

Teachings of the Tree People: The Work of Bruce Miller  
Complete transcript

(water rushing)

Gerald Bruce (subiyay) Miller, Skokomish Elder: When we were kids, this tree here -- this big cottonwood? That was only the size that my little finger is now. I remember when it first started to grow. That was sort of a measurement for me of the passage of time.

Karen James, Cultural Anthropologist and Family Friend: Bruce had a real knack for being with older people. He was interested in what they had to tell him...

Vi (taqseblu) Hilbert, Upper Skagit Elder: His ancestors were all leaders and were all spiritual teachers themselves.

Barbara Brotherton, Ph.D., Curator of Native American Art, Seattle Art Museum: He says that the Tree people in essence are our grandparents, and they in their wisdom and their difficult experiences made the world a better place for us, just as Bruce and some of the elders are making for this next generation for children.

## **TEACHINGS OF THE TREE PEOPLE: The Work of Bruce Miller**

Bruce: Some of us write our names on walls. Some of us write our names on rocks in the mountains. Some of us carve our names on trees. The thing that lies inside all of us is our chance for some kind of immortality. My name is subiyay. My sense of immortality incorporates the knowledge that I want to leave behind.

When we hold on to our ancient traditional customs and language, we remain intact like a rainforest that has all kinds of things to offer. And the roots that hold us together is our knowledge and practicing the ways of our ancestral teachings.

### **spring**

Bruce: Spring is the time of rebirth. The dogwood blossoms bloom, and just by their blooming announce to us that our shellfish, our butter clams, our little neck clams are at their prime for gathering and preserving for future use. The blooming of the dogwood trees announce that all the deer and all the elk the young have been born now. They announce it's time for all the animals to move back up to the higher altitudes to partake in the things that grow there. They announce to the human beings that it's time to gather things. It's the time of gathering cedar bark.

## **“Don’t teach them all the same thing”**

(Native vocables in song)

Warren (yulout) King-George, Muckleshoot Oral Historian: Today was a special day. I got to spend the day with my uncle Bruce Miller. He was showing me the technique of harvesting Red Cedar.

Bruce: At this time I creating some cedar mats that will end up in another home for the education of the public. Mats were a common ordinary item long ago, but now are a rarity and very valued.

Warren: That one looks like it’s already been harvested, Uncle. See the scar on it? Here. Look at how they started at the base of it.

Bruce: Yeah

Warren: Old harvest?

Bruce: At least ten years ago. It takes a large quantity of prime cedar to make a mat. We like to use the bark from young trees for that. That one’s a perfect size.

Bruce: and that’s probably the last time I will participate in mat making, because it (laughing) takes so much material.

Warren: The time that we spend together, it’s always fun. It’s always entertaining, which is one of the teaching tools that he has. It’s all hands on, there’s very little books.

Warren: Be careful!

Bruce: It’s a little bit early in the season yet. And it’s not a very warm day. So changes are that the sap on the tree over there is flowing.

Warren: There’s a number of treasures that Uncle Bruce retains mentally, and unfortunately I don’t have the ability to learn them all.

Bruce: You want to try to get it here.

Warren: So I have a select few subjects that I’m interested in. Working with cedar is one of them.

Bruce: You get in there with it now?

Bruce: Don’t teach all of our children exactly the same thing. If you teach them everything all the same, they won’t need one other and the world will split apart. Within the teachings of the Tree People comes what we call Sequilaloch, the teaching of the grandmother cedar tree. With her teaching as human beings on this earth we learn patience, generosity, flexibility. We could have as a race of people given up our language completely, given up our culture, given up our oral tradition, given up our

teaching, and become part of mainstream America with no background or no history. But we chose to persevere against all the traumatic obstacles set before us as a race of people.

Warren: I consider myself a very fortunate man to be able to spend the time that I have with him. And I love him very much. I only hope that the knowledge I retain I will be able to pass along my learning to another family member that I have. I hope I can do him justice by learning what he has to offer me.

Warren: Very nice.

Bruce: Hit the road, Jack.

