



a natural state

Artist: Nancy Basket

Video 3: Uktena Legend

Basket: Hey, everybody, my name is Nancy Basket. My name really is Basket. I take my name from the work that I do and from a Cherokee grandma who lived a long time ago. Her name was Margaret Basket.

I do a lot of different things. I make baskets out of kudzu and pine needles. And I make the paper out of the kudzu as well.

One of my very favorite pieces right up here is the pine-needle mask, and it tells a Cherokee story.

The Cherokee story is "The Uktena," and it comes down and it burns up things. And the Cherokee don't know how to kill it. One of the people that we come from, the [indecipherable] Shawnee people, comes down and he says, "I can kill it." And he's got his arrows. He shoots at the Uktena, and the arrows don't quite get the seventh diamond until the last arrow. That shoots it, kills it, and then he lets the fire burn down. He takes the crystal from the head of the Uktena and goes back to the Cherokee town. And he wanted to live with them. So they said, "No, you're ugly. O-o-h." And one of the drops of poison that the Uktena spit landed on his head, and he found out later in a puddle that that piece of poison...the drop...had sprouted into a small Uktena. And because he was so different, they wouldn't let him come back.

This is what I call the Native Room. And up here, when I first came, I worked with some of my Cherokee friends on the reservation. I moved down here to get the pine needles that were longer and to learn the stories of respect to teach my own kids and now my grandchildren.

My kids said, "Mama, these stories are so good, why don't you go to school and tell them, too?" So that's what I've done.

The story here tells about Grandfather creating snake and how different isn't ugly or bad or right or wrong. Different is just different.

