

Excerpted Version:

*Weaving History with Integrity*

By: Rachel Bishop

Renowned Chilkat weaver, Wooshkindein Da.aat Lily Hope, ... Raven T'aḵdeintaan, was born in 1980 in Juneau, Alaska to full-time artist parents...Wooshkindein Da.aat, Lily's Tlingit name, means "walking together one behind another..." Lily grew up in Juneau and remembers watching her mother's hands constantly at work while she was encouraged to help. She would help lay out mother-of-pearl buttons, stir the dye pot, or wind yarns, and thigh-spin warp. Given her parentage, it's no surprise that Lily was destined to become one of the most renowned Chilkat weavers of her generation, but if you ask her, she will clarify that she didn't always recognize herself as a weaver.

Chilkat is a woven art form practiced by Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and other Northwest Coast peoples of the US and Canada. The Chilkat ceremonial robes are commissioned by clan leaders or given as gifts to be danced during cultural ceremonies and are coveted by museums and fine art collectors. Historically, the robes were twined on a warp of thigh-spun mountain goat wool and cedar bark, but in the present day, merino wool is used as it is easier to obtain...The designs record history that calls on ancestors when the robe is danced, the fringe swaying out from the wearer to the witnesses in threads of connection. It's a magical experience that Lily likens to "watching a child take their first steps."

Traditionally knowledge is passed from one family member to another. In the last 120 years, there have been fewer than a dozen Chilkat weavers capable of weaving full-size ceremonial regalia. Lily recalls the realization she had about her mother teaching her to weave. "I was a storyteller, actor, and teacher. My mother was the weaver. It wasn't until after her passing that I realized how sneaky she was when she was teaching me how to weave. But now I know she was always preparing me for this life and now she's on the other side of the veil guiding me on this path."

---

Rachel Bishop grew up in Georgia but found her way to Alaska in search of cooler weather and more dynamic scenery. She works part-time for the nonprofit, Juneau Jazz & Classics, and is Executive Assistant to Lily Hope. When she is not busy supporting and uplifting artists, she is writing and recording her own personal projects and enjoying all the Tongass National Rainforest has to offer with her daughter and her cat.