Warren: I got pitchy on that one. The first one I didn't get pitchy on.

(Native vocables in song)

### **“And yet some people remembered”**

Karen James: In some cases the older people stopped teaching in order to help their children survive. Children were sent off to boarding schools. Even at Skokomish there was a boarding school on the reservation that the Skokomish children were sent to. They were away from their parents, so they didn't have that kind of contact with their mothers or fathers where they were learning on a daily basis. So there was this break in knowledge.

Barbara Brotherton: This estrangement really facilitated the demise of the culture. And so Coast Salish art has really had a very long hiatus. And it is through the efforts of Bruce Miller and other people that the style that was unique and indigenous to this region is now coming forward

Vi Hilbert: He is honest. I can trust him to continue to teach the young people who come to him as students. And he will teach them well. He carries within himself a lot of discipline to carry and teach the things that are important for the culture to live.

### **“He was the one”**

Isadore “Dobie” (semtelanex) Tom, Jr., Tulalip/Upper Skagit/Lummi: (drumming and vocables)

Bruce: One of my valuable mentors is taqseblu, Vi Hilbert.

Vi: I'm the only child of Louise and Charlie Anderson who were Upper Skagit traditional people. Born in 1918, love to beat that age.

Bruce: I look forward to every time I get a chance to spend time with taqseblu.

Vi: Oh he's my pet. He is my pet. I call him that lovingly...

Bruce: Hi Fran, great to see you, another year passed by. Hi Elaine!

Vi: The moment Bruce comes in why there is a different feeling that comes into the room and let's me know, oh, subiyay, one of our best spiritual teachers has arrived.

Michael Pavel (chixApKaid) Pavel, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Higher Education, Washington State University: He took it on to teach more people how to gather, he took it on in terms of teaching people how to prepare and process the raw materials. And now there's a very successful association of Northwest weavers. But there was year after year when he was the only one making a basket, the only one gathering material. There was nobody else.

Vi: This man ignores the fact that there is anything physically disabling about his body.

Michael: You know sometimes his health is failing him. I remember one time he had a stroke. He actually lost parts of his memory, feelings and stuff like that.

Vi: We hope the Creator gives him many more years to be a teacher.

### **“A victim of erosion”**

Bruce: I was born in Skokomish, in April 23, 1944, the 15<sup>th</sup> child of my mother and father Fred Miller and Georgia Miller. I grew up in my grandparent's home in what was a traditional extended family that consisted of my maternal grandparents, a maternal granduncle, a paternal granduncle, my 14 brothers and sisters and a varying number of cousins.

Bruce: I grew up at a time when my great grandmother was still alive and lived in walking distance from my house. And during the time of the leaves changing we would go down to her house to listen to the stories of our old people.

Bruce: My aunt Emily, was who I asked if she'd show me how to make a basket. Before I was ten years old. And she says I'm not gonna show you anything until you gather me some material. And at that time you actually only had to go across from the little house she lived in and down by the marsh where she lived in to gather material. Now none grows there at all. That's how much the environment changed in the course of my adolescent years to my adult years. Some plants and things disappeared from the region. Period!

Bruce: We lost an interest in what the plant people had to say to us. We lost an interest in what the environment has to say to us. It's beginning to awaken now. We see the rainforest vanishing before our eyes. We see the water that reflected the path of life become so polluted we can't even swim in it. The environment has been trying to tell us. The air has been trying to tell us. The water has been trying to tell us. Listen to us. We see the salmon people diminish. We look in other areas of the world and see one tribe trying to kill another. One nation trying to exterminate another because

they've treated the land in such a way that it can't produce enough to feed everybody anymore. And we become a victim of erosion...

### **summer**

Bruce: Summer is broken up to many choruses, to many refrains. The time of picking beargrass, the time of picking salmonberries, the time of blackberries, the time of Indian plums. Summertime was the time of travel, it was the time of experience other activities, we traveled to distant tribes to watch to see what they did. Time to do things outside.

Marja Eloheimo, Ethnobotanist & Environmental Anthropologist, The Evergreen State College : My name is Marja Eloheimo and I've been involved with this garden since it was a dream.

