Sharon: Right. I saw some. I went to see Joan Chapman and she showed me some. It took me a minute to figure out that it was for the designs, you know you're used to seeing it split already and...so I guess I was being a little slow that day. But yeah she was mentioning that she only digs the roots in the spring.
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: Oh. I guess different people do it differently?
- Elizabeth: Yeah. If you get and it's like now...you can go...get it...It peels easier.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: But in the fall it's kind of hard.
- Sharon: Right. And, ummm, Cathy Jimmie...she works in that program at the Interpretive Center here... She was saying that, in her program, that you have to let it dry for like a year, the root, before you can use it.
- Elizabeth: No.
- Sharon: No?
- Elizabeth: No, maybe the bark.
- Sharon: The bark...but not the...
- Elizabeth: That's the only thing she works with is the bark. She learned that from Wendy. Wendy White [uncertain of last name].
- Sharon: Right...okay. Okay, because I was thinking like that you would have to wait a long time before starting up...if you were learning.
- Elizabeth: No.

- Sharon: No. And you have to soak it before you can use it?
- Elizabeth: Yep. Yeah Frieda had a whole bunch of stuff and she gave it all to me.
- Sharon: Yeah, she told me.
- Elizabeth: I told her, I says "Aren't you gonna make anymore?" "No" she says, "Not for awhile". She was busy with her beadwork and different other things.
- Sharon: Right. So if you, ummm... If you can't get the roots yourself do you need somebody in your family to get them or...
- Elizabeth: Goodness, they cost too much darn money.
- Sharon: Yeah...because my grandmother... When she was up at Powell River a few years ago, the ladies up there they had to buy it from the lumber companies. So I wondered if that went on around here or not?
- Elizabeth: No, not like that over here, but you have to get permission from the Forestry before you can go.
- Sharon: Oh really?
- Elizabeth: go out in the...
- Sharon: I didn't know that.
- Elizabeth: They'll catch you out there.
- Sharon: Oh, that's interesting.
- Elizabeth: Before, a long time ago my mom and them used to just go up in the mountain, anyplace, and go and get it. [Laughs].
- Sharon: So, you can collect the roots anywhere or?
- Elizabeth: Yep, but you have to find old trees.
- Sharon: Old trees.
- Elizabeth: Not the young cedar trees because they're...the young cedar trees got... their roots is knotty.
- Sharon: So does the ground around the tree have to be flat or does it matter?
- Elizabeth: You've gotto get them some place where there's no rocks or anything.

- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: If there's a lot of rocks or something it... The roots is all crooked.
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: Yep.
- Sharon: Ummm, I just forgot what I was going to ask you. Ummm...in the past... I notice a lot of baskets are sort of the same sizes and shapes and ummm, Keith Carlson, in the building next store, he was sort of asking me, if I'd ask if it was for trade. Like if it was to have standardized containers of different things for trading purposes. Do you think there's any truth to that or?
- Elizabeth: Ummm, I don't know. They made lunch baskets and they made baskets for fishing. Fishing baskets, I've got one of those old, old ones. Fishing basket belonged to an old elderly lady. I didn't make it, I was going to try and make one. [Laughs].
- Sharon: I saw a really interesting picture of one at the Vancouver Museum that fits in the... the pointy part of the boat. Yeah. So ummm, you're not sure, you don't know for sure like if, you know, like if you had one of those sort of trapezoid baskets full of berries if would be traded for you know a certain quantity of something else?
- Elizabeth: Those big, ummm, berry baskets for picking berries. I had one of those too, it belonged to my grandmother and I lost it.
- Sharon: Oh no.
- Elizabeth: I was so disgusted when I started looking for it when I moved over to Seabird, in those days I used to live back here [in Sardis].
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: So I went over there and it fell off the truck somewhere.
- Sharon: Oh no.
- Elizabeth: So I lost that.
- Sharon: So those cradleboards. Have you ever made those basket cradles.
- Elizabeth: No.

Sharon: Oh, because I was wondering about those... I was told by this lady from Ottawa [Andrea Laforet, Canadian Museum of Civilization] that those were only sort of... came into use around the turn of the century like 1900. And I was sort of wondering like if you thought that was true or what they used before that if they didn't have something like that?

Elizabeth: Somebody said they used to use it for you can put water in it. It never leaks or anything. I don't know I've never tried it. [Laughs].

Sharon: Oh the baskets for cooking and stuff. Yeah, I've heard that a few times too that you put water and hot rocks in and boil things.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

-----[Brief Pause]-----

Sharon: With the designs that you put on the baskets, like would you use them on other objects too, like would you use them if you were weaving a blanket or put them on wood or would it be that they're designs just for...?

Elizabeth: It's just for baskets. Baskets alone.

Sharon: Do they have special meanings or...?

Elizabeth: I don't know I've never learned that much about it. Some of them did have... They used to have a lot at Coqualeetza, that big building way over, they used to have all that written down, whatever designs they had, what it meant all this and that.

Sharon: I've seen it for the weavings, but I haven't seen it for the baskets.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Rosalee: Might have been *East* [unsure if this is the correct word].

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah.

Rosalee: and the ladder.

Elizabeth: I don't know I never see that anymore.

Rosalee: It's just plain.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

- Rosalee: I was sitting beside her...[inaudible portion]...because it's how the hunters used travel when they go up the mountain.
- Elizabeth: Oh.
- Rosalee: That's why they had the ladder. I wish I could remember something else. I can't.
- Sharon: Do you know if... [Brief interruption from outside of the office]. So, ummm, where was I? I was wondering about... Would containers decorated with special patterns would they have certain use? Like if they were, you know, made for fishing or berries did they have designs that went with those?
- Elizabeth: No.
- Sharon: No. You put it on anything?
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: I read in a book that there's a cleansing ceremony that involves a basket. Do you know about that or...?
- Elizabeth: No.
- Sharon: And over in building one they have baskets hanging over some of the doorways and the elevators and things, and I was told that that's to catch evil energy and spirits and things.
- Elizabeth: [Laughs]. Oh.
- Sharon: And they're cleansed periodically by a shaman. Do you think that's something new?
- Elizabeth: [Still laughing]. Yeah.
- Sharon: That's not a traditional use?
- Elizabeth: No.
- Sharon: Okay. Yeah that's what I... I've been hearing that that's not true, that it's usually the cedar bough or the devils club.
- Elizabeth: Frieda, when she started out I told her she had to start out digging her own roots. So she went out and got it. The first time she went out, her and her sister, and she come back with the roots and she had a whole bunch of

them within her car. And she come back and she showed them to me, I says "You've got the wrong kind of roots!"

