

Project: Elders Warning

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KT: Katie Turner

TT: Troy Turner

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:29:06

KT: My name is Katie Turner. I'm sitting here in Holy Cross with Troy Turner. Where did you grow up, and what year were you born?

TT: I grew up in Holy Cross, and I was born in November 1972.

KT: Did you grow up fishing or participating in fish camp?

TT: Yes, I did.

00:00:29:08 - 00:00:57:16

KT: How was fish camp changed from when you were growing up?

TT: It changed a lot from when I was a kid to now. Nowadays, kids don't go to fish camp or know what fish camp is, what I see anyway. And when I grew up, it was mandatory to go to fish camp for the summer to help cut fish or help with fishing.

00:00:57:18 - 00:01:26:24

KT: Who taught you how to fish and who did you usually go with when you went out?

TT: My dad taught me how to fish and my grandpa, the late Harry Turner, taught me how to fish. And that's who I spent time at fish camp with.

KT: Who do you usually bring when you go out?

TT: Bring my wife or

00:01:26:24 - 00:02:00:27

TT: And my kids, if they're, if they want to go. But mainly my wife goes with me.

KT: Where did you fish?

TT: As a kid, I grew up fishing in Paimuit with my grandparents. And after that, I just continued with my dad and mom and, fish and Paimuit. And then I fish out both, through about three miles.

00:02:00:27 - 00:02:15:18

TT: Four miles above Holy Cross and Victor's. I started fishing up there, but I'd have net set in pine mute, about 38 miles down, and then.

00:02:15:20 - 00:02:43:28

KT: How do you know where to set net or toss a drift net?

TT: I was taught by my dad and grandpa to find an eddy and watch the currents, to see where the eddy is and that's where you want to set your net to where the current because the fish, or the way I was taught to fish will try to rest in the currents.

00:02:44:01 - 00:03:14:25

KT: Is that the same for silver?

TT: Yes.

KT: Are there any environmental factors that let you know that the fish are close by or on their way?

TT: Yeah. People will call. No. Yeah. There's some you always know when there's, like with the cotton there. They say. The elders say like, the cotton starts, you know, flying. I don't know what the plants called, but the fireweed.

00:03:14:25 - 00:03:49:16

TT: I guess if cotton is flying, then the fish are getting close or they're here.

KT: From your experience, how is the regulation and management of salmon changed in the area?

TT: Bad. Done. Gone. Yeah. It's from when I was a kid to now, fishing was really good when I was a kid. And now it's. I don't think I would even be able to bring my grandkids out fishing.

00:03:49:18 - 00:04:01:08

TT: It's so bad. It is now. They were. We've been shut down for the last two years now to, do any kind of fishing.

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KT: What's your favorite way to eat or prepare salmon?

TT: Cooked? You know, we smoke them in the smokehouse. Brine them, smoke them. You know, you got different one strips, splits. And, if we're fishing, I like to cook them on the, in the smokehouse over the fire. And the smoke on the fire.

00:04:33:24 - 00:05:07:01

KT: What does salmon mean to you?

TT: Means a lot now, since we don't have it. And a couple, you know, in the last ten years since, you know, salmon means for me and my kid, my family feeding my kids and after they moved away, trying to feed them and their families, it means a lot. I mean, that salmon, you know, is for the, to survive during the winter.

00:05:07:02 - 00:05:32:25

TT: Now, we don't have it, you know, it's hard. We're, you know, we haven't had like I said earlier, we didn't have fishing for the last two years, and now we're getting fish from the Kuskokwim from other family members, and it's not the same as Yukon fish. You know we're not used to the Kuskokwim fish because there's no oil in them.

00:05:32:28 - 00:06:00:15

TT: And Yukon fish have a lot of oil and it's and that's the way you know, it's what I think anyway.

KT: Do you notice a difference in how you feel when you're unable to harvest salmon?