Bruce: She asked me if I'd be interested in doing some work with her on studying aboriginal medicinal plants. And I said Oh, I would be. And then that year, eight years ago, maybe nine now, it became a collaborative effort with Marja's class and the Evergreen State College.

Marja: We started with the circle bed and moved, to creating a wetland, a prairie, a dye garden, cultivation gardens for vegetables.

Bruce: We decided to call it Sayuyay; Sayuyay means the medicine of the plant people

### **“The forest was our Wal-Mart”**

Bruce: Hi, I'm Bruce, it's good to see you.

Bruce: At one time everything we needed was given to us by the plant people. The forest was our Wal-Mart, it was our pharmaceutical store. Our medicine, our food, the wood we used, the dyes, the cosmetics, the medicine, the plants to beautify, they were all here, we didn't have to go to the store to buy them. Watch your step.

Bruce: We see the maidenhead fern here. The plant dried and chewed up was packed into spear wounds and stab sounds. It swells the bleeding shut so you don't bleed to death so fast. It was used for bleeding ulcers, internal bleeding. So I'll go up this way a little way. Oops

Visitor: Is Devil's Club native to this area?

Bruce: It grows all the way along the coast, I think. All the way up to Alaska down to California. We use it here for black secret society paint, the charcoal; we use it to make a tea to help lower our blood sugar. Some people use it for high blood pressure.

Bruce: This is our endocrine system section here. It covers problems with the liver, pancreas and digestive system. We're all aware of the high rate of diabetes with Native Americans. Many of us who maintain lawns are constantly in a battle to get rid of things we consider weeds. Well these weeds happened to be a very important medicine for our ancestors who had these diabetic problems.

Bruce: When I realized that I was an acute diabetic, and I experienced all the peripheral effects such as on the kidneys and on the heart, neuropathy, and circulatory problems, amputations...

Bruce: Over here we have the Cascade huckleberries. We gather those to make the tea. The medicine is called inulin. Blueberries, huckleberries and dandelions are all high in a element we call inulin that helps our bodies to process sugar.

Bruce: To this day I use plant medicines along with the insulin I take to help stabilize my system. And I firmly believe that's why I'm still here.

Marja: Of the things that is so remarkable about this garden is the way that it merges traditions. It draws upon the very specific knowledge that Bruce carries within his Twana tradition, and knowledge from Western herbalism.

Barbara Brotherton: Bruce's garden resurrects the old knowledge of plant life because not only does it teach youngsters to be good stewards of the environment, but it gives them the experience of being in nature very intimately. Getting dirty and digging plants up from the roots, and knowing how they change. And I see this as an other part of Bruce putting together this picture, that I think will eventually be a whole one.

Karen James: To me, the garden is like Bruce -- he brings in the whole world into the garden.

Bruce: My elder from Vancouver Island said, "look at the hills, what do you see?" And I said oh that was an easy answer, the forest, the trees are there. And he said well that's exactly the answer 90 percent of the people would give you. But what you see there is the oldest teaching since creation. He said it's the teaching of the Tree People. He said, you look up there and you say you see trees, but what you see is many nations of trees living side by side from the beginning of time in harmony. We were told in this teaching that we were never to infringe on the diversity of the forest. We need to respect all the things that the other races of people have contributed to this earth. Not to look for the differences but to look for the things that we have in common. This will keep the earth in harmony.

Bruce: We're going to go into my house for a minute, whoever wants to look at my little weaving I'm doing. You get to come in my secret chamber... Come on in.

Bruce: Although this is a contemporary loom, this all still has to be done by hand, stitch by stitch. I'm making a blanket for Stonington Gallery. The theme of the blanket is called cloudberry. And after I get the border about this wide, I go into the Coast Salish twill weave. This one here is St. John's Wort. It's a plant that grows out in the ditches here, you can... It don't bite, so you can handle it, rub it on your face. This is a dye made from black moss. We usually eat it and it has a mild licorice flavor. And, this

was the experimental one this season, it's with red rhododendron flowers, that's what color it came out.