Sharon: Oh no.

Elizabeth: I says, "Where'd you get them from?" She says "Oh, Laidlow or some place up that way," I told her, I said "You've got the wrong kind of roots." Here she had alder roots not cedar roots [laughing]. So she had to take it back and so I showed her. She had a couple of cedar roots all right. She had little tiny ones and I showed her "that's the kind" I says "you're supposed to get." "Oh..." she says, "I know where there's lots." So she went up there and she had a whole bunch of it when she come down.

Sharon: Oh. Do they have to be very big the roots? My grandma said...

Elizabeth: No, some of them... some of them are about that big.

Sharon: Oh really, my grandma told me they have to be at least like a quarter [in diameter].

Elizabeth: No, some of them are really big if the tree is really old. A big old tree and you can get real nice roots from the old trees.

Sharon: And then like do you...do you split them by hand or do you use an awl?

Elizabeth: Split them by hand. You've got to peel the bark off of it and split it.

Sharon: Then do they have to dry for a little while or...?

Elizabeth: Yeah. Then after she [Frieda] got all her cedar roots and that I told her "Now you've got to go and get the sticks." And then she went out and she got it and she got a tree it was about that big and I told her I said "Not a big one!" I said "Just get a small one." And off she went and she got this great big thing. She got her husband to fall a big tree! [Laughs].

Sharon: Oh!

Elizabeth: I told her "No", I said "You've got to get the small ones." That's ordinary to get the nice, fine grained.

Sharon: Right.

Elizabeth: It can't be thick, because it's got to be just thin. And she went back and then she got some. She got it whole and then she went to work and she screwed every one of them. And I told her, I said "Don't split it like that", I said "you've got to count the grain" I said "and then see how thick you

want it before you can do that.” So that’s what she took and took over at my place and I’ve got a whole bunch of it. Some of them just as thin as this paper [Laughs].

Sharon: Wow.

Elizabeth: I told her, I said you’re not supposed to split it all like that. Anyways she used it and she’s got a little basket about so big. It’s about this high. It’s still over at my place. She gave it to her sister because she asked me what she was going to do with it. That’s... I says, your first basket I says, you either got to give it away I says or you’ve got to burn it.

Sharon: Oh! You’ve got to burn it.

Elizabeth: I’m not burning it she says. It’s too hard work she says. I says, well you’ve got to give it away. So she gave it to one of her sisters and her sister left it over at my place.

Sharon: So...for the coils do you do like sort of the bundle ones, the rounded ones, or do you use like the wider slats?

Elizabeth: You can use the fine, fine roots for the fine work.

Sharon: Right.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Sharon: So you do both? Like...

Elizabeth: You do both, yeah.

Sharon: Is that...is that finer work is that – that’s from the Thompson area. Is that?

Elizabeth: Nope. I don’t know about... Everybody makes the fine work.

Sharon: Yeah, because I was told it came down from the Thompson area.

Elizabeth: Over at Seabird.

Sharon: Uh huh.

Elizabeth: I don’t know if you know over at Seabird school?

Sharon: Yeah.

Elizabeth: There’s a bunch of baskets over there.

- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: And some of it is my mom's and ... or over at the Café. The Seabird Café. There's some of my mom's work there too.
- Sharon: Oh, I didn't know that. I've only been in the ummm, ... community center. Where they have those evening classes.
- Elizabeth: Oh to that main school, the big school? That's where they've got a big display of different kinds of baskets and canoes and whatever.
- Sharon: Oh I should go see that.
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: It's open all day?
- Elizabeth: Yep.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: Classes are there everyday.
- Sharon: Right.
- Verlie: Did your family have any special designs --? [sounds like *Yermmala*, referring to Rosaleen] On your baskets? Were there any special designs in your family for your baskets?
- Rosaleen: No, just any...any designs.
- Verlie: Any designs.
- Sharon: [Unclear portion]...Most of the people I've talked to about that say that everybody uses the same designs.
- Elizabeth: Yep. Yep.
- Sharon: So...one of the points of the project is that they are hoping to separate the collection out at the Interpretive Center [Coqualeetza], because some of them are from the Thompson area and they want to return those back up there so... So we're trying to find out if there's some way of separating the work. You know through the designs or styles.
- Verlie: And what kind of designs are from the Thompson area?

- Sharon: Ummm, there's a whole range of them. Like I saw them in a book, there's over thirty designs, but there's some you know that you see everywhere sort of the zig zags and [becomes unclear due to multiple voices].
- Rosaleen: ...what we were doing in Mission, the sisters were crazy. They made us work in the washroom there. The other kids they couldn't see what we were doing.
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Rosaleen: Because we were way upstairs in the washroom. That was really a waste of time. We were supposed to teach the younger ones, the other students, that didn't know about the baskets. And the sister there told us to go way upstairs in the dormitory in that long washroom...the washroom must have been about as long as this. [Unclear portion]...and then because we had to use the water, I guess that's why she put us in the washroom. We made chairs in the washroom there, doing our basket work, and the ones that wanted to see – they had to ask permission to go upstairs to see us. Instead of letting all the kids watch. We could have been doing it in the playroom. [Brief pause]. Emma used to do a lot of basket work too at the...[unclear portion].
- Verlie: Can you guys remember any of the... most of the designs in the area that we can relate to different families what were their designs? Like you mentioned --? [sounds like *Yermmala*, referring to Rosaleen] the stairs and the steps.
- Rosaleen: Yeah. No we just... we seemed to...
- Elizabeth: Whatever comes into your head.
- Rosaleen: Yeah.
- Verlie: What we're saying is can you remember what the designs that you know was associated with the Sto:lo people?
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Verlie: What was their designs mostly? Like is it stars, snakes...
- Elizabeth: Oh some of them, some of them know different designs but I don't know. I never knew the difference.
- Rosaleen: Well, I was asked to tell. I did my own design what was a tree. I make tree designs. That, I got that from my Aunt down Musqueam. She asked me if I could do that. I had to do it in different ways the way I work. [Unclear

portion]... wide strips, and wide strips. They were the ones I used to send my baskets to. They sold them for me. Auntie Bertha [?] and Auntie Mabel.

Sharon: So how long does it take to make a basket?

Elizabeth: Not very long if you have the material.

Sharon: Can you make one in a... a day or...?

Elizabeth: No. A day...a couple weeks. It all depends how big it is.

Rosaleen: If they knew what we have to do to prepare to...our roots, prepare our sticks, and all the things like that. Fix our design and things.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Rosaleen: It takes a long time, not just a week.

Sharon: Oh.

Rosaleen: It's a lot of work.

Sharon: Yeah.

