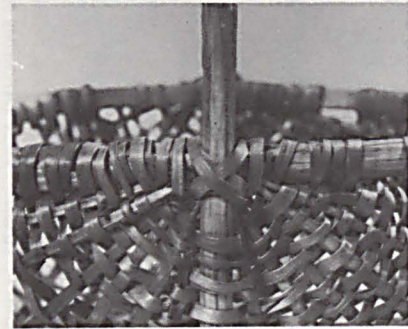
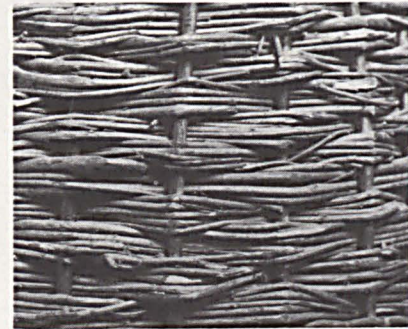


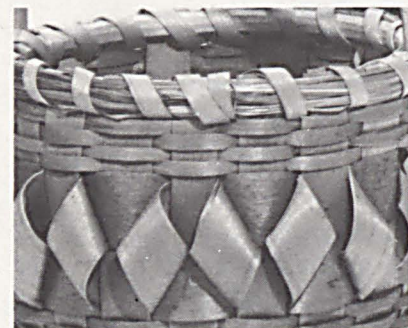
## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



LOOK FOR:  
characteristic cross at intersection  
of ribbed frame and handle



LOOK FOR:  
stake-and-strand patterns



LOOK FOR:  
chequer patterns, projecting  
twisted weaves

### BLACK TRADITION

The women use only red maple saplings to weave their sturdy ribbed baskets. The wood is halved and quartered with hunting knives or jack-knives. It is then split along the growth lines into heavier pieces for handles and rims, and into thinner ribbon-like strips for weaving. The circular handle and rim, bound together at their intersection in a characteristic cross, together with the many ribs inserted into this cross, form the framework of the Black market-basket.

Sometimes, natural dyes made from barks of alder and birch trees are used to dye the weavers (splints). At Easter time, colourful synthetic aniline dyes are used.

Women continue to sell their work at the Halifax City Market, a tradition that began soon after their families came to Nova Scotia from the southern United States in the late 1700s.

### EUROPEAN TRADITION

Settlers from Europe brought basketmaking traditions which they continued here, using materials from the surrounding woodland.

Fishermen continue to use the long, slender pliant shoots, (withes) of a variety of plants - primarily witherod, *Viburnum cassinoides*, gathered in late fall or early spring when there are no leaves.

Eel traps, garden and clamming baskets are woven with either single withes (to produce wicker, slewing or randing patterns) or double or triple withes, in a variety of patterns called twining. These withes (strands) are interwoven around a framework of sticks called "stakes". This stake-and-strand basketry style is based on the European willow tradition.

Other settlers from Europe brought various traditional skills, including coiled and braided straw techniques, that are still used in Nova Scotia today.

### MICMAC TRADITION

Men and women of the Micmac community prefer ash for making baskets, although they use maple, poplar and sweetgrass, as well.

The logs are quartered, the heartwood removed, and the wood is pounded or shaved into long, thin flexible strips, or splints, of varying widths. These strips are then woven in chequer or twill patterns.

Decorative baskets are often made from sweetgrass combined with wood strips. Other distinctive features of the Micmac tradition are projecting twisted weaves, with descriptive names like porcupine and periwinkle, and the use of colourful dyes.

Wood-splint containers were originally produced for the European market in the 1700s. Before that time Micmac used woven-reed bags and sewn birchbark containers.

There are many plants growing in the woodlands of Nova Scotia suitable for making baskets. Some of these plants have been used by the traditional weavers for centuries, while others have been recently discovered by the "new" basketmakers.

## GATHERING AND PREPARING NATURAL BASKETRY MATERIALS

REFERENCE MATERIAL
<b>BOTANICAL IDENTIFICATION BOOKS:</b> Published by the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests <i>Summer Key to the Woody Plants of Nova Scotia</i> A. E. Roland and D. A. Benson <i>Identification of Nova Scotia Woody Plants in Winter</i> James F. Donly <i>Trees of Nova Scotia, A guide to the native and exotic species</i> Gary L. Saunders <i>Shrubs for Wildlife</i>
<b>BASKETRY INFORMATION</b> published by the Nova Scotia Museum <i>Edith Clayton's Market Basket</i> Joleen Gordon <i>Handwoven Hats</i> Joleen Gordon <i>Willow Baskets, Traps and Brooms</i> Joleen Gordon <i>Eliteley: Micmac culture from 1600 AD to the present</i> Ruth Holmes Whitehead <i>Micmac Quiltwork</i> Ruth Holmes Whitehead <i>Info Sheets: Snowshoes; The Micmac; Tree Leaves; Basketry; Woven Hats</i> <i>Loan Kit: Making Baskets and Hats</i>

1290

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Education  
Nova Scotia Museum Complex

