



Christy Ruby (below) designs modern contemporary pieces with the fur that she hunts herself.



FASHION STORY

Working with Fur, according to Christy Ruby

In this issue, not only did we want to feature a photo collage of our favorite fur pieces and accessories, we want to put a spotlight on an indigenous artist who worked with fur on a daily basis: meet **Christy Ruby**.

For Christy Ruby, her work with fur takes her back to her ancestral roots. "The fur has a familiar sensation that means life or death to my people, and its value has not changed for thousands of years." Ruby introduces herself as an Alaskan Native Tlingit Eagle from the Keet Gooshi Hit House, Killer Whale Dorsal Fin. She was born in Haines, Alaska and refers to herself of having "a tough pioneer mix," being French Canadian and Tlingit. "Utilizing the skills taught to us from the past will ensure we will never go hungry and we can always clothe ourselves," explains Ruby. But Native Alaskans didn't just hunt; they strove for individual expression in the creation of beautiful clan art. "It's with this sentimental pallet that I create modern looks with glimpses from the past." Ruby's creations were inspired by skills passed down to her by her grandfather, who was a very talented man from Klukwan who carved totem poles and toured the world as a Chilkat dancer. "I strive to be as proud of my work as I am of my heritage."

She's lived in Alaska her whole life, so, best believe that she loves all types of fishing and hunting. Ruby mainly hunts harbor seal and only take a few sea otter once a year. According to Ruby, there are no limits on the take of either of these mammals as their populations are flourishing in southeast Alaska. However, the only requirement for

hunting them is a hunter has to be at least $\frac{1}{4}$ Alaskan Native and live on the coastline of Alaska. "I use a 22-250 and reload my ammo to take all my game, including deer" Ruby explains.

When Ruby hunts, she salvages some of the seal meat and fat and donates it to several groups of elders who can't get the seal on their own. "It has the flavor of the ocean and is very dark, oily and rich in omega fatty acids," she says of the seal's flavor. As for the animals' hides, Ruby makes the beautiful contemporary fashion of the highest quality and craftsmanship. Her design collection is as diverse as the color of hides she works with, and consists of outerwear such as mittens, neck warmers, and hats; Ruby also makes sea otter teddy bears and jewelry adorned with seal claws.

It's also worth noting that Ruby's work is award-winning. Her pieces have been awarded first, second and third place ribbons at various Native Art Markets and Fairs across Indian Country. No matter where her travels take her, Ruby is always happy to display her work and share the stories of her heritage with everyone.

Ruby is indeed a well-rounded, multi-talented individual. Her talents consist of multimedia arts such as graphic designing and marketing. She's also an avid gardener and raises chickens outside her home.



Shop pieces from Ruby's collections at her Etsy store at [ETSY.COM/PEOPLE/INDIGENOUSALASKA](https://www.etsy.com/people/indigenoualaska).

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