Rosaleen: And then you've got to use an awl... after fixing all your roots and things like that. Doesn't take overnight to do it.

Elizabeth: I asked my niece one day, she goes up towards Skookumchuck [unsure of spelling], up that way. To watch for some cedar roots for me, because one of my friends from the states, she came over one - to visit me one day and she says I'm going up to Skookumchuck she says. I says oh, I says watch for some cedar roots. I says I want to get some. So she did and brought me... brought me about five bundles and the bundles were only about like that and the roots is doubled.

Sharon: Right.

Elizabeth: And it's only about this long. And I asked her, I says how much was that? I says, I'll pay you for it. No, no, no she says, I'll give it to you she says. I says oh thank-you for goodness sakes. So I asked my niece, I says how much was the cedar roots from up there? She says forty dollars a bundle.

Sharon: Oh.

Elizabeth: I says God!

- Rosaleen: We used to buy them five dollars a bundle.
- Elizabeth: Yeah that's what I say, because my mom used to buy it from a lady up at... up at Yale. She used to sell them and that's all she paid and some of them were big!
- Rosaleen: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: Quite big things, about so long doubled. And that's all she paid was five dollars. My goodness, forty dollars!
- Rosaleen: Yeah they're beautiful roots too.
- Elizabeth: I told her, I said oh forget about it. She brought me a sample of it. Little - a small little bundle. It was all split the wrong way.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: I told her, I said you can't use that, I says. So I showed her how it was supposed to be, and I had a few other pieces and I told them, I says if you go up there, I says you show them or... tell them it's got to be split like this. I says not the way they've got it. Instead of ... they cut the roots in half with the... they just kept on splitting it.
- Rosaleen: Geez!
- Elizabeth: All split the wrong way.
- [Brief Pause]-----
- Sharon: Well I guess those are sort of the things I'm interested in. I can't think of anything else right now. I'm going to be working on this all summer. Like the Museum of Anthropology is trying to throw a contract together for me, so hopefully I'll be able to invite some people down to have a look at their baskets later in the summer. Maybe if you're interested you could come down for the day and have lunch and have a look at those. [Unclear portion].
- Elizabeth: Minnie...Minnie Peters up at Peters reserve, she makes a lot of baskets.
- Sharon: Up at Hope is it?
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah.

- Elizabeth: Peters reserve. And there's another lady up at... up at ...Chehalis.
- Sharon: Joan Chapman?
- Elizabeth: Joanne Chapman. She makes a lot of baskets.
- Sharon: Yeah... I already spoke with her actually.
- Elizabeth: She went with us when we went to Vancouver.
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: Sonny McHalsie took us down there.
- Sharon: Right... Minnie's her ummm, sister-in-law I think.
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: Would it be okay if I took your pictures? Because I'm also putting a little exhibit together next year and I... and kind of the point is to show that people are still practicing you know basket making and that it's not something that's just in the past. You know that there's still people around. You know. Would you be willing or...?
- Elizabeth: I don't know [laughs].
- [Brief pause]-----
- Elizabeth: When we used to work for the... the Coqualeetza.
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: They used to take us all over the place demonstrating to different schools.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: Take us over there and we'd take all the material that we use and everything and... and different places, different schools...
- Sharon: Right.
- Elizabeth: And demonstrate basket making.
- Rosaleen: I used to do that with them, exhibitions too. Exhibition grounds and take all my material there. Yeah lot's of them were quite interested.

- Sharon: There was one more thing I was thinking about. I didn't ask about ummm, a lot of men are making baskets now and I was wondering if they did that in the past or if that sort of something new? Men making baskets?
- Elizabeth: It must be something new. I've never heard of it. Went out and got the cedar roots, but I ... and sticks and stuff, but...
- Rosaleen: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: But basket making I don't know.
- Rosaleen: My dad, he went out getting that material, but he never did any things like that. He knew where to get lots of good -- [sterling ?]
- Sharon: Like Joan Chapman, her husband used to make baskets too.
- Elizabeth: I know a friend of hers. She used to... she used to live in Chehalis and her sons used to work across the line, over in the States, and they got some real nice cedar roots from over there. And they brought it home every time they came home.
- Sharon: So why do you think men make baskets now? Do you think it's perceived more as a... as a art?
- Elizabeth: Something like that. Yeah, its getting so hard to get the material and...
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Rosaleen: Hard to get jobs too.
- Elizabeth: Afraid. Afraid to go in the bush in case you get... get a trespassing ticket. Yeah. Minnie Peters she goes... she still goes out. I don't know where she goes to get hers. Her cedar roots. She was supposed to go out and get me some. I don't know when.
- Rosaleen: I wonder if that guys still there. The one that they said you could get roots from his field.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, you're wondering if he's still there.
- Rosaleen: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: He was supposed to move away with his daughter.
- Rosaleen: Yeah.

- Elizabeth: There's a place up at Hope. He's got some real nice cedar trees on his property.
- Sharon: Oh?
- Elizabeth: Really big things and I asked him one day when I went up there. I bought some sheep wool from him, he's...[unclear portion]. He told me to go up there and dig roots if I wanted it, but he was forced to move away from there. I don't know if he's still there.
- Sharon: Did everybody make baskets in the past? Like did all the women make baskets?
- Elizabeth: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Elizabeth: That's all they used for getting their clothes and stuff. Trading clothes or whatever.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Elizabeth: Whatever they would trade you with.
- Rosaleen: That's why I had to learn to make baskets, because I had to earn my own clothes.
- Elizabeth: They traded with whatever the person had or...
- Rosaleen: Even I earned my own bed.
- Sharon: Oh really!
- Rosaleen: With basket weaving, yeah. A lady came to the house one day and I said I'm busy picking up my blankets. She asked me what I was doing and I told her I'm picking up my bed. Oh you don't have no bed she says. She says if you make me a shopping basket I'll let you have a bed, she says. I made her a shopping basket.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Rosaleen: This was old --? [unsure of name] daughter, Ellen.
- Elizabeth: My mom used to trade people over in Agassiz there. Groceries for baskets.
- Rosaleen: We earned dinner for our baskets.

