

Nalaga Designs

Indigenous Cedar Programming

Nalaga Designs offers a unique array of cedar bark workshops that are based on land based cultural empowerment facilitation processes by Haida/Kwakwakw'wakw artist Nalaga (Avis O'Brien). Cedar bark weaving has been an integral part of the culture of the peoples of the Northwest Coast for thousands of years. Avis dedicates her days to preserving her culture by continuing the work that her ancestors started.

Nalaga's weaving workshops are a way to bring forward the positive energy and imagery from our ancestors. She respects the gifts that come from the spirit world, protects these gifts, and is dedicated to passing them on to future generations. Participants will leave the workshop with an in-depth understanding of cedar bark weaving including its spiritual, cultural, and historical importance in Northwest Coast Indigenous Cultures, as well as the technical skills to weave cedar bark and carry on our sacred tradition and practice.

Impact of workshop on participants

In Kwakwakwa'wakw culture, cedar is referred to as the tree of life. Many of our sacred teachings come from the cedar tree; there is a lot to learn from her. I intend to uplift and empower the participants of the workshop by sharing my cultural and traditional knowledge of cedar, and providing them with a better understanding of the medicine. In addition to my role in the workshop, the cedar itself will help facilitate a positive experience for participants as it has supernatural healing powers and calming properties.

My vision is to weave a dynamic cultural web of creativity, healing, and belonging for Lig-wildawx elders who attend my workshop. Many of our people have grown up disconnected from traditional teachings and culture, and I am committed to sharing with them all of the knowledge, skills, and teachings related to cedar that have been so generously

passed down to me. The only way knowledge is kept alive is if it is shared. These teachings have had such a profound impact on my life, and I know they have the ability to affect the same change in others.

Cedar Bark Hat Project

Participants will learn a great deal of important knowledge through the workshop. I create a safe, nurturing, fun and dynamic environment for elders to connect with each other and with their own creativity. I share openly about my experiences growing up as an Indigenous youth disconnected from culture and how cedar has helped me to heal from the intergenerational impacts of residential schools and colonization.

I begin each workshop with a prayer, smudge, and a song. Singing is a way to connect our hearts and spirits, and is a good way to bring positive energy into the group before we begin to weave. Weaving is a practice that requires positive thoughts and energy, so ceremony is an important first part of the workshop.

Participants will spend the first part of the workshop learning about the spiritual and cultural importance of cedar bark connected to the Indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest Coast. During this time, they will also be learning about harvesting techniques as it is important to understand where the material comes from, and what is involved in harvesting it.

We will then begin processing bark. Processing bark for an adult cedar hat takes approximately 8 hours. The finished hat will be a combination of plaiting and twining forms of weaving. Once all the bark has been processed we will move into weaving, creating a plaited cedar bark hat.

Another alternative to this is having me process all the cedar for the workshop. I charge an hourly rate of \$30 / hr to process the cedar at 8 hours per hat.

Time Allocation

- A hat making workshop will take approximately 22 hours of processing and weaving time. Each session will be 2 hours long **(8 hours processing time / 14 hours weaving time. 22 hours \ 2 hour sessions = 11 sessions)**
- A hat making workshop where I process all the bark and the participants just weave the hats will take 14 hours. **(14 hours / 2 hour sessions = 7 sessions)**