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[side one]

Margaret Eskilida [ME]: I bring this book here. It's a story book. An old time story book. That means lots to our Native kids. What we call the [Athabascan word spoken]. Means not to talk back, or not to do things bad. That one word is really big word to us.

Eliza Jones [EJ]: [repeats Athabascan word]?

ME: Yeah, [repeats Athabascan word]. My sister-in-law and her husband just been wrote this story here. Something like, there are two kids here in the book. They wished the cloud turn into gold. And they got bow and arrow, and they play hunting. And they [inaudible], and this boy thought that was gold in that woods. And he went in that woods and got lost. His dog with him. And they go, just go. He go around with that dog. Go around. He couldn't find his way. Now this what boy we call [repeats Athabascan word]. That's bad wish. He wished that cloud turn into--make him lost. Another thing too, that they play with fish or, what do you call them, frog?

EJ: [gives Athabascan word], uh huh.

ME: Yeah, them things too. What did you call it?

EJ: [repeats Athabascan word].

ME: [repeats Athabascan word]. They play with that, too. That

makes them drown. Cause all the trouble. [gives Athabascan word] is a big thing. How we find out who--you know, kids don't pay attention lots of time. If we tell them, "Just don't do that, don't do that," they're not supposed to do it. And they don't listen. They do it anyway, until we say [repeats Athabascan word]. Everybody stops right there. So that's a big word. It's a big word for a Native. We teach that to kids lots. Everything that is [repeats Athabascan word]. I think that's really helped them children to behave and, you know, not to do lots--like a tribe we got, they don't do bad marriage. That's [gives Athabascan word] too. Of who they don't know, you know, those strange come? That's not right to do it. Those are the things I teach kids down there. I got about eleven or twelve kids I teach all the time.

This is good story that--that boy, lost. He keep on going and going, and he couldn't find food. He got lost. And he finally let that dog go. He's not tied up. He just let him go. One morning he sleep, and that dog went somewhere and caught a fish. He brought a fish to his master. And he cooked that fish on the fire and eat. And then he think, you know, "How am I going to get that dog to lead me?" he think. And next morning--that night he paint the Indian paint they always had in little bag. Everybody used to carry that red paint. And he got that, and he painted the dog's foot. All four feet he painted. And he went to bed. The dog went to bed; sleep too. Next morning, early, that dog already been fish. Got fish. Then he tracked it, and pretty soon the paint wear out. And he sleep again. Then, that night, he paint it again when it stay. It lead him to the creek, river, where that fish is. Then he stayed there for a while, maybe couple of days. Then he went down to--he don't know where to go. He follow that stream. Go down that river. He find some people down there. The old, old

village he find. Most of the house got nobody in it. But one house looks like somebody move in. They stay in there. So he go in there and stay. Nobody around. Later on, he hear noise. He went out again, and he see that boat coming. Then he know there's people around, so he just wait. And he hide in that steam bath [that] was next to house. Old time house. Right against that building they used to have it. Because they used it for sleeping, too, in there. Really warm house. He was in there, and that kids come up. They run up to the house, two boys. And they say, "We going to go up to the house." They run, and then somebody in the house make noise in that sweat bath room in there. Them boys got scared and run back. They say, "Somebody in the house!" And the father got mad and went up. I don't know whose dad, he say, "I'm going to kill him." He went up, and he got his hair and pull him out that door, and he was going to kill him. Then his wife start hollering, "Don't kill him!" Say, "We need help. We'll make him slave for us." Them boys don't like him but they still--they scare him. They don't like him. But they save his life.

EJ: He was a stranger?

ME: Yeah, he stranger. He was this lost boy. And then he-- every time they come go hunting, he stay there. And when they come, he help, you know, bring meat up and all their stuff. He done lot of help. Finally, he went some little road. They say not to