- Elizabeth: Yeah... [Brief pause]. Now it's hard to get the material and then the baskets are getting more expensive.
- Rosaleen: Yeah. It goes into the hundreds now.
- Elizabeth: Yeah, before I used to make a great big basket for about ten dollars.
- Sharon: Oh! Now they go for several hundred. Wow.
- Elizabeth: Yeah. Yeah. I know a lady down here she made a... a baby basket for one of her friends. They live down in Langley somewhere. I asked her what you going to do with... making a baby basket? She says oh, she says one of my friends wants it. For his... his wife is going to have a baby. And she sold that thing for fifteen hundred dollars.
- Sharon: Oh my goodness!
- Rosaleen: Oh yeah. One of my nieces, somebody made... her grandmother's basket for her and three hundred dollars she wanted. She says I'm having a hard time. It's a little covered basket, a work basket. She wanted three hundred dollars for that.
- Sharon: Wow.
- Rosaleen: And then she wanted a lunch basket for three thousand dollars. A lunch basket. She told me, she says Auntie I'm financially difficulties, she said. Oh my goodness I said. How come you're selling your grandmother's baskets? Because I'm really... I'm going to be in trouble she said. Gosh I says to her, I'm not that rich.
- Sharon: Yeah... I bought one of Joan Chapman's, but it's just a... It's like a little cradleboard, you hang it form your rearview mirror when you driving and stuff.
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: And she sold it to me for twenty. That was all I had on me, but I guess they sell them in the shop for forty over there [at the Interpretive Center].
- Elizabeth: Yeah.
- Sharon: But she says that she sells them for around twenty, twenty-five, so... I felt bad, but... what do you do? Oh well...
- Rosaleen: Gee, I've got one too. Somebody gave it to me. A cup and saucer. I've got it way up on my shelf. And my great granddaughter she was climbing up

and Kevin called and...[unclear portion]. On that little shelf and there she was trying to climb up [laughs]. I'll have to move that shelf somewhere. Yeah, a tiny little basket that. A saucer and cup, yes.

Sharon: Well, I don't want to take up too much of your time. I'm really happy that you agreed to speak with me. Well, I guess I'll turn this off now.

-----[End of Tape]-----

Transcript of Sharon Fortney interviewing Wendy Ritchie.
Interview took place on the Sto:lo Nation grounds, Sardis, May 29th, 2000.

- Sharon: Today is May 29th and I'm interviewing Wendy Ritchie at the Sto:lo Nation.
So, I guess I'm just wondering... you live in Skowkale. Is that the name of your community?
- Wendy: Yes. Its Skowkale [correcting pronunciation].
- Sharon: Skowkale? Okay. Sorry, I'm bad at pronouncing things.
- Wendy: That's all right.
- Sharon: So are you the only basket maker that lives in that community?
- Wendy: Ummm... I would have to say yes. [Brief interruption]... Actually there was... let's see, my brother Jack, and my sister Charlotte, my sister Gail, my sister Reenie, myself and Derek Point that took sort of a mini basket weaving course with my mom... And, ummm, they don't weave any longer though. They didn't carry it out any further than that and that was about five years ago.
- Sharon: So it was like an introduction?
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: So they would know how to do it, but they wouldn't be very skilled at it?
- Wendy: No. No... And I sort of continued on, and enjoy it when I can do it.
- Sharon: But you began to learn when you were about twelve years old?
- Wendy: I began learning when I was twelve. We were the Salish dancers and my family, my sisters and my mom and I, and we had to make our own regalia. So we made our own ... dresses, skirts and capes out of... what is it called? Bullrush leaves... and our own headbands out of wool and... yeah.
- Sharon: So, you do different kinds of weaving besides the coil basketry then?
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: [Inaudible comment]... for your coil basketry do you use like the wood slats or do you use like the bundles? For the coils?

- Wendy: Do you mean my people traditionally or myself?
- Sharon: Yourself.
- Wendy: Myself. I've been taught the coil. The Thompson way.
- Sharon: The Thompson way?
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: And is that... was that common tradition?
- Wendy: Ummm... You're taught by what your mother was taught traditionally... And my mother is half Sto:lo, half Thompson. So she was taught Thompson way by her Aunties on her father's side, and she figured that that was easier for us to get used to for beginners. So she taught us the Thompson way... now.
- Sharon: So it's easier to do the Thompson style?
- Wendy: Supposedly.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Wendy: Yeah. Yeah. And she said once we got the hang of it she'd teach us the Salish way. The Sto:lo way.
- Sharon: The slats?
- Wendy: Slats, yeah, the cedar slats. I have not yet done that yet. My brother has but I haven't.
- Sharon: So, ummm, with basket making like traditionally - do you know if it was specialists or did all women in the community do basket making?
- Wendy: Ummm, there... I think all women did basket making because they were for...used for cooking, they were used for gathering medicines and herbs and berries...and trading, ummm, even storing things in. So everybody made baskets. Yeah.
- Sharon: Okay.
- Wendy: It was...it was our utensils.
- Sharon: Yeah, because I ummm... I'm trying to remember who I interviewed. Somebody suggested to me that maybe it was specialists that did the

basket making and other people did other types of containers... You know like some people did coil baskets possibly and some people did bark containers.

Wendy: No...I would think that it would depend on what you used it for. My mom said the big bark baskets were made for storing things in and the coiled baskets were made for cooking and picking berries, because you wanted it to last year after year after year because as soon as it wore out then you would have to make another one. But, if it wasn't going to be for packing anything heavy then you would use a cedar bark basket.

Sharon: I don't know if this is appropriate or not, but did specific families...do they have special techniques that they use in the basket making? And if they did would they share that with other members of the community or would it be...?

Wendy: Are you talking long time ago or today?

Sharon: I guess long time ago and today.

Wendy: Long time ago and today. Long time ago women and families lived in a long house together.

Sharon: Right.

Wendy: So everything was shared. Today only certain families or women carry out the basket making, most likely because it's the choice of the other people not to. When you're subsidized with going to the store and buying baskets or buying pots and pans, and buying your berries already picked in flats you have no need to or want to... to want to make baskets. And a lot of them the lifestyle was that you needed to do those things - that was your survival, that was your way of life. Today it's too convenient to just jump in the car, go to the flea market and buy your raspberries there or your blueberries there. You no longer have the need for the baskets. It's now become an art, it's not a lifestyle anymore.

Sharon: Ummm...When it was taught was it taught through the community? Did people in the community share in the education of younger people or was it better that you learned from your mother or your grandmother.

Wendy: You generally learned from your mother and your grandmother and your aunts.

Sharon: A lot of men make baskets now. Like that wasn't so in the past was it?

