New Evidence for Coast-Plateau Basketry Connections

Kathryn Bernick, MA,

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New Room B108 Cornett Building, UVic campus.

Summary: Basketry has great potential for tracing ethnicity and cultural identity in antiquity. Fortunately it preserves in wetlands and muddy riverbanks and beaches. Over the past 60 years archaeologists working on the Northwest Coast have recovered waterlogged baskets from numerous sites. Specimens from the Coast Salish region show an underlying basic consistency of style and technique, as well as variation through time. They are recognizably coastal though not all types resemble the ethnographic record. Recent discoveries challenge that pattern. Examples of current research include plateau-style baskets from archaeological sites in the Fraser lowland, unique specimens from the Fraser delta that differ from any others but are most like ethnographic basketry on the Columbia Plateau, and “hybrid” coast-plateau baskets.

Bio: Kathryn Bernick (MA UVic) is a research associate in archaeology at the Royal BC Museum and an internationally recognized expert on basketry technology. Her experience with Northwest Coast waterlogged sites began in 1973 and led to research and publication on environmental archaeology and basketry styles and cultural identity. She has also analyzed and published basketry from sites in the Near East. Bernick’s most recent book, the edited volume “Waterlogged: Examples and Procedures for Northwest Coast Archaeologists” was published in 2019 by Washington State University Press.

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