

GALLERY



Kelly Church*



**“Beautiful and Destructive-
Circle of life-Fiberge Egg #5”
8/2015**

Black ash, copper, sweet grass, dye, velvet, and vial with Emerald ash borer inside, a EAB larvae, and a black ash seed.

This piece shows the beginning of an ash tree, the seed, and the end of ash trees, EAB, and the seed will bring it back in the future.



* Kelly Church is a member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

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**“One who wears many hats”
1/2015**

Black ash, birch bark,
sweet grass, acrylic paint,
dye.

This piece represents all of the roles basket makers take on to make a black ash basket. We have to know our forests, traditional teachings, entomology, and seasons.



**Black ash bark basket with
floral etching**

6/2012

Black ash bark, black ash trees, etching done by oxidation after etching with awl.

This basket can only be made for 6 weeks in summer months and will serve as important teaching tools for future generations to identify bark on trees to harvest; after seeds are re-planted and grow.

We weave baskets for utilitarian purposes, to make statements, and for collecting. As Basket Makers we take on many roles. We are botanists, as you have to know your environment and seasons to gather your weaving materials. We are Tradition Bearers and Culture Keepers, passing on the knowledge of making a basket from start to finish; planting seeds, selecting the right materials, processing the material into splints that will one day become the baskets you weave. We are teachers and mentors, working with the next generation to sustain the traditions for future generations. We are Artists, Activists, Mothers, Caretakers, and Basket Makers.

The baskets woven express your culture based on the materials selected to weave. The weave is dictated by the materials; grasses create coiled baskets, wood splints are plaited, barks can be twined and plaited. While we can weave out of many man made materials such as paper, film, photographs, or vinyl blinds; you miss a part of the connection to the culture that is shared and passed on with each new generation, . . . the harvest. Knowing why that plant was used, how to care for the plants, how to process them, and passing on the teachings of caring for the plants and earth as you pass on the teachings to the next generation. You miss an integral part of the basket itself by not learning why and how we harvest the materials we do.

A Basket Maker is one who knows how to harvest, process and weave baskets. A basket weaver is one who understands the weave, but does not harvest their own materials, or use traditional materials. When you have the harvesting knowledge, you can make baskets as long as there are seeds and you are not dependent on others for your materials. There are certain words in our languages that express these teachings; without the teachings being passed on, we would no longer have a need for those words. The knowledge from start to finish has a connection to other aspects of our culture. When you learn, know and pass on the teachings from seed to basket you honor your ancestors, who worked hard to keep the teachings alive, so that we could continue them today. Basket designs and their materials vary from tribe to tribe, but their importance and the teachings are valued by all.