- Wendy: Not too often. No, not unless they were too spirited and they liked to do women's work, liked to be with the women.
- Sharon: Right. Yeah...so, ummm, why do you think so many...like I think there's more men interested now than there were in the past.
- Wendy: I think so, because like I said it's considered an art and it's a hobby. It's a lot of work. The women today are too fragile, they're too used to keeping care of their nails with nail polish and filing them and keeping them long and looking nice, and having nice skin. And when you work with basketry your hands get rough and cracked up and your nails break and... So it's now more seen as being masculine I guess. It's just pretty tough. I've collected bark and roots for about six years now, and it's tough, it's really tough. Like if I don't have my husbands or my sons with me then it's really back breaking trying to get the bark and scrape off all the outer bark and dig roots, and...you know. It's really hard work and a lot of people prefer not to do it.
- Sharon: Do you collect the material mostly in the Spring or...?
- Wendy: Yeah. Yeah.
- Sharon: And I went to the Longhouse Interpretive Program last week and they [Cathie Jimmie] mentioned that you have to leave the roots to dry for a year. Is that true? Like you can't use them for a year?
- Wendy: Well maybe it's true for a certain type of basket that you are going to make. Again I've not heard of that before. No.
- Sharon: Okay. I thought that would take a long time to get your stuff together [? - this portion a little unclear], especially when you are first starting to learn.
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: Oh, okay. But I heard also... I talked to Frieda George and Joan Chapman [brief unclear portion], and they mentioned too that... you have to dig in a sort of a flat area. Is there a special area that you go or do you just...?
- Wendy: I was always told to go where it's not too rocky. Otherwise your roots are going to be kinked and... It's best in the sand, sandy areas, and flat areas.
- Sharon: So like near a river maybe, near a river?
- Wendy: Yeah. Yeah, because then there's no big rocks to make your roots all kinky and crooked.

- Sharon: And do you have to dig fairly deep or?
- Wendy: No. No, you dig about probably a good 6 – 8 inches down.
- Sharon: Ummm, Sonny McHalsie told me that you can't get them off the surface or they're too dry and they don't split properly.
- Wendy: That's right. Yeah.
- Sharon: And in one book... Have you ever seen that *Cedar* book by Hillary Stewart?
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: She says you have to dig a couple feet down or something like that... in her book.
- Wendy: Oh wow.
- Sharon: And I thought that's a lot of work.
- Wendy: I wouldn't want to go digging with her. [Laughs]. They're harder to get when you dig down that far I would think, because I even dug some up that were as much as ten inches down and that's lots of work. You're looking at sweat getting them out. Yeah, so it's better if they're just like 6 – 8 inches down.
- Sharon: Right...and so most people who make baskets they dig the roots now, they don't buy them?
- Wendy: I can't speak for everyone else, ummm, myself I dig my own roots.
- Sharon: Yeah, because my grandmother she went to Powell River in 1990 and she got a couple baskets while she was visiting up there and the ladies they didn't have anybody to dig for them. The ladies were buying the roots from the lumber companies...
- Wendy: The lumber companies!
- Sharon: Yeah, you know where they were logging and they were selling a bundle for... I think she said for \$20 for a bundle of roots.
- Wendy: Oh, is that right?
- Sharon: Yeah.

- Wendy: My mom told me that it's always best for you to get your own roots. Because you're the one that is going to put your sweat into it, you're the one that knows the type of roots that you like to work with. And if somebody else gets your roots for you then it's not going to be the same as if you got it for yourself. And they're not going to be the quality that you like. And I totally understand where she's coming from because somebody gave me a bundle and they split them wrong, according to how I was taught, and I shouldn't even say wrong. They split them differently than how I was taught, so I have to use the whole bundle for filler. I couldn't use them for weaving.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Wendy: And doing the wrapping. So I was disappointed with that because they split them different than how I was taught. And they were kinked, so they got them where there's rocks.
- Sharon: So are you familiar with the work of a lot of different basket makers or just your family, or...?
- Wendy: Ummm...No not really. I've seen a man's work in Mount Currie. My mom's work of course. I get to be really...what you might call fussy or... What's the word I'm searching for? Because my mom has such beautiful work and she's very particular about her roots and I compare to other ladies work, or another person's work, and it's not as good quality... I see. And the only reason why I can think of that is because she was taught by grandmothers and I guess she's a bit of a perfectionist. She'll leave a mistake on her basket, but if it's a big mistake she'll take it all out. But she's particular about her roots. She wants her roots to be...to her liking and her standard. So I adopted to some of that too.
- Sharon: I was wondering if you saw a bunch of anonymous baskets in a museum, or something, would you be able to recognize them.
- Wendy: Oh yeah. Definitely.
- Sharon: Is it just from the way she does her work or is there a certain design on them?
- Wendy: No. It's the way she does her work - her style and her technique. Like I said it's very fine, very particular. The roots that she uses and the way she splits her roots, it's different... from what I've seen.
- Sharon: Right...When, ummm, you're creating baskets do you have a certain...certain designs that you like to put on them afterwards to decorate them or do you just... do anything?

- Wendy: Ummm, you can pretty well do anything. There's butterflies, there's trees, there's leaves, there's sparrows... I gather that they at one time had meaning or you would put certain designs on for certain uses of the basket.
- Sharon: Right.
- Wendy: I think I've even heard my mom say in the past they didn't even put designs on the baskets if they were working baskets. Like if you were going to use them for picking berries then it would just be a plain basket. If you were going to make a basket and give it as a gift to a Chief or for a wedding, or for a grandmother, then you would put designs on that.
- Sharon: Do you know if designs that they've put into like the wool, when weaving something wool, are they the same designs they would use on the baskets or are they a different set of designs?
- Wendy: No, they're pretty much the same. I've seen them pretty much the same.
- Sharon: I was wondering about like... In Alberta when I was there there's a lot of people they dream designs, or... or they go on a vision quest, or something and they...they... they have a design that belong to them that they maybe share with their family, but it only belongs to them. And I wondered if that ever happened to the designs that are included on the weavings and baskets?
- Wendy: Not that I know of. My mom has taught us the Salish way and you can see all the different blankets that were made, ummm, through Coqualeetza [unsure of the word] Salish weavers, and they have all the same designs in their... in their blankets as well.
- Sharon: I don't know if it was because all the different communities in the sort of Fraser Valley, they sort of intermarry, so they're less... So things got spread around more. If I wondered that was why it was that way?
- Wendy: Yeah. It's possible, because long ago we followed a matriarchal system and now we follow a patriarchal system.
- Sharon: Right.
- Wendy: So all the teachings are handed down through the women and when the women were integrated into the man's community then her teachings left with her, right? So things did get mixed up and spread out.
- Sharon: Ummm, Keith Carlson, he wanted me to ask about, ummm... if the baskets, like often you see them - they're the same sizes and shapes and he

wondered if that was like a weights and measures type of system for trade? Like in the past?

Wendy: It may have been. I can't answer I don't know for sure.

Sharon: No.

