

Introduction by Találsamkin Siyám¹ Bill Williams

My ancestral name is Találsamkin. My English name is Bill Williams. I'm a great grandnephew of Sophie Frank. My grandmother, Monica Williams, is Sophie's sister. Their baskets are a beautiful example of the types of work that they did. Being a bit of an entrepreneur, Sophie would work diligently to make a whole bunch of baskets, different sizes, and paddle her canoe over from North Vancouver, from a place called Eslha7an; that's how Sophie ended up walking around Vancouver and meeting Emily Carr. They were the same age. The first time they met, Emily really wanted to buy one of Sophie's baskets but didn't have money at the time. Sophie didn't want to lose a sale so agreed to meet again a couple of weeks later and that's when they started talking more about how Sophie puts her work together and what Emily does as a young European-background woman. They really enjoyed each other's company and the dialogue that they had.

Sophie commented on Emily's paintings: "That's beautiful work that you do, but you can't see colour. Your green is one green. The grass is the same colour as the trees, as the bushes. Let's go to this place over here." "Over here" was a place called Stanley Park. They went to the same place on three different occasions — once at sunrise, another time at noon, and another time close to sunset. They looked at the same bushes and at the same trees and at the same grass. This is how Sophie showed Emily that when you look at nature, it isn't one colour. It's multi-coloured and in different hues, and depending on what kind of day it is, it carries a different life to it. It isn't just an inanimate object. It's something that is living.

Emily showed Sophie that she wanted to learn more about the Indigenous culture but more particularly Skwxwú7mesh culture. Tumuth, for example, is a red ochre that Sophie was using. She told Emily, "This ochre is to let the ancestors know that we're praying to them for help and support to be able to do the things that we're doing." What Emily got in her mind was that she was struggling as a painter, not really selling a lot of her paintings. So she asked Sophie for some of this tumuth and covered her paintbrushes with it to have the help and support [of the ancestors], to be able to do things in a cultural way. That tells me that Emily had some belief of the culture and the passing of the culture from Sophie to Emily in a very deep way. Most non-Native people wouldn't even want to go there at the time... but their friendship was so strong, in such a good way, that it was automatically accepted.²

¹ "Tálálsamkin" is Bill Williams' Skwxwú7mesh snichim name, while "Siyám" translates to "Chief" in English.

² Edited and condensed transcript of an audio-recorded conversation between Találsamkin Siyám Bill Williams and Ashlee Conery, February 3, 2020. You can listen to an extended conversation on the exhibition page for *lineages and land bases* on the Vancouver Art Gallery's website or on their Soundcloud account.