

About Qatš'ay: The Basket Project



- Qatš'ay: The Basket Project originated during interviews by Dr. Lorraine Weir with Elders in Xeni in relation to the **Oral History of the Tsilhqot'in Title Case**. A community-based collaborative project by Dr. Weir with Chief Roger William (Xeni Gwet'in) and the people of Xeni, the book-length Oral History is one of three projects undertaken by Weir at Chief William's request. These various projects comprise the **Tsilhqot'in Research Cluster at UBC** and include the development of a website devoted to the Title case, and the archival placement of materials of historic significance from the case at UBC Vancouver. All of these projects are now in progress.
- According to the Elders' teachings, qatš'ay (Tsilhqot'in baskets) were primarily made by women in the old days and they represent an opportunity to document the Elders' knowledge about Tsilhqot'in women's cultural and historical roles which have received little attention in contemporary research. However, although collections of Tsilhqot'in baskets are in museums all over the world, the community of Xeni had no awareness of the wide-spread survival of the baskets or of their celebrated artistic status. Thanks to the generous assistance and support of Curators and staff at MOA (the Museum of Anthropology at UBC), and to the academic units which supported **Qatš'ay: The Basket Project**, the Elders were able to make the long journey from Xeni to visit MOA on Sept. 22nd and 23rd, 2016 and to be in the presence of the magnificent work of their relatives and ancestors.

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- Organized by Dr. Lorraine Weir with the assistance of community organizers Annie C. Williams (Director, ʔEniyud Health Centre) and Betty Lulua, and with the support of Chief Roger William and Council, **Qatš'ay: The Basket Project** enabled fourteen Elders as well as Chief and one Councilor and three community translators to visit MOA and their knowledge (most of it shared in the Tsilhqot'in language) to be recorded, transcribed and translated for future generations. With their permission, some of this knowledge will be included in the Title case book and some on a website, **Qatš'ay: The Basket Project**, which will begin development later this year at UBC.
- Reconnecting with Qatš'ay is part of the process of revitalization of Tsilhqot'in language and culture which is one of the great victories of the Tsilhqot'in Title case. Although the baskets themselves will remain at MOA for now, bringing their stories back home to Xení is an important part of the community's process of reconnecting with its own proud artistic and cultural heritage. We are deeply grateful to the Elders whose teachings, interest and determination to visit made this project possible.