

# Legacy lives in hand-tanned buckskin

Like her mother and her father's mother, she is seldom far from the tannery next to the river. Spending many hours there, she turns rough, stiff hides into soft, beautiful buckskin. This is what her mother taught her to do.

But, unlike her mother and women before her, Lucinda Green spends most of her day at a job in Warm Springs, then comes home after work and really gets to work.

Besides daily chores, Lucinda busily tans hides, gathers roots and picks berries. "That's the Indian way," she says. "We should all know how to do these things."

Tanning hides, though, is her specialty. With devotion, Lucinda works on hides producing highly-valued buckskin. The tanned hides bring extra income to her household, but more than that, they bring pride. "I always feel proud of myself for learning how to do it. I can say I know how to make buckskin."

But keeping this art alive is a difficult task. Lucinda feels it is slipping away because it is not taught to the young. Some women are unable to teach their children because they don't know how it is done.

"The women that do know how to do it don't take the time to teach their kids. It's a dying thing," Lucinda explains. "A lot of kids don't even know you're tanning a hide." She adds, "Everyone will need buckskin at some time."

In an attempt to remedy this lack of knowledge in the hide tanning process, Lucinda now teaches women how to tan hides. She works with them from the time they bring their elk or deer hides to her to the time these same stiff hides become soft, pliable buckskin.

Initially, Lucinda emphasizes the tedious and long hours involved in working the hide. It must be clean, scraped thoroughly, or the effort will be fruitless. The many hours of labor and care spent on a hide will show results.

Through the steps of scraping the hide, soaking it in a brain solution and poking the hide to soften it, Lucinda guides the students, encouraging them. Even in their absence, she'll often visit the tannery to ring the hide, making certain the solution is working.

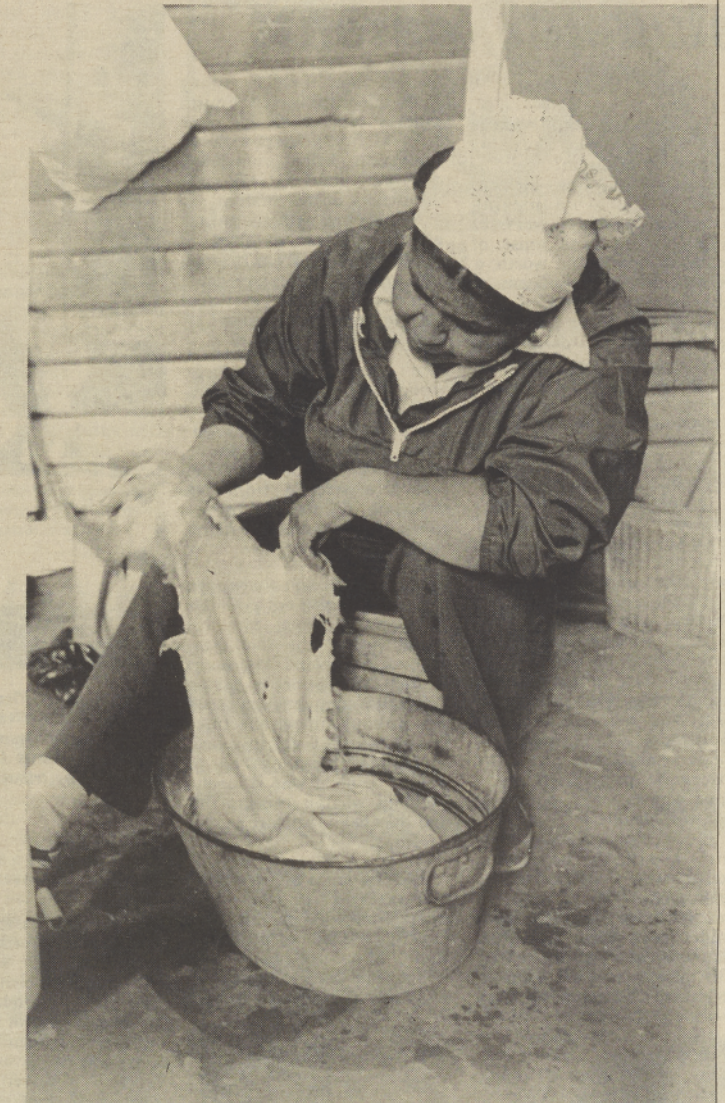
Elation is felt when the hide has been transformed into buckskin, as soft to touch as cotton. A little color from the smoke of alder chips and it's finished.

This is the Indian way of tanning hides. It is something that should be taught, Lucinda feels. "Young parents should be teaching their kids. They don't think it's important."

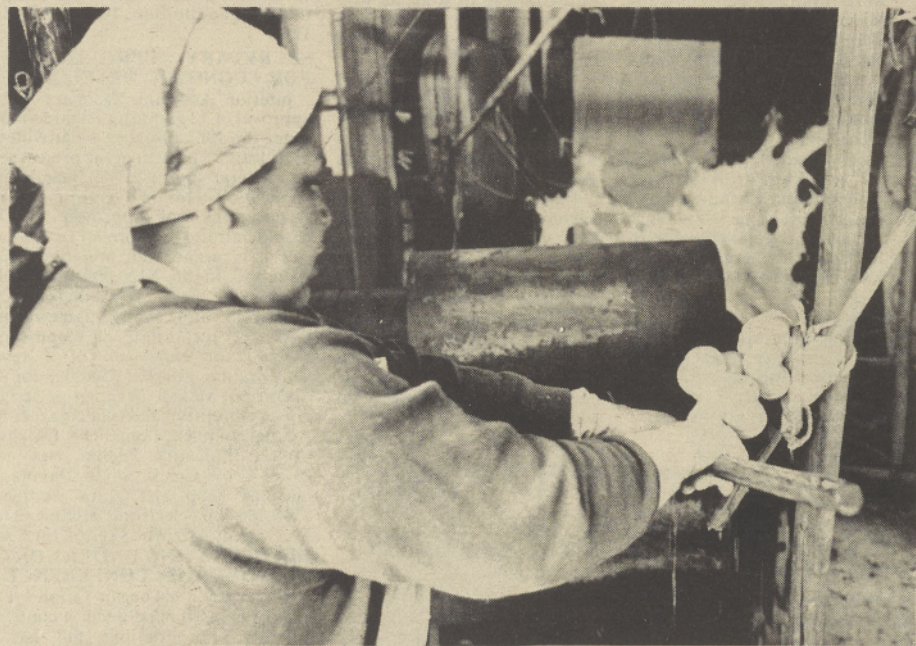
Lucinda remembers her mother sitting on the ground in the tannery tending the coals used for smoking the finished buckskin. Now she sits there in her place, recalling her mother, using the same stone and frame to soften the hides that her mother did and employing all the skills patiently taught her. She softly says, "I grew up in this tannery."



After stringing hide onto a frame, instructor Lucinda Green begins poking at it to soften and stretch it. Tanner must work hard and fast to soften hide before it dries.



Hides are soaked in a brain solution during which time it is wrung often and stretched with hands enabling the solution to work into the hide.



Wringing the hide rids it of excess moisture. Hide, then, is ready for framing.



Scraping hides is a time-consuming, arduous task but the resulting buckskin is well worth it. Cathy Eagleheart scrapes with a draw knife, careful to avoid cutting the hide. Hide is then hung to dry for a few days.



For a smoke, brown color, hot coals are deposited into a ground pit and watched continuously while the hide is draped over it in teepee fashion. The hide is removed when desired color is obtained.



Student Sabrena Boyd pulls hide from river where it has soaked and been cleaned by river action. It soaks until hair slips off easily.

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