

## Basket Caps Reading Sheet

Baskets are an important Siletz tradition. Many have practical uses such as storage baskets, fish traps, plates, and even cooking pots. Storage baskets can be small and have lids to hold items like jewelry or medicine. They can also be large enough to hold deer, elk meat, eels, fruit, and other plants. Some baskets are designed with a large strap and are intended to be carried on a person's forehead. Other baskets are used as traps for fish. Special cooking baskets are woven so tight that they can hold water. People cook in these baskets by adding hot rocks to boil that water and cook.

Basket caps are one of the most recognizable baskets woven by Siletz people. Basket caps are created with intricate patterns or designs that most Siletz people call marks. Many of these marks are shared by weavers from neighboring Tribes, such as Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk. Caps are worn at important occasions, including Nee-dash—a traditional ceremonial dance for Siletz people originally from Southwest Oregon and Northern California. This dance lasts for 10 days and is held in a dance house, a special structure made of cedar planks. At Nee-dash, Siletz people dress their very best—the basket caps worn by female dancers are an important part of this tradition.

Weavers gather many different plants to make basket caps. Hazel or fir sticks, gathered in the spring are used as the **warp**—the spokes of a basket, which radiate from the start at the center to the edge.

The roots of spruce trees are used as the **weft**—the two (or more) elements that the weaver twines around the warp to make the structure of the basket. Weavers use other materials such as maidenhair fern, bear grass, and other plants to cover the spruce root and make the mark.

Skilled weavers are very committed to their craft. A weaver spends a lot of time gathering and preparing the plants that they need to make a basket. Weavers must use art and math skills to create such beautiful patterns on basket caps.



*Examples of basket caps*

### Comprehension Check

What might be three things you see at Nee-dash?

## Basket Caps Reading Sheet *(Continued)*

Their knowledge of science, plants, and geography are important and lets weavers know when and where to gather plants for weaving, how to prepare and store materials until they are ready for use, and how to design a basket. In all, a basket cap made by a highly skilled basket weaver can take 50 to 100 hours to complete and last for hundreds of years. Today, master weavers continue to share their knowledge with others in order to carry on the traditions of weaving. Many Siletz people learn to weave from their older family members, such as parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. There are also culture camps, summer camps, workshops, and other opportunities for Siletz people to learn how to weave. Siletz people work together to make sure the materials they need to weave will continue to thrive into the future. Making a basket cap is a lot of work and keeping Siletz traditions alive takes the whole community working together.



*A woman teaches how to weave at Siletz Culture Camp*

### Comprehension Check

Why are basket caps important to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians today?

### Comprehension Check

Where can Siletz people learn to weave baskets?