PLANT	WHEN	WHAT	PREPARATION	STYLE
<b>TRADITIONAL</b>				
Red maple <i>Acer rubra</i>	All year	Saplings 3-4' 2-3" diameter	Use green	Ribbed-frame
Ash <i>Fraxinus americana</i>	All year	Trunk, 6-8' 4-6" diameter	Use green	Splint-woven
Poplar <i>Populus tremuloides</i>	All year	Trunk, 6-8' 4-6" diameter	Use green	Splint-woven
Yellow Birch <i>Betula alleghaniensis</i>	All year	Trunk, 2-3' 3-4" diameter	Use green	Plaited
Rush <i>Juncus effusus</i>	Mid-summer	Whole shoots	Use green	Plaited
Witherod <i>Viburnum cassinoides</i>	Late fall or early spring	Stakes - lg. shoots Weavers - sm. shoots	Use green	Stake-and-strand
Cattails <i>Typha latifolia</i>	Mid-summer	Cut plants without seed head	Dry in full sun 2 weeks Dampen/wrap 1 night	Chairsseating
Rush <i>Scirpus Lacustris</i>	Mid-summer	Cut whole plant	As above	Plaited or chairsseating
<b>NON-TRADITIONAL</b>				
Tamarack <i>Larix laricina</i>	Late fall or early spring	Lg. limbs - handle rim & ribs Sm. limbs - weavers	Use green Soak in warm water	Ribbed-frame
Red Osier Dogwood <i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	Late fall or late winter	Lg. shoots - handle rim & ribs Sm. shoots - weavers	Dry outdoors 2-4 weeks Use within two weeks (fall)	Ribbed-frame
Virginia Creeper & Grapevines	Late fall	Cut runners at base	Simmer in water 2 hours & cool overnight in pot.	Ribbed-frame

### BLACK BASKET

Technique: Ribbed Frame  
Material: Maple



### EUROPEAN BASKET

Technique: Stake-and-Strand  
(vertical supports and horizontal weaving)

Material: Withes  
(shoots of pliable shrubs)



### MICMAC BASKET

Technique: Chequer weave  
Material: Ash and sweetgrass



# info

Nova Scotia Museum 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6

NOVA SCOTIAN TRADITIONS

# BASKETRY

IN NOVA SCOTIA TODAY THERE ARE  
THREE GROUPS OF TRADITIONAL BASKETMAKERS:  
BLACK, EUROPEAN AND MICMAC.

COMPARE THESE THREE BASKETS.  
IT IS EASY TO LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY THE  
TECHNIQUES, MATERIALS AND FORMS  
THAT DISTINGUISH EACH TRADITION.

NOVA SCOTIAN TRADITIONS

# BASKETRY

BLACK, EUROPEAN AND MICMAC PEOPLES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE RICHNESS AND VARIETY OF BASKETRY IN NOVA SCOTIA TODAY.

◀ Micmac women display baskets with decorative weaves. These weaves continue to be used in Nova Scotia. Note the machine-woven hats two of the women are wearing.

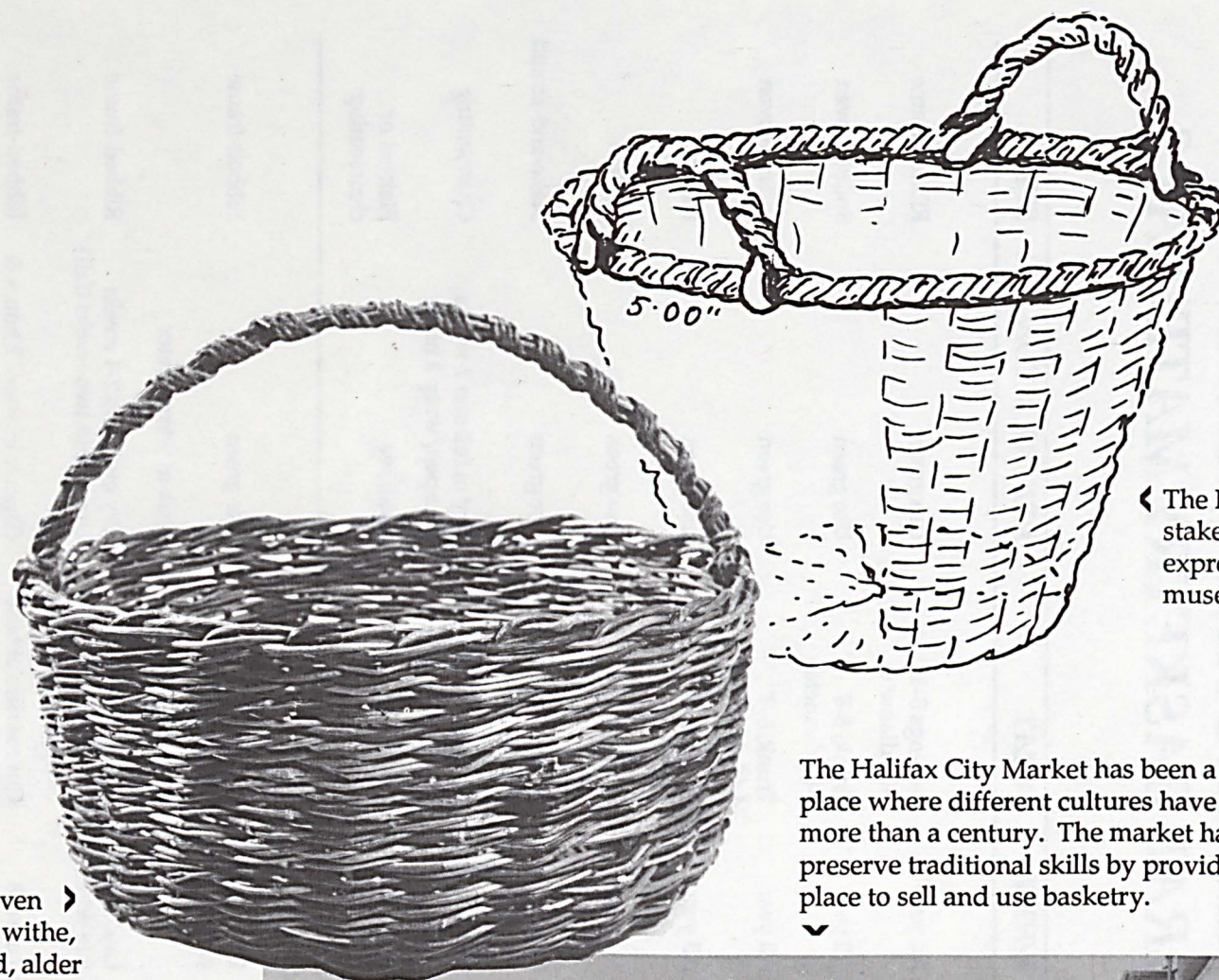
Photo by Notman, c. 1910 (Public Archives of Nova Scotia)