Visitors: That's nice, what beautiful colors.

Bruce: We're gonna get our picture taken everybody!

Visitor: Get behind, you're too tall! I didn't realize he's so tall! (laughing)

Bruce: If I take my leg off I'm only 5'6"!

### **“Life on the outside”**

Bruce: I took a lot of things for granted in my young life, because I saw things that are now a rarity, I saw them every day. I saw baskets that had been in our family for up to eight generations, I saw dog hair and mountain goat blankets. I listened to the speech of Puget Salish and Twana without ever giving it a second thought. But all this began to disappear while I was experiencing life on the outside.

(60's music)

Bruce: I experienced life off the reservation, life in the colleges and the universities. Life in the military, I experienced life in war.

(wartime sounds)

Bruce: And I experienced drama on stage.

Ellen Stewart, Founder, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club: He knew with what to do with music. He knew with what to do with dance. He knew what to do to make a beautiful scene on the stage. He knew all these things. He was the embodiment of what we like to think theater should be.

Ellen: He was invited to join our troupe, and is a world famous company. Peter Brooke was very interested in Bruce. Bruce was here when Robert Wilson was here, he was here when Phillip Glass was here, he was here when Tom O'Houran who directed Hair for Broadway was here. Sam Shepherd, Bette Midler, Harvey Keitel. He was with his peers. He made an invaluable contribution!

Bruce: I had a fulfilling life in the Native American Theatre, in New York. I had a fulfilling life in artistic achievements. I became well known as an artist, well known as an actor, but I was not happy. Now that I was living on the outside, I saw the true value of life back here on the reservation.

Karen James: He had to make a choice I think. He had roots... he had family... he had history... he knew who he was. I'm sure that's what brought him back was this self-awareness.

Ellen Stewart: We all were very sad. But you must know as I say, he was a spiritual person and he was the spiritual leader of his tribe, and his tribe needed him to come home.

Bruce: And one day I just left, and I came back to the reservation and I've been here ever since.

### **“That’s wealth”**

Bruce: Can you get in at those? We don't need a lot like last time.

Edwin (asta cHay tLi) Poulin, Quileute: My name is Edwin Poulin. I come from La Push. After I got initiated Bruce told me that I'm gonna stay so that he could teach me. I said OK. And I haven't left yet! Today Bruce wanted to show me how to dye the cedar using the inside of the alder bark.

Bruce: That ought to be enough for what we're gonna to do today. We need to get back immediately and prepare it. Time is an all-important factor in preparing of the alder bark dye.

Edwin: The sooner that you use the inside of the alder bark the brighter red the cedar bark will turn out.

Bruce: We can see that it's beginning to take color already. Although this is what we're going to use to make orange dye today, the bark has other properties. One is a tumor medicine and the other one is a anti-streptococcal medicine. Another use of the juice of this is to neutralize the itching of mosquito bites etc. We call this potsiti thwoki , the bark of the alder tree. It means wood to cook with – and in the old longhouses alder doesn't emit sparks that fly into the air that give a great chance to the longhouse of burning down so it was the preferred cooking wood, also for the flavor.

Bruce: Now we need to get this ready. I think that needs to be split. We want to dye just the inner part.

Bruce: When I was first trained to do this part, the particular aunt I was working with was more innovative than my other grant-aunt, and I had been to a garage sale and found a second hand blender, and I asked her if she'd ever thought of grinding this up some other way she said “no, but we'll try it,” and miracle of miracles we found a new way to process alder bark.

Edwin: Today we - we're modern Indians now and we have the luxury of the blender.

Bruce: Here's our saliva substitute.

Edwin: So we blended up all the bark.

Bruce: To give it a little boost we give it liquid sun.

Edwin: And we used ammonia to bring out the color.

Bruce: And this gets the process going here.

Bruce: we get a better chemical reaction when we just use the inner layer of the bark.

Edwin: All my life I wanted a grandfather. Someone who would teach me.

Bruce: Then we strike while the sun is hot.

Edwin: Bruce has taken me by his side. And made me feel a sense of belonging.

