

Exploring a Traditional Woven Haida Hat

This hat was made by my great, great grandparents, Isabella and Charles Edenshaw. She was a spruce root weaver and he was a carver and form line artist.

The shapes of hats on the West Coast are somewhat similar from throughout time. But it's a twine spruce root hat and now days, they are hats that are made out of plaited cedar bark. But the shapes are quite similar throughout the coast. It's just that the techniques to weave them might be different.

Even though it's a large hat, the materials are a lot finer, so it probably took a long time to make it. And it was woven without a hat mold.

My mentor, my aunt Isabelle Rourke, she was one of the only spruce root weavers who weaves the hats without the mold shape. So she shapes the hat by each stitch, and her tension creates the hat shape. Which was how they were made in the old days. But it's a lot harder to weave like that in comparison to weaving around a hat mold. So it's an older practice, but it's still being done today.

The top of the hat and then to a certain point, it's woven with three-strand twining. And then it turns into the dragonfly design on the bottom part. And that design is done with two-strand twining, but there's a stitch pattern to create concentric diamonds and it's called a dragonfly design.

Mostly, the hats, they were woven without colour, and then the designs, and the form line designs were painted on after.

So like the central part right here, the red, is the tongue and then right there is like the nose, and then there's an eye. And then here's a paw, there's a paw.

I like this hat because it is a great example of their work together. But also, it is a very artistic piece, with the designs and the painting and also the weaving and the shape and the size. And just imagining how long it took to weave, or how many roots. It's very interesting, and it's so detailed.