**VALUE #2: WE UPHOLD AND FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS THAT COME FROM OUR ANCESTORS.**

**ɬušəqild čəɬ čəɬa ɬučalad ti xʷdikʷ tuľʔal ti tuyəľyəlabčəɬ.**

**Her First Basket**

From a story told by taqʷšəblu,Vi Hilbert.

Long ago, before the world became the way it is today, there was a little girl. This little girl had been born with an illness that made her actions awkward. She could not run like the other children. She thought her thoughts in a different way. She spent a lot of time alone, because the children did not want her to be on their team or in their group. They felt uncomfortable with her, because she was different.

One day, she was sitting alone at the foot of a tree, feeling very sad. This tree happened to be a cedar tree, which is called the Grandmother of the People, x̌pay̓ac in our language. From this tree came everything that the people needed in life long ago. The Grandmother Tree had taught the people how to take strips of her bark and make all kinds of mats and baskets and hats and even towels and diapers with it. She taught them how to make houses and canoes from her trunk. She taught them how to make themselves strong with her boughs. But there was one thing she had not taught them yet: how to make baskets that could hold water without leaking.

This was the tree that the little girl had sat down by. Lucky for her. The Tree looked down and said,"Granddaughter, you seem very sad." The Little Girl told the Tree all her troubles. That was one thing about the little girl: she could talk to the Tree very easily, unlike many people.

The Tree said,"Granddaughter, you are not only different, you are special. You will be a basket maker."

The Little Girl said,"How can I make baskets, when my hands are so clumsy that I cannot even catch a ball most of the time?"

The Tree said,"Practice and know-how. I will offer up the know-how, and you must offer up the practice. First, you need to go down to the river. You will find a place where my roots are exposed. You will take as much of my root as you need to make your basket."

The Little Girl said,"I don’t even know how much that is."

The Tree said,"You will know."

So the Little Girl went and got the cedar roots. There is a special name for them in our language, c̕apx̌. The Tree showed her how much root to take, how to prepare them for working and how to coil them around and stitch them tight to make a basket. The little girl worked hard. Her fingers were sore; her arms were sore; her patience almost ran out. She thought,"I can’t give up, or I might hurt the Tree’s feelings. She is trying to be so nice to me, but I don’t know if I can even make it to the end of this basket." The Tree smiled to herself. She knew what the little girl was thinking.

Finally, the basket was done. "There is one thing more," said the Tree. "You must go down to the river and dip up a basketful of water and bring it back to me." The Little Girl went to the river, dipped her basket full of water, and carried it back to the tree. Along the way, she could feel drops of water leaking out of the basket and falling on her legs. When she got back to the tree, her basket was almost empty.

"I walk so slowly because of my illness that all the water leaked out on my way back to you," she told the Tree. "No, said the Tree. Your basket was not tight enough. You need to take it apart and do it over." At first the Little Girl couldn’t believe it. How mean, to make her take it all apart after all that work. But as she sat there, she gradually knew that she needed to take the basket apart. "The second try is going to be just as bad as the first one," she said to herself. I can’t do this kind of work, because of my illness." Again, the Tree knew what she was thinking. The little girl hardly heard her say,"The second one will be better than the first, because you know something now and you have practiced." It was almost as if the little girl had thought that herself.

Finally, the basket was finished for the second time. It looked very nice – even sides, tightly woven. "Now take it down to the river and dip up a basketful of water and bring it back to me." The Little Girl went down to the river, dipped her basketful of water and brought it back to the Tree. There was only a little bit of water on her legs this time. The basket was almost full, but not quite. "Not tight enough yet," said the Tree. "You need to take it apart and do it over."

The same thing happened all over again for a third time. Finally, the little girl brought back her fourth basket, and it stayed full. "I finished the basket now," she thought. But then the Tree said,"You need to decorate your basket now."

"I don’t know how to decorate a basket said the little girl, almost crying. I can’t think of ideas like the other kids. I am not creative or smart, because of my illness."

"You can make a basket that holds water," said the Tree. "No one else can do that. Don’t you think that is a smart thing to be able to do?"

"It’s not because I am smart, it is because you taught me."

"And wasn’t it smart of you to listen and to take it apart four times and never give up? So, for a design, just look around you. Take what you see and make it yours."

The little girl looked around. The sun was shining and making her feel warm and happy. There was a dog walking by. He was a funny dog, always hanging around the village. From time to time he would lie on his back with his feet in the air and bark. Everyone liked him. And there was a snake at her feet, sliding away from his old skin, with a beautiful pattern on his back.

The Tree said, as if she knew what the little girl was thinking,"Yes, you can put the sun and the dog and the snakeskin on your basket. That design will represent the thoughts and feelings that you are putting into your work. Then it will be a real basket, of the kind that we call spəčuʔ."

The little girl learned how to put the designs on the basket. When she showed it to the Tree, she felt a warmth in her hands as she held it. "I will keep this forever," she said. "Whenever I am sad, I will look at it and think of all the things I learned form you."

"No," said the Tree,"You must take it back to your village and present it to the oldest lady. That is what people must do with the first things that they make from my gifts. They must pass them on."

"What will I say to the oldest lady? I can never think of anything to say to grown-ups."

"You will speak from your heart when the time comes."

The little girl went to where the oldest lady was staying. This lady was in a lot of pain from arthritis. She did not like to see the little girl who had such trouble moving, because that little girl reminded her of her own trouble. She had often said,"Little girl, go away, don’t bother me." The little girl was afraid to talk to that lady, so she turned back to her own house.

She waited until the people were all gathered, and she told the head speaker that she had a little bit of work to do. And then she sat and listened to the songs of her the people at the gathering. Finally, the time came when the head speaker said, "This little girl has something on her mind."

She asked the head speaker to call the elder’s Indian name. Then she said,"This is my first basket. It holds water without leaking. On it are the warm sunlight, the little dog who makes us laugh, and the snake leaving his old skin behind. These are all things that made me happy the day I finished my basket. I am giving this basket to you because you, like my teacher, have lived a long time and are wise; and like me, you sometimes need cheering up."

The old lady thought,"This little one understands how I feel. How could I have ever been so impatient with her?"

Time passed, and the little girl grew up. As she grew older, she helped many people through her basket making. She passed along the knowledge of how to make a basket water tight. She lived according to the teachings that the Tree and the elder lady (who became her friend) gave her. And she became a treasure to her people. It would be nice to think that her illness left her. But it didn’t. She suffered from that illness all her life, and she accomplished all those things anyway.

We can still learn from her even to this very day. This story has no end, because her teachings have continued from long ago right up until now.

*Artwork by Jason Gobin. Lushootseed provided by Tulalip Lushootseed Department.*