Bruce: As soon as the sun strikes this it should start changing. Rub it on thick as you can. Now we sit and wait for the reaction of the sun and the alder juice to take place and when it's about the shade that we want it then we'll take it out of the sun and rinse it off.

Edwin: To me obtaining the culture and obtaining and learning the traditions from Bruce that's wealth. It has made me feel complete.

### **“The fragrance of the forest”**

Bruce: When I was in Vietnam we were in a base camp and they were actually cooking real turkey. And the smell of the turkey and the sage stuffing took me away from that country, away from that war, to my home. Even though it was just for a brief moment. And I remembered at that moment one of my elders saying we burn this sacred smell when we teach you so that when you smell this smell again it brings you all the experience back. It woke up that part of me about the teachings of the Tree People and the fragrance of the forest.

Elise Krohn, Certified Clinical Herbalist: My name is Elise Krohn and I'm an herbalist. Today we are making incense. This is all Northwest stuff that I've gathered. And with incense anything that is aromatic you can be use to make incense. So some of the things I would think of immediately would be resins from trees. Working with Bruce, it's such an honor.

Bruce: That's a happy one (laugh)

Elise: It really is. And I have learned so much from Bruce, because he does have such a sense of the plants here.

Bruce: What we're going to do today is make our own incense with things Elise has gathered.

Elise: One of my favorites that I just discovered, is something called Black Diamond Willow Fungus. It's a mushroom that grows on old-growth willow trees. And so I brought some and gave it to Bruce and he said, “Oh, I've been using that for centuries!” (laughter)

Bruce: This is a neutralizer for unharmonious feelings mentally aimed toward you. It was used to ward off negative thoughts.

Elise: Bruce, do you know silver sage? It has a really nice, sort of cool scent when it burns. It's calming and ah...

Bruce: Almost subtly mint-like?

Elise: Yeah, it is. Another one that I wanted to talk about is rose. This is the rose essential oil that I'll pass around and um, such a beautiful fragrance.

Bruce: As Native Americans we used the rose branch on our cradle boards to ward off things concerning the dead. Let's have fun!

Elise: Umm, this smells so good.

Bruce: I feel so useful!

(laughter)

Angel Parker: I feel like Martha Stewart!

Bruce: I'm going to name my variety, Husky.

(laughter)

Elise: That's great! Husky, the manly incense. Laughter

Susan Pavel: Oh that's a nice scent.

Elise: Yeah, it's so different.

Angel: It's light

Elise: Yeah, it is

Susan: I like that

Elise: Wow, you can really smell the sage in it.

(laughter)

Elise: What I hear Bruce saying is that there's no time. The planet is in a critical point, and we as human beings don't know how to take care of it. And I think that Bruce feels the importance of the fact that he has some knowledge that might help bring us back into balance.

Bruce: The very ancient trees played a significant part in our spiritual well-being. There might be a tree where our father, our grandfather, our great-grandfather, our great-great-grandfather would go to this tree in times of mourning, in times of turmoil, and through the spiritual embrace of that tree regain their balance. The trees remember every experience they've had since they sprouted. And they implanted this belief that these trees could remember and retain knowledge for us.

**“The trees were our first teachers”**

Michael Pavel: We're too encumbered with doubt. If we looked at the teachings of the Tree People, it would be nice if we walked out there and the tree suddenly moves its limb, embraces you, and whispers in your ear the specifics you need to understand. It's not always so direct.

Michael: I'm Michael Pavel from the Skokomish Indian Reservation . I'm one of the principal apprentices of subiyay, Bruce Miller.

Michael: I've been taught by subiyay, Bruce Miller, that communication between humans and tree people doesn't take place in the form of language, like I'm speaking now...

Bruce: My first apprentice was chixApKaid, my nephew Mike Pavel. And he was about fifteen when I struck a deal with him sort of. I said if you go to school and get a PhD, I'll give you everything I have.

Michael: Now I argue that the teachings of my ancestors as I've gained them from subiyay are as applicable now as they were at the signing of the treaty.

Michael: Currently I'm visiting faculty at Evergreen State College.

