

March
April

ANS 401 Cultural Knowledge of Native Elders.

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Summary: Margaret Eskilida

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Margaret Eskilida is from Chitna on the Copper River, which is 130 miles from Cordova. This area is of the Ahtna Athabascan people. She has three children. Most of Margaret's time is spent at a camp behind the Wrangell Mountains. They used to live in a canvas tent.

FOOD: Any plants that a bear eats a human can eat also. Food is obtained by hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering.

- Rosehips are a major source of vitamins.
- Kinnikinnik are dry, hard orange berries these can be added to soup.
- Tsos is a wild potato or carrot this is a root that grows on the sand bar. They are picked in the fall just before freeze-up or early spring.
- Sheep is the main diet. Also hunted for was caribou, moose, and bear if no other meat was available.

FOOD STORAGE: Berries were traditionally stored in birch baskets and put in a cache. The cache is at a high level so wind can go around the cache, this keeps the cache cool.

- Rosehips are stored in grease, this prevents the berries from drying.
- The underground cache or freezer is a hole about four feet deep or where they hit ice. Once the ice is reached logs are layed down for flooring. The walls may be lined with

birch. Then the place is covered with logs, birch bark and dirt. A ladder is used to get to the freezer. The freezer should be in the shade. (Really cold!)

- Salmon bellies were put in salt barrels this is a form of preserving.

CHIEFS: All people of the Chitna area would listen to their chief. Today there is no chief.

MEDICINE MEN: Medicine men would dance around fire or a sick person in the direction of the sun. They usually sang songs during the night unless someone was sick and needed help. People of the Koyukuk River have a story about the last medicine men. The power of the medicine men was taken away because they fought against each other.

MEDICINE: Ts'eskena' is a plant stem like rock that grows on the mountain. This plant is dried and when it is needed it is put in water. This stem can heal arthritis by rubbing the plant on the area that is needed. Margaret's brother drank the juice for an ulcer and almost died. He used a small spoon diluted in water. Everything turned dark and he went to his room to sleep a long time. When he woke up the pain was gone. Margaret said she would not drink it.

- Spruce Pitch is used for cuts. The pitch found in the woods is the best.

- Stinkweed is boiled and can be drunk. It is helpful for an ulcer and arthritis. These weeds grow all over and smell. It is also used for a skin conditioner.

TECHNOLOGY: Birch was used for many things because it was a strong wood that doesn't split. Bow and arrow, containers for food, snow shoes, shovel, etc. These were all made for birch.

- A stove was made out of tin.
- Dip nets were made out of spruce roots.
- For sewing a tse awl was used. This is a handle with a needle, it pokes holes through the skins or any other material that needs to be sewn.
- Knives (semi lunar) were made of copper from the Kinnicut Mine.
- Used fish traps to catch barbot/lush, trout. Salmon from the Copper River.

COOKING: Boil, put in "ahes", things were cooked in birch bark or spruce. Meat is folded in bark and sewn. It is then place in a hole near the fire. Traditionally, heated rocks were used to boil food by throwing them into the pot with the food in it.