TT: Yes. Well, I feel or personally I feel is you know, it's a wasted summer. You know, you're not because every year you're doing, you know, you do the same routine.

00:06:00:15 - 00:06:15:17

TT: You get your wood, you get prepared and in these last two years, it's just been summer. It's just, you know, it's just boring.

00:06:15:19 - 00:06:46:14

KT: How do you feel about these current runs?

TT: What? What runs? We don't have any runs.

KT: Do you remember when salmon runs were beginning to become concerning as far as population? The size of the fish? Disease?

TT: Yeah, it's been about. My wife probably knows the question better than me, but I believe it's been the last.

00:06:46:16 - 00:07:24:02

TT: I don't know, ten years, maybe seven years. It, pus pockets and the fish are getting smaller, you know, and the runs are getting smaller and it's just in the last couple years, the fish are really small, and it's just, you know, there's just they're different. The way I see it, it's not the same as maybe 20 years ago when the fish were, you know, three feet.

00:07:24:05 - 00:08:00:25

TT: And nowadays we're catching little, you know, 20 pound, 30 pound, you know, fish like that. But yeah, I noticed the difference with the pus pockets and the color of the meat and stuff are different.

KT: Is there less oil now on them too?

TT: Yes. They don't they don't drip as as much or hard as they used to. We used to be able to put cardboard down to catch the oil or something down, catch the oil.

00:08:00:27 - 00:08:41:09

TT: And now they just barely they barely drip.

KT: How did community members and elders respond to this change?

TT: Well, it affected all the community because nobody can fish and what I think they should have done was they should instead of shutting us down completely, they should have regulated every, every household that, that fish is to, to instead of letting us go free for all, they should just let them regulate 50 fish of each house, and then you're done.

00:08:41:12 - 00:09:01:16

TT: And that would have been. That probably would have helped with, you know, the way we are now, because the whole Yukon can't fish now. They should have done that. But there's always going to be somebody that's going to go out there and want to get more than they should.

00:09:01:18 - 00:09:32:19

KT: Did you need a change where you traditionally fish in order to get salmon?

TT: Yes. I used to set nets all the time and now it's we have to we have to go to drifting. You know, where I used to be able to set a net and catch 30 kings. Now I got it, you know, I catch 1 or 2 fish in the eddies.

00:09:32:21 - 00:09:40:17

TT: Now I have to move out to the to drift. To drift all night, to catch 30 fish.

00:09:40:20 - 00:10:08:10

KT: Did your elders give you any warnings about salmon or advice on how to behave around them?

TT: Not really, I guess. I don't know, I can't remember, but, you know, my grandpa and them used to tell us, you know, don't throw your fish. You know, because you're bruised meat, you know, you're wasting. But, you know, we

00:10:08:12 - 00:10:28:15

TT: When I was younger, we'd have, I don't know if it's tradition, but, you know, it gave us. It was, I guess, the way I grew up and it was it gave us luck. I don't know if it was superstitious or, but the first king salmon we caught, you know, the first one of the year, would shoot to let everybody know.

00:10:28:19 - 00:10:56:13

TT: You know, we got caught a king and that would let everybody in Paimuit, you'd know, hey, you know, the fish are hitting and I don't shoot no more. But, you know, as soon as I, you know, as soon as I catch. Well, if I'm Paimuit, I will, because I know that there's, you know, the family's down there, and I let them know in the graveyard there.

00:10:56:13 - 00:11:14:20

TT: Hey, I got one, you know, and but other than that, no, I don't do that tradition anymore. But it's just I don't know that the traditions are slowly going away. And everybody's just, you know, free for all.

00:11:14:22 - 00:11:36:17

KT: Do you have any warnings or advice for us about salmon?

TT: You know, any fish? No. Not really. I don't really have I don't know, it's just we got to regulate, do some regulations to where, you know, it's going to let us fish.

00:11:36:19 - 00:11:47:08

KT: Would you mind sharing one of your favorite fishing stories?

