

ANS 401 Knowledge of Native Elders
Elder-In-Residence: Madeline Solomon
October 21, 1986 by M. Esai

Today started out by a student asking, "Were certain beadwork designs owed by families or clans?" Madeline said that designs weren't owed they were created by the person or copied from books.

Before the coming of the missionaries Medicine People were highly respected. They were believed to have the power to heal, bring back game, and sometimes give people bad luck. If a person needed help they asked the medicine man or woman, and to pay them for their service they were given something valuable like guns, parka's, or whatever they have.

A student asked, "Where did medicine people get their power?" Madeline's answer was, "That's the way God made them. Because a long time ago when Jesus was on earth he used heal people, and then he gave his power to his Disciples to heal his people, and maybe it went on from there because there were no doctors and ever since we started having doctors there aren't anymore medicine people."

Another student asked, "Did medicine people fight over power?" Eliza answered, "Yes, I heard that one of the reasons why there aren't anymore medicine people is because they started fighting among each other and something came over and took their powers away." Madeline added on, "I

heard it went outside (lower 48) that's why there are many medicine people down there and none in Alaska."

Madeline and Eliza told us a little about medicine man, Redshirt, who use to live in the Koyukuk area. He was a rich man with five wives and lots of children. This shaman position is said to carry on in families, like one of Redshirt's son's was one of the last known shaman on the Koyukuk river.

In the old days polygamy was practiced. Although polyandry was practiced it was more common for men to have more than one spouse (polygyny). The men were usually rich shaman's.

Traditionally when sleds and snowshoes were new they were pushed towards where the sunsets for goodluck. If either brought bad luck they were thrown away.

Also when fishnets were new they weren't put in the water until there were lots of fish. Because if you put the net in for the first time and don't catch any fish it's thought that the net will never be any good. If you catch a lot of fish the first time around its good luck if not it's bad luck.

When people were out hunting or trapping they didn't exchange caps or gloves because it's bad luck. You probably won't catch anything. To get rid of bad luck it would take time. For good luck you must always show respect for the animals you catch. Don't brag about what you catch.