Wendy: Again I have to emphasize that basketry was a lifestyle. They used them for cooking, gathering and stirring. And if they used them for bartering and trade then it would make sense. My people were a very common sense people.

Sharon: Right.

Wendy: There was no...competitiveness to better than or be richer than the other. You know, it was always this is what we need, this is how we...we do it. And, ummm, very simple and basic.

Sharon: Ummm, I read in this book, ummm, by Wayne Suttles [Coast Salish Essays], he was mentioning a blessing or a purification ceremony that involved a basket, but that's all it said that there's a ceremony that involved a basket and ummm, I asked Keith about that...you know [unclear portion]...And he mentioned that there's like baskets in building one hanging over the doorways and he said that that was to, ummm, to trap bad energy, bad spirits and things, and then they get cleansed periodically. And I wondered if that's a common practice still or...?

Wendy: Well apparently if they're still hanging over the doors over there. I've never heard of it before. The only thing that comes to my mind when I hear things like that is that the cedar tree is the tree of life to our people.

Sharon: Right.

Wendy: And the basket is made out of cedar, so it makes sense that the basket would then, ummm, I guess, in somebody's mind, cleanse negative energy as people walked in. The more common one that my family used, as far as I know, is the devil's club and a cedar bough that hangs over the roof.

Sharon: Yeah, that's what I've seen mostly since I've been staying here too. Yeah, I heard that about those baskets so I thought I would ask.

Wendy: I guess, that's the best... probably something that's come...evolved in the last few generations and that it...looks nice.

Sharon: Yeah.

- Wendy: And you don't have to keep changing it.
- Sharon: Sort of an adaptation or something.
- Wendy: I think so yeah, I think so.
- Sharon: Okay, ummm, I was wondering about cradleboards too. I don't know if you've ever made any of those, but I wondered if they were like a new thing or like, ummm...because when I worked for Andrea Laforet [of the Canadian Museum of Civilization] she suggested that they came into being around like the turn of the century, around 1900... I wondered if they didn't have cradleboards before then what did they use?
- Wendy: Yeah, I'd be interested to know too. Ummm, as far as I know our people have always kept the babies in the cradle basket and... yeah, that's where they slept and as they grew bigger they just made bigger baskets. So they had like three stages for the baby and... as far as I can remember that's what we've used.
- Sharon: Yeah, because I've seen things that must be inspired by, sort of, the trade with the white people like...like tea cups and tables and things like that.
- Wendy: Oh yeah.
- Sharon: And those things, I don't know I call them fruit bowls, but I guess they're cake stands or something. I've seen stuff like that.
- Wendy: Yeah.
- Sharon: But the cradleboards to me seem more, I don't know, tradition items.
- Wendy: Maybe if you're talking about a cradleboard, then those come from the prairie style Indians, but if you're talking about a baby basket then those would have been...I would think more traditional to our people.
- Sharon: Yeah. Yeah. I've seen some really neat ones too, with the little holes in the end and the little urinals sticking out, for the boys.
- Wendy: Oh yeah. Yeah.
- Sharon: I saw one like that in Calgary in their museum [the Glenbow]. It's cute.
- Wendy: Yeah, that's what I heard my husband talking about that...they had a little hose with a hole in the basket and they stuck it on the end of the little baby's penis and when he had to pee it just trickled out.

Sharon: Yeah. A little hollow tube. I don't know what it was [the material it was made from]. It was funny.

Wendy: Yeah, and they lined the bottom of the basket with moss.

Sharon: Yeah... I'm just trying to think. I've sort of covered most of the things I was interested in... Yeah I guess I've covered most of the stuff I'm interested in.

Wendy: Okay.

Sharon: So... Well thanks for talking to me.

Wendy: You're Welcome.

Transcript of Sharon Fortney interviewing Minnie Peters.
Interview took place on the Peters Reserve, Hope, June 8th, 2000.

Sharon: So today is June 8th and I'm interviewing Minnie Peters in her home on the Peters Reserve. So the types of things that I'm interested in are also how basket making is transmitted, like who people learn from and at what age they learn.

Minnie: We've taught some children quite young. In order to start learning about baskets we have to go gather the material and the material is done in the month of June and July and in August. We have to go out... out in the areas and get the cedar roots. We have to look for cedar trees and dig up the roots and then we take them home and split them. And then we hang them up to dry and they have to dry for six months before you use them.

Sharon: Wow.

Minnie: And then we go and get the wild cherry. The cherry tree – we go looking around the same time the month of June, and then when the sap is running and then we peel the cherry tree for the trimmings. The red is uh, the red, the red is the red cherry tree and then we use the material to dye it to do black. We use alder bark and other things and we put it in water and leave it in there, and we look at it every now and then until we get the right color. And then we split the roots and we make some fine and then we make some... make some for sewing. And then we have to have an awl, we have to have a knife, and they make deer awls for us, they... They fix it so, they split it in half, and then they fine it to a point. So it's usable for us and then we have to have a... a stone to sharpen it when it gets dull so the point is kept sharp, and then we start. We start with the center, and any kind of basket you want to make – the cedar. The cedar root baskets you start with the center for the coil or you start with lengthwise. You do quite a bit so to make it oblong. To make berry baskets. And then they go and gather the young cedar trees and they split that for us, for the doing the wide material. The wide baskets like this.

Sharon: Right.

Minnie: Yeah. And then they put the... and then we have to work with that in. And the cedar bark – we have to gather that when the saps running too. But in our area here we have a place that we call Xa:ytem. They go down and they ask loggers, that has logging booms, and ask if they could peel the cedar bark of the cedar trees. Saving them peeling a large cedar, and it saves a lot of... so the cedar can grow as it wants to.

Sharon: Right.

- Minnie: So we do that. They gather there all they can, and then a lot of times I go down there and I help them clean it and roll it and then we split it, and then we make baskets. We have training programs down there to do – to do basketry.
- Sharon: Right... But you yourself at what age did you learn to make baskets?
- Minnie: I learned at... I learned at about the age of... I was about fifteen years old when my mother sent me to my great grandmothers, great great aunt I should say and great grandmother. And they took me up the mountain and I helped her dig the roots and she split them and she started me off on a basket. And she made me make a tray and then I had to take it to the store. These were... this was the year, in the thirties, you know when there was no money.
- Sharon: Right.
- Minnie: So she went and traded my basket for material and she cut it out and then I had to sew. She cut out my dress and I had to sew it by hand, and then if I didn't do it right she made me take it apart again. She made me just sit down until I got my basket made and then that's the way I was taught how to get the materials for getting baskets.
- Sharon: And this was up in the Thompson area?
- Minnie: Yeah, Thompson area, Spuzzum area. Yeah I lived with them. I used to go up there, mother used to send me up there to go and help them. We used to even go up the mountain and pick berries and that they were healthy.
- Sharon: Yeah.
- Minnie: And then we used to gather the winter food.
- Sharon: Would you ummm, learn the coil, like...is the called like a...
- Minnie: A coiled basket.
- Sharon: Like a coil, like a bundle coil?
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: And then these ones here are like a slat?
- Minnie: The wide... Yeah, the wide slats.
- Sharon: Oh, which one did you learn first?