TT: Jesus.

00:11:47:10 - 00:11:55:01

TT: I don't know, there's quite a bit of them.

00:11:55:03 - 00:12:04:10

TT: I can't think of anything right now. I should have been thinking about it earlier.

00:12:04:12 - 00:12:39:04

TT: There's one story that I keep thinking about is my me and my mom and my dad. Before he passed, we went out fishing for silvers, and my dad told me. You know, we'll make a ten minute drift, and we're done. Okay? We're fishing for silvers, so it's okay. Me, him and my mom went

out, made a ten minute drift, and I'll never make a ten minute drift again.

00:12:39:04 - 00:13:03:13

TT: I told them we caught more fish than we even knew what to do with. The boat was chock full. We had maybe three inch freeboard. I was throwing live fish back into the river and he kept saying, look, you know, people gotta eat and he told me when we landed, you know, called, get on it, go to the house call.

00:13:03:15 - 00:13:40:21

TT: And we gave fish to people that can't go out or don't fish. You know, we just, we just had them come down because they, you know, we had more than what we wanted. But yeah, there's I got all kinds of stories that I grew up fishing and Paimuit when I was a kid, my grandpa would send me out in old set net, would set about three nets and we'd go with my uncles or stuff like that and check nets.

00:13:40:23 - 00:14:18:10

TT: And it been and I, you know, I didn't know when people can hear us good over the water and I'm about them not not 'bout maybe 500 yards away and I'm cussing, swearing and you know, I'm only 14 years old, you know, swearing about all this fishing. I went back to fish camp. My grandparents heard everything I said about sitting down here wasting my whole summer fishing and yeah, it was it wasn't very good after that.

00:14:18:12 - 00:14:43:20

TT: But yeah, bringing my kids out, you know, learning from them and bringing my kids out fishing, it got to a point where my kids wouldn't go fishing with me because I'd yell and holler and swear and, you know, because it has to be my way or the highway and after I got married and stuff, my wife, you know, kind of calmed everything down.

00:14:43:20 - 00:15:11:21

TT: Then we'd go out fishing. But I love, you know, I love to go fishing with my kids. And right now, my daughter, the only one that lives here with, in the village with us. She's my, she's my fisherwoman, you know, and she loves to go out. But every time I have my kids back here, I'd love to bring them out fishing and just, you know, just to see the smiles on their faces when we're pulling in the King, you know.

00:15:11:21 - 00:15:52:13

TT: And that was, you know, that's the thing I really miss is being out there with my kids. You know, my kids moved away and they're going to school and stuff like that and I don't really I don't really, like to go out anymore because it's just I don't know it. I mean, I, you know, it's like, I have to do it, but when I have, you know, when I have my kids there, you know, that's what I really miss is watching my daughters and my son, you know, pulling net, you know, it's a lot of work.

00:15:52:13 - 00:16:27:13

TT: But when they're fighting the fish to bring it in, you know, it's kind of fun watching them trying to pull that little fish over the boat. You know, my boat.

KT: What values do you think that you try to pass on to your kids through fishing?

TT: Geez, I'd say patience, but I don't, you know, none of my kids have the patience like their mom, you know, basically, I think my kids are like me.

00:16:27:13 - 00:16:57:18

TT: But main thing is patience and just the will to go out and do it, because a lot of the kids I see nowadays, they don't want to do it. You know, they got their games and their phones and drugs, you know, and it's nowadays the kids, you know, they don't want to go out and sit there and learn how to set a net, check a net. We had,

00:16:57:21 - 00:17:28:10

TT: We had a teacher here one time that I bring out and we set net for the kids, and the kids really liked it, you know, from the school to go fish silvers and stuff. They had a blast. The kids that never did it before. And they come back and, you know, they'd go out and they dominate, have stories to tell about what they caught, you know, and they're all excited and full of slime and soaking wet

00:17:28:10 - 00:17:58:04

TT: But they didn't care but that's the thing I really want my kids to take away from, you know, fishing with me is, you know, don't let shit go up, don't let stuff go for granted, you know, because one day it's going to be gone and it's, you know, it's gone. I mean, fishing is gone now and that's the thing I really love to do with my kids was go out fishing.

