

## **Video: Technique**

### **Dawn Glinsmann talks to Laura Phillips and Allison Deep about weaving techniques of two baskets in the Biderbost Collection.**

DG: When you get down to twining, you've either got to be using split cedar root, or spruce root, or cedar bark

LP: or maybe cherry bark?

DG: Maybe cherry bark. And the stuff that's curled around looks like cherry bark, it actually looks kinda like cherry bark, and after 500 years, and waterlogging

LP: 2,000 years.

DG: Yeah yeah, sorry, that's what this is

LP: Well, we're not really sure

DG: Yeah, who knows. So the big thing here though, I just looked at this and I said 'Oh I think this is spruce root'. This here, came from the middle of the root. They split off the edges, and they used these really nice finished edges for nicer, and I'm speaking Northern Coast, but here too you'll just find a preference for this outer shiny part. And then the inner part tends to be the strong, more, the outer part, and um here, you can see it's twined and there's actually a shine to it, and it's got this nice curve. And here, here's a good example, this piece, and I really do work with a loupe and magnifying glass, I mean always looking at this level or detail. But this is the inner root, this is inner root.

LP: And so how did they, how did they get stripped?

DG: Good question. So in the case of spruce root, and this is well-established Tlingit and Haida technique, it doesn't look like they did it on this part of the coast. But what they do up north is they, um, get a fire going, pretty big, and then take it down to the coals. Elderly weavers always involved, so it's, it's all art. And you cook the spruce root over the coals, and then you uh, you draw it, and when it's sizzling just perfectly and just the right sound and the right smell, you take it off the fire, and you draw it through a stick that has a slit in it. And you pull it through and it takes the husk right off. Then, you start taking, splitting it, one end in your mouth, and the other end pulling, and you know, you've got, you do whatever you can to get it this flat and straight and then pull this off, always monitoring how thick everything is, and then maybe you can get another, hopefully you can get a flat piece out of the middle, maybe two depending on how big the root is. Here, and then you sort that. Here we're talking utility, they didn't take

the husk off. I think it happened to fall off, because here you've got the husk on it, so whether it, and here, right here. So they weren't worried about it.

LP: Right there you can really see it.

DG: So they weren't worried about it. They just didn't even.

LP: Yeah you can see how it's really woven into it.

DG: That's it, and yet it's hard to believe that here, it fell off later. So I think it either worked itself off as it was being woven or whatever, but they were not at all worried about whether the husk was on or not. And they also weren't worried about whether they used inner root or outer root. But they were exploiting roots. That's a big thing with this piece. The other thing is they were doing open twine here with two pieces, and then here they were using, and this is, these go over one, under one, over one, under one, so you just have two wrapped elements as they go. Here..

LP: Looks like another one of these decorations..

DG: It is, and it's over two, and it's also 3 strand, 3 strand twining, because this one goes there, and it's not this one and it's not this one. So you've got at least 3 strands. And they're going over 2, under, looks like under one, cause this one might be...

LP: Maybe it is just two..

DG: It is, it could very well just be two. But it looks like this one is like

LP: Yeah, and then...I'll get a pointer too. It does look like this one just kind of fumbled, but it got in there, I think that might be that one.

DG: But see this tiny one, coming out of there? So this big one comes out here and there's a little tiny one there, a big one here, tiny one there, big one here, and then it kind of..Not..we're just..

LP: Mmhm, They're just sticking in there. But then maybe this, but this, it's uh, it's, why is this down here? If this is the bottom, why is there this decorative element?

DG: Could this whole area here be the bottom?

AD: That's what I think it is. Personally, that's my hypothesis

DG: Yeah.

LP: Ooh, so this is where it meets. So this meets and then that's the bottom.

AD: And it's just smooshed.

DG: It's just smooshed, that's exactly right.

LP: So they got to the bottom here and they put this kind of structural...

DG: And then this is, is the corner.

LP: The carry over, so this is the corner. And that's why, because otherwise if this was decorative they would have been more careful.

DG: Maybe, yeah. I just see this as we need a basket to strain these clams now. And..you can just make it as fast as you can.

LP: How long does it take to make a basket like this?

DG: If this basket is truly this big, and, you could do it in less than a day, at this level of, you know, you could tell that they were in a hurry, yeah, cause each round would probably take, if she's really fast, she could do a round every 10 minutes, 15 minutes.

DG: Sometimes in twining, what you have, is you don't, you have two, usually what you have is you have two elements that are always like this. And so you have a consistent angle to the twine. What's unusual about this piece is that you do have a two-two twine here, over two under two, in both elements, so we'd say that's 2/2 twining. However, next to it, and it's very hard to see because of the dirt, and different things going on. But you've got one piece that's clearly the same piece, and it is at different angles, so what that means is, it is a row of braided twining. And that's where you've got warps, this you know, the weaver is like this with the warps, and she's braiding and twining it through at the same time, and that's where you end up with a chevron, or a bird's foot, or something like that. That's what this is. And then she goes back to twining, regular twining. But this, now we need to go back through and look and see if we have any other braided twining 'cause this is what I'm seeing. So if this is braided twining, which is another technique. So usually with twining, you're just, this is regular twining. The first one.

LP: So they're twisting and...

DG: Yeah, and so I'm going to take my weavers and go over, but, I'm gonna go around the back and bring it through and to the back and around, and bring it through and to the back, and so you end up with a consistent angle. And that's the first row. But with this next row, she has two, and she's bringing one over the front, the other over the front, and we never really see them cross in the same warp so she's bringing one over two and the other around the back but then she's bringing the other one at the other angle, so it's a braided, and you end up with a chevron or bird's foot type pattern. And that's why you've got this piece at these opposite angles. And so what I love, you know it's so fun to find consistency, and then, what you find is this ability to not...the individual artistry and the invention of the weaver is what this is, and that's exciting. And then she goes back, and so this is decorative.

LP: But she's doing this, and then this, and then this. There's 3 elements.

DG: Yes, there's three rows. And I think this is the most decorative, intentionally decorative thing I've seen today.