Michael: Little did I know how challenging it would be because you would have to really understand what it means to commit to two widely divergent forms of education. This is the reality. The same kind of reality that the Tree People faced when they were charged with holding the land together.

Bruce: Their teaching was that if the earth was to remain in harmony, then we would be living like the trees. A multitude of nations living side by side with a common goal: the preservation of the earth that we live on. So trees were our first teachers.

Michael: And that's just what we're trying to do, as humans, pick up on these lessons as best we can. All right, give yourself applause. We're going to take a break for a few minutes, we're going to come back, Christine is going to give us some detail. Nice job everybody.

**autumn**

Bruce: When the leaves hit the ground, to our ancient spirit it's like thunder, and that awakens that part of our spirit. It's a time of returning, a time of enjoying the harvest.

It's the time when the major schools of salmon return. Our ancestors returned back to the permanent winter villages at this time, and they celebrated with a feast.

### **“The First Foods Ceremony”**

Edwin Poulin: Well during the First Foods Ceremony you gather the four-legged, you gather the fish, you gather the berries and you gather the roots.

Kimberly Miller: We gather the huckleberries to give we give thanks. As we're cutting these we also thank the trees for it. We're not just chopping them down to chop them, we're giving thanks.

Edwin: And you honor all of those things. All of those different foods, in the first foods ceremony, to ensure that there will be an abundance, that they're not forgotten.

Kimberly: I dug this camas and it's hard hard hard hard work. This took us digging three hours I think.

Edwin: It is a lot of work! Sometimes I go to work so I can rest. I'm serious. It's late nights, canning, preparing the roots, just all sorts of different stuff that goes on. That needs to be done preparing for the winter. I'm finally getting it. Took 35 years to get it.

Kimberly: Know the most important part when you're in here? Cook with a nice clean, good heart. You can't think anything negative or bad, ever.

Bruce: We never know what's going to happen until the last minute. How much food's going to be here, how many people are going to show up.

Kimberly: We're going to start with the water.

Bruce: Good to see you!

Kimberly: So the first thing to be served is salmon. Christine you're going to dish the salmon.

Vi: the camera people are here – hi!

Kimberly: Next thing is the deer. Jackie you're going to serve the deer.

Bruce: Hi Cokie, good to see you! Get up in the goddamn seat of honor. (laughter) Oh, I meant that in a spiritual way of course.

Kimberly: The next thing is clams. Red Wolf, you're going to do clams.

Bruce: We can just get them ready.

Kimberly: Do it now?

Bruce: Yeah.

Kimberly: When you serve this, you do a little prayer, clean yourself out, only good thoughts. Because it's medicine for everybody, just like when you were cooking, same thing.

Longhouse speaker: O siem (native language)... Friends and relatives, it is a good day to be here. For the foods we are honoring here today are the foods that our family here has gathered, and have been prepared in a way for our people to make it through the winter. This day is our thanksgiving. I want to thank you for being here and honoring us with your presence. O siem.

Edwin: We need more tables!

Vi: The First Foods Ceremony is by invitation only. It's out of this world beautiful, each food is individually presented and discussed.

Barbara Brotherton: In earlier times, one of the predominant food ceremonies for the Skok people was the First Elk Ceremony. That was where the first elk of the fall season would be ritually honored. When I heard that Bruce Miller had revived a kind of first foods ceremony, I thought, this is yet another piece of this renaissance that's going on.

(singing)

Hank (kwilemqibem) Gobin, Tulalip Elder: Subiyay asked me to talk about recognizing the earth, the good earth.

Vi Hilbert: I am so grateful to subiyay that he has the capacity to learn from his own people what needs to be done to remind everyone that has been invited here the way we as the First People need to continue to try to teach our young people who are able to listen.

Neah (tsisdagwal) Martin, Swinomish Elder: When you become an elder, you should make an imprint on young peoples' lives. So if you people that are under forty, if you have somebody that will talk to you, you take the time to listen. Even if they're getting after you or correcting you, you'll listen. Because one day, that person is not going to be here.