- Minnie: I learned the wide coil basket first, because I had to make a tray to bring to the store. The coil... the slat baskets I just learned that down here after I got married.
- Sharon: So is that... is the slats more of a Fraser Valley sort of kind of a style?
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: Oh. Are there... are the designs different down here from up there?
- Minnie: Oh yes. They have the... the designs down here are the animal patterns. More like the ravens or the eagle, they put them on. And up in the Thompson area we use the diamonds and the Indian trails and all different and... for good luck and everything like that.
- Sharon: Right. The diamonds are for good luck.
- Minnie: And the stars, they use the stars down here.
- Sharon: Okay. What about... I've seen some baskets with tree designs on them is that down this way or...?
- Minnie: No, I think that's from some other area. Yep.
- Sharon: Oh, because I've heard some...seen some in museums and they say they're from Cultus Lake maybe or...?
- Minnie: The problem, maybe some of them are just doing it, you know, to put a different design on a basket.
- Sharon: So it could be like something that's not specific to community. Do specific communities... do they have their own designs?
- Minnie: Pretty well, yeah like the Coast people have their own designs and then you can't use it. You have to go and ask find out if you can use it before you can use the designs. Even on Indian sweaters and that.
- Sharon: Is that true to with individuals? Like do the designs belong to specific individuals?
- Minnie: Yep. Yeah it's handed down...
- Sharon: Like from your family?
- Minnie: Yeah, from the families.

- Sharon: I've just...I've been sort of interested in that, but it's been hard to find anybody who knows for sure.
- Minnie: Oh yeah, oh yeah, there's a lot of things you know that it's held in the family. Like most of the families stay together and then... as it's passed down the younger people that want to learn they'll learn. And then if they're good at their work well then the parents or whatever, aunt or whoever, will pass down the designs and work, with the work that they do.
- Sharon: Right. So, so traditionally people learned just from within their family, they learned basket making and...
- Minnie: Oh yeah, but today now you can go about anywhere for training. You know you can... like my granddaughter and I, we go to the United States and we learn different style baskets now. And then if people can take you but... I don't think there's hardly anybody that has even tried to learn the coiled basket, or they don't want to instruct that. They want to keep it to themselves – to their area.
- Sharon: Yeah, that's... I got the impression with some of the other ladies I interviewed that...that it wasn't something you taught outside of your family.
- Minnie: No, no, but if it's in your family yes.
- Sharon: They suggested that some of the younger women once they learned they would teach others in their community, and I wondered if that was just a...different generation doing something different?
- Minnie: No, I kind of think they're getting more openly into... into different work areas now, because every time we here there's something new in basketry we wanted to learn so... We pay to go and learn this from the instructor that's teaching us.
- Sharon: Are there like standard sizes and shapes of baskets that are made?
- Minnie: Yes there is. A lot of the people make the berry baskets that you go and pick.
- Sharon: This sort of?
- Minnie: Go and put it on your back and you go and pick the berries.
- Sharon: Right.

- Minnie: And then they make little ones, little shaped ones that you put straps on them too and then you put it around your waist and then you pick it and you put your berries in it. And then your basket is sitting on a stump.
- Sharon: Right.
- Minnie: And then you take this little basket and then you empty your berries into the big basket, and then you don't have to have that on your back all the time when you're picking.
- Sharon: Oh that's a good idea.
- Minnie: And you could go a distance when picking the berries and they used that for going fishing down a river like it's steep. They have a larger basket, they go and put stuff in it or they'll clean the fish down there and then they'll pack it up the same way on our backs.
- Sharon: Would ummm, they wanted me to ask...like Keith Carlson he said that... or he's interested in if the baskets are standard size for trade like kind of a weights or measures system. And so I've been asked if you know about that, but...
- Minnie: No, because we'll make any kind of baskets and then when we start trading we know the value of our basket and then the person has to give us whatever they want to do on trading, we figure the same value.
- Sharon: Oh, but in the past like did the basket...
- Minnie: They were small.
- Sharon: But were they used to measure the contents? Like if they were trading fish or something for something else?
- Minnie: No, I've never heard of that.
- Sharon: No.
- Minnie: People are just... just look at them and then they figure the trading is equal or they just trade with the person.
- Sharon: Are there other people in your family that do baskets?
- Minnie: Well my granddaughter's learning to make them.
- Sharon: What's her name?

Minnie: Betty Peters.

Sharon: And does she here on the Peters Reserve?

Minnie: Yeah.

Sharon: And so...

Minnie: She works for Xa:ytem.

Sharon: Oh.

Minnie: Yeah and uh...Brenda Crabtree.

Sharon: Okay, somebody mentioned her name to me I'm sure.

Minnie: Yeah well she works down at the rock.

Sharon: Hatzic?

Minnie: Hatzic Rock, yeah.

Sharon: Right.

Minnie: Yeah they're the narrators for Hatzic Rock.

Sharon: Oh.

Minnie: And then when people come in and want to do this and that, and then they call and ask and get together, and they says we've got money and we're having a training program going and they do a lot of training there.

Sharon: That's good.

Minnie: I weave for them. Spin wool and dye wool and weave for them.

Sharon: So did you train your granddaughter to make baskets?

Minnie: Well she's learning now, any spare time she can she'll work at it. She wants to learn all my trades.

Sharon: Oh that's...that'll take her awhile.

Minnie: Yeah, yeah, yeah, she said we have to learn all you know she says 'cause if you leave us nobody knows.

- Sharon: Yeah... have you trained other people to make baskets?
- Minnie: Not really, not baskets. No. We generally like to keep that more or less into our secret areas, yeah.
- Sharon: Is this design here [on one of her baskets on the table] is it meant to be a sun? This circle?
- Minnie: Yeah, diamond. That mean's good luck.
- Sharon: Oh it's meant to be a diamond? This one?
- Minnie: That's just a half of diamond.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Minnie: That's a true entity.
- Sharon: And this one here?
- Minnie: That's a... I just said it... I can't get it in my head now.
- Sharon: Not the path, the zig-zaggy path one?
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: It is?
- Minnie: The trail, Indian trail.
- Sharon: Indian trail. Oh, I guess when you see them in the circle, when they're on the trays, you sort of think... you think they're a different design, because they're joined like that.
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: Ummm, are these the designs that... like are there specific designs and kinds of things that would help people recognize your work?
- Minnie: Oh yeah, we even make... butterfly patterns on them. Oh yeah, there's different patterns that they use...different areas.
- Sharon: Yeah, but for yourself? If a person was looking at an anonymous collection and your work was represented would it be, would there be...