00:17:58:06 - 00:18:24:03

TT: And my kids, they did, you know, they did a lot of work in fish camp when we started our own fish camp. You know, they pack fish, they wash fish, they hang fish and they're right now they're between 20 something and 30 years old and they're, you know, my oldest girls are and my youngest girl is finally starting to try to cut fish.

00:18:24:05 - 00:18:34:16

TT: You know. But before they, they wouldn't they never used to because their mom was too greedy.

00:18:34:19 - 00:19:04:19

TT: But they loved you know, my kids love to be at fish camp and cut fish. And that's what I miss, is just, How can I say it? The family being together, having fun, laughing and talking in the smokehouse. But nowadays, you know, you don't see that in a more. It's just you, you know, you gotta holler at the kids just to get them to.

00:19:04:22 - 00:19:36:29

TT: If they want to go, you know? But a lot of kids didn't grow up fishing don't go out but the kids that did grow up fishing and knowing the value of the hard work they do and they eat all, all winter, they know, you know, they know what they're doing, what they what they lost now.

KT: Do you think there's cultural connections with fishing?

00:19:37:02 - 00:20:06:23

TT: Yes, I do, I think fishing, you know, the fish camp I think is my experience with it, with my family is it brought our family closer and traditional wise. You know, my kids do the hard work of we got to cut wood, we got to get wood, you know, we got to keep fire. We got to keep the animals away.

00:20:06:25 - 00:20:43:22

TT: You know, and the traditions of the way I, the way I grew up and their mom grew up fishing, you know, and that's, you know, that's what I think for me is their traditional way of being out in fish camp with no cell service, no TV, you know, and just a radio. Just listen to the radio. And nowadays the kids ain't going to get they ain't going to go to fish camp unless they have a DVD player or TV.

00:20:43:24 - 00:21:12:20

TT: You know, they got to have some kind of gaming system, generator. I mean, I can lie, I had a generator, my grandpa got me a generator so I can bring a VCR and a little 24 inch TV to fish camp so I can watch VCR movies because, you know, after, you know, after a while, it gets pretty boring being in fish camp.

00:21:12:23 - 00:21:18:26

KT: Do you have any other thoughts on taking care of salmon?

00:21:19:29 - 00:21:55:19

TT: What do you mean about

KT: Like, respecting them, preserving them.

TT: We got to stop them. We got to stop them, and, trolling and the bycatch of all these other big fisheries out there in the ocean. That's not letting our you know, not letting the fish come back.

And, you know, I mean, yeah, fish is money, but, you know, we got, you know, the native peoples got to eat too and it's that's what I'm, you know, that's right.

00:21:55:19 - 00:22:23:04

TT: I look is the bycatch and big fisheries out there where they making all their money. You know, they got to do something about that instead of letting the native people, you know, cut us off stone cold. You know, it's just it's not right for them to make money off of king salmon, where I'm going to feed my family for the winter, you know, like Jesus did.

00:22:23:04 - 00:22:35:15

TT: I can take a piece of fish and feed my family. You know, nowadays ain't no fish. Jesus. Never come around.

00:22:35:17 - 00:23:03:06

KT: All right. That was my last question. Thank you so much for your time.

TT: Okay. I can sit here and tell you more stories if you want.

KT: Okay

TT: But I lie. No. Yeah. We're good, but yeah, fishing is gone. And that's the hard part about it is, you know, I can't. My kids don't want to come home for fishing and bring, you know, their spouses and stuff.

00:23:03:06 - 00:23:10:01

TT: And we just can't. We just can't go out anymore and just go have fun and just, you know,
fish.