Micmac patterns (standard diamond, porcupine and periwinkle) can be reproduced using paper strips and colourful ribbon for festive occasions.



European baskets can be woven using any pliable woodland withe, including red osier dogwood, alder and willow. See chart on back panel.



◀ The European tradition of vertical stakes and horizontal strands is expressed in this 1934 drawing by museum curator Harry Piers.

The Halifax City Market has been a place where different cultures have met for more than a century. The market has helped preserve traditional skills by providing a place to sell and use basketry.



Photo by Notman, 1886 (Public Archives of Nova Scotia)

Black frame-baskets can be woven with several plants - red osier dogwood, tamarack or vines. See chart on back panel.



◀ Ribbed frame baskets made by Black basketmakers and sold at the Halifax City Market in the 1930s are like baskets produced within the Black community today.

A detailed record, by museum curator Harry Piers, of Black baskets bought in 1934 at the Halifax City Market. Note the characteristic cross and ribbed frame construction.

Made at Cherry Brook Settlement, Preston, N.S.; Sept., 1934; and purchased in Halifax market. Bought from the maker Mrs. James Drummond, Cherry Brook, Preston, N.S., for \$1.25 for the 4 baskets. (Average 31¢ each).

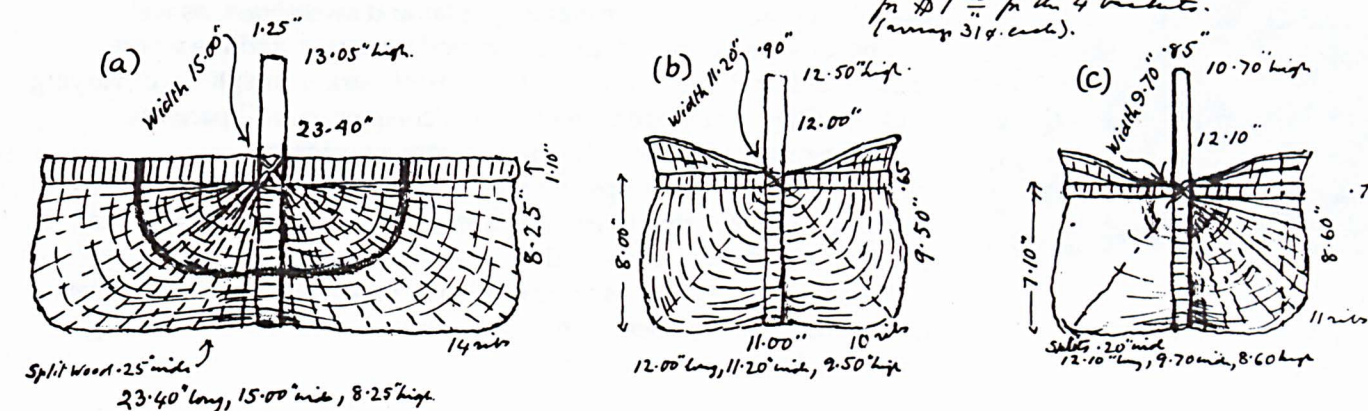


Photo by M. O. Hammond of Toronto, 1934 (Archives of Ontario)