

## **Elisabeth Pierite interview transcript. Running time 6 min, 12 sec.**

Conducted in Marksville on September 10, 2021, by Independent Curator Dayna Bowker Lee. Written interview transcription by Curatorial Assistant Alex Landry. Interview text and audio have been edited for clarity by Newcomb Curator Laura Blereau with Landry.

[Untranscribed Tunica-Biloxi language]

So, in English, my name is Elisabeth Pierite. I'm Tunica, Tunica-Biloxi. I'm Choctaw. And I'm 32 years old.

Today we're here at the powwow grounds. The powwow grounds are named after my great-grandfather, Chief Joseph Alcide Pierite Sr. And there's also a pavilion towards the front of the powwow grounds that's named after my grandfather, Joe Pierite Jr. But my parents are Michael and Donna Pierite. I grew up in New Orleans myself; so did my parents, but we moved to Marksville around 2005. We've been here since.

And so [basket-making], even though we didn't live in Marksville, that's something that we would do at home in New Orleans. At nighttime [my mother would] pull out the pine needles, the raffia. She'd, you know, give me a needle and show me how to make the beginning of the basket, what we call the foot. In the beginning it was just kind of figuring out how to just sew. You're pretty much just sewing when you're working on pine needle baskets. My mom taught me how to make them using the foot. So you wrap the pine needles with the string or the raffia that you're using and then you'll bend it over on itself and sew it to secure it to itself.

Today, there's two elder weavers that I know of, that are still actively making baskets. But through our work with the language and culture program, we're encouraging people from around my age to pick up basketry, to take an interest, to become the cultural leaders in the community. So I know other tribes [are] maybe more known for their baskets, but there's people in our community that are taking an interest and I think it'll pick up, it'll pick up

again.

Mr. Tom [Colvin], he encourages the old way of teaching. The old way of teaching is you have to know how to process your materials before you get to learn to weave. It takes a while, it took me years to build up this collection of palmetto—and to get it just so it's usable. But it helps to learn that way, because you become more independent, I guess. You're able to go out on your own. You know what to look for, you know how to work with it, how to process it. You know, weaving, I don't want to say it's the easy part, but you can weave with just about anything, any material, whether its palmetto or cane or ash...We've had workshops where we've even taught kids.

I guess one thing I think about is, especially with learning how to work with cane and palmetto, that there was like a break in the carrying on [of] traditions. And so I think about where weavers from our Tribe, where they may have gone. They probably went to the same places, the same patches, to collect materials. And working with these things, with these materials, learning how to weave--I'm picking up where they may have left off, or I'm catching up to where they left off.

The cane and palmetto, I get around the Avoyelles Parish area; and then the pine needles, I go to Kisatchie.