### **“To see your teachers disappear”**

Bruce: You might wonder what it is to see all your teachers disappear. It's like a forest standing healthy. And we look at it through timelapse and there's a few trees gone. And suddenly a third of them are gone and half of them are gone until we finally see one tree left for the birds to nest in. The things that you relied on for your knowledge are simply gone. And then the realization that I've become this forest, and I'd better ensure that my experiences are passed along.

Bruce: The doctor figures I probably was a diabetic for 15 years before I was ever treated. If I had known about it I could have probably been in better health than I am now. Maybe I'm not as careful (laughing) as I should be, but it has awakened me to the importance of ensuring that I have reciprocants for what I have to share. So I may be gone but my breath is still here.

### **“The living breath”**

Bruce: We agreed to do these mats, which will belong to a public environmental center. And I thought, this is a good place for these mats to live. What could be nicer than to have some of the children, who go to this center to learn, participate in the making of these mats?

Bruce: We're going to take a piece of bark and we're going to have a couple of you split it and see how much we can actually use and how much we set aside for other projects, because we never really throw anything away.

Bruce: There's a significance that we connect with the concept of umbilical (right there is fine) that we call hihaneetin – and that's the significance of a teaching that's carried from one generation to the next by the living breath. Our human tree rings then overlap -- (Now I'm going to do this myself because if you don't do it right we lose a lot of bark) -- and connect together to carry on the continuity of these readings of time.

Bruce: See it's getting away from you a little bit, so you've got to adjust by leaning that way

Suquamish Elementary Student: It's a whole lot more work than I thought it was. I thought we just peeled the bark off the trees and then we wove it, but it's a lot more work.

Bruce: What does the bark do? It sort of slithered. And we've got to pull it over this way.

Bruce: When you have intimate participation, then you have a memory as long as you live on this earth, I was there I participated, and you take your children and grandchildren there and say “there it is. I helped with this.” What could be more meaningful than that?

### **winter**

Bruce: Our great time of holiness was the winter months. It was the time our spirit awakened. It was the time our melancholy was placated by the singing of our spirit songs. We always looked as children at the emergence of winter as “now it's time to hear all the stories.” We just hear things better in the crispness of winter.

Warren King-George: Are we in Virginia?

Taxi Driver: Yessir, the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Angel: Really. And what is this?

Taxi Driver: The Keybridge Marriot

Angel: Oh is this where we're staying.

Taxi Driver: Yup

### **Arriving for the National Heritage Fellowship Awards**

Barbara Brotherton: As a master teacher, Bruce has a number of apprentices.

Warren: I'm going to go bless the room now. (laughter)

Barbara: And these apprentices will in turn teach other people. And so I'm very optimistic about the future of Coast Salish Art especially in the Puget Sound, whereas ten years ago I was not.

Bruce: It's a beautiful thing for me to see what I consider the souls of our culture.

Karen James: His life is not an ordinary life. He fully engages with the hard parts, and incorporates them in continuing with his life. If one's still alive, then we have our life to live!

(Native song)

Master of Ceremonies: 2004 National Heritage Fellows!

Vi Hilbert: He shares. This is what makes him a good teacher in my estimation. Because he has such a huge huge amount of information that he can share for years and never run out of things to share.

Master of Ceremonies: Our next recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship, subiyay, also known by his English name of Gerald B Miller, is one of those special bearers of culture of the Skokomish people.

Karen James: Well Bruce in his teachings, helps us to become aware, what are your roots. I think people start thinking about their own history, their own family, their own place in the world. And this is something that has been lost for many people.

Bruce: A nurse log. It's a tree that's fallen. It's covered with moss, it's covered with lichens. And eventually new life evolves from this tree. As it lays there and nature changes the structure of it the children that grow from it take that knowledge and bring it back to life.

Bruce: Some of the people that I associate with ask me, “why didn’t you teach me that?”  
And I say, “Why didn’t you come to learn? Because I’ve always made it plain I’ll teach  
whoever comes to learn.”

In Loving Memory  
Gerald Bruce (subiyay) Miller  
1944-2005

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