- Minnie: Oh yeah, somebody would notice it, yeah – “Oh that belongs to so and so.” Yeah. Like Joanne [Chapman], Joanne uses different designs.
- Sharon: Is that from like knowing other people that do that type of work?
- Minnie: Joanne was handed down from her family. Like she always sat with them, like her grandmother and that, and then [unclear word] their little designs, like when we do knitting?
- Sharon: Right.
- Minnie: Like this here. What do you call it?
- Sharon: Oh graft paper?
- Minnie: Graft paper, yeah. We put them on graft paper and you just make your designs and then you try and work with it, because we’re so used to the coil because we easily put it on and do these here you’ve got to use so many.
- Sharon: On the slats?
- Minnie: Yeah, so many of the patterns on it [on one slat because they are wider than the bundle coils, you have fewer to build up the design]. Like this one here is one, two, three, four...and you’ve got to make sure you’ve got them in the right place.
- Sharon: I really like the way the stars look.
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: I’ve seen a couple like that [with similar star designs]. Have you been to the Interpretive Center? The Coqualeetza Interpretive Center they have a whole collection of baskets in there.
- Minnie: No, I see them all over but...
- Sharon: They’re trying to...well they’re hoping eventually to separate the Thompson baskets out from the Sto:lo ones and then the want to return the Thompson ones, and I’ve seen one at least with that design there.
- Minnie: Yeah, Seabird Island has a lot of collections over there in their school.
- Sharon: That’s what I’ve heard, yeah...
- Minnie: It’d be nice if you went over and took a look.

- Sharon: Yeah.
- Minnie: It's right in the main, big, big school.
- Sharon: Right. I talked to Elizabeth Herrling and she mentioned that to me.
- Minnie: Yeah, they have quite a collection. They have a little bit in their Café. They have a little showcase there too.
- Sharon: Right... I 'm just thinking. Do you go special places when you get your materials? Like when you dig your roots?
- Minnie: Oh yes you have to.
- Sharon: Like is it...do you just look for certain features?
- Minnie: Yeah it has to be a certain kind otherwise it isn't right. You don't get the right ones.
- Sharon: Like for the roots the ground has to be flat?
- Minnie: No, it could be anywhere. It could be going up the mountain, but again you have to know what part... what areas to dig from the tree.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Minnie: Yeah. And the wild cherry bark you have to get the young ones otherwise if you get the older ones it's too heavy, it's too thick.
- Sharon: So do you have to get quite a lot of material to keep you going all year round?
- Minnie: Oh yeah. We generally go and gather every year. We've already went once, and then my family wants to go again. My other family that wants to make... the one that's doing baskets up in Spuzzum and then her sister's living in Agassiz. Her and I, we go out and we go and dig the roots, yeah. I gave her all the roots so that she could get started. I went and helped her because she has no vehicle to go out with.
- Sharon: Oh. Some of the ladies when I was down at the Sto:lo Nation, like Rosalee, they were saying that it's hard to get the materials.
- Minnie: It's hard to get the roots for them, because she wants to make baskets she sits at home a lot.
- Sharon: Yeah.

- Minnie: Besides the language that she's teaching.
- Sharon: But she said that people get upset with things like private property, type of thing...
- Minnie: Oh yeah, if you're doing up around here we just go up the mountain, everywhere.
- Sharon: I was wondering about cradleboards, they make those sort of coiled cradle boards. Is that like a new design or is that something that...
- Minnie: No they made that a long time ago. They make it out of birch bark and they make it out of this wide material and they make it out of coil.
- Sharon: Right, because one lady that I worked for he said that they only came in around 1900.
- Minnie: About that yeah. They had just a board and buckskin.
- Sharon: The head part?
- Minnie: No board, just like a flat board at the bottom and they fixed a buckskin and put the babies in, in the early days.
- Sharon: And are there other shapes that are new and things that are new too that...?
- Minnie: No.
- Sharon: No. I'm just trying to think. Do you ummm, sell your work?
- Minnie: No, not really.
- Sharon: Because Joan was telling me she has some in a shop around here, a gallery.
- Minnie: I think it's up in Hope, I'm not sure.
- Sharon: Oh.
- Minnie: I don't think she has. I think she brought some down to Xa:ytem, small little ornaments.
- Sharon: Oh the little...
- Minnie: Cradles.

- Sharon: Yeah, I bought one of those. Yeah they're really cute. I've never seen them like that before.
- Minnie: Oh.
- Sharon: And ummm, I was wondering if baskets...like I heard that there was a cleansing ceremony involving a basket, but I haven't heard or talked to anybody that who's been able to confirm that.
- Minnie: Well that's a secret.
- Sharon: Yeah, so...
- Minnie: They are letting a lot of things out which I really don't believe in too much. The smokehouses, the spiritual person, it's just for certain people, but today they... the younger people... I guess the younger ones like, younger than I am, like your age, they're letting it out and they're letting the people get involved in that.
- Sharon: Yeah, because that was something I'd read in a book actually.
- Minnie: Yeah.
- Sharon: So I was wondering like, for in a museum collection, if those sorts of baskets should be separated or kept out of the public? You know?
- Minnie: No, the ones that were brought into the museums were all more or less lost baskets. Maybe the people passed away and a lot of them didn't know what to do with it and they brought it to the museum, because we've been in there looking at them.
- Sharon: In Vancouver?
- Minnie: Yeah, we've been called in to find out where did these baskets come from. Yeah, we went down to take a look at them.
- Sharon: At the... in that building at the Sto:lo Nation, I don't know building one. They have baskets hanging...
- Minnie: All over the place yeah.
- Sharon: Yeah and they said that that was...that they're over the doorways because it traps evil energy when people come in and it's like a purifying thing too. Are baskets seen as...?

Minnie: Yeah, well just like cedar a lot of people use the cedar bark too.

Sharon: Yeah, I've seen the Devil's Club and the cedar boughs. I stayed at Frank Malloway's longhouse.

Minnie: Oh did you?

Sharon: Yeah, I stayed there for a week at the beginning of May, and then we stayed at the Coqualeetza one the following week, and I didn't stay there as long.

-----[End of Interview, brief conversation]-----