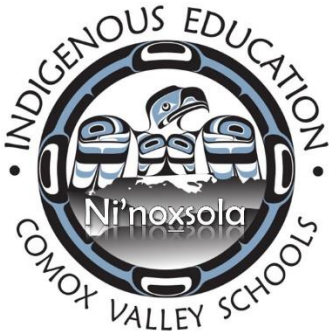


Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Sheila Buchanan
Moccasins



Growing up with my grandparents was a learning experience for me, not only in trapping and surviving, but the skills taught to me were phenomenal. I learned so many things that I love to share some of those with everyone.

One thing I did not learn and I could have was to do bead work and making moccasins. As a teenager I just didn't have the interest, and I regret it. First of all before one can make moccasins, the moose hide has to be prepared. This is a long process.

The moose hide is stretched out on four poles and tied at each corner to hold it in place. It has to be very tight. Once it is in place, the flesh has to be removed. This is done by using a sharp object, tied to the wrist and carefully pounding on the flesh. My grandma had a large moose bone which was carved with teeth that was made especially for this purpose. Once this was done, then the hide is flipped over and the fur is then removed with the same movements, but with a different object that resembles a tomahawk. Taking care not to make any holes in the hide.

The moose is then put in soapy water to soak for days. once taken out of the water, it is then laid out and moose fat is spread over the entire hide. This sits for another couple of days. It is then put in more water and then removed after days stretched out and the water drained. Grandma used to put it around a tree and wrap a pole around it to wring it out. It had to be soft and free of water. It was then put on a teepee like structure with a small smouldering fire filled with smoke and tanned. One had to be careful there were no flames, only smoke. It had to be flipped over and the other side had to be tanned also. This was a long process, in tanning and preparing the hide to make moccasins, mukluks, vests, jackets. You name it she made it.

I used to help her with the tanning and the entire process. I took my turn in removing the flesh and fur. It was a beautiful tan color when it was finished and soft as velvet. In the end it was worth the effort and the hide came with a nice aroma from the smoke. Hope you enjoy this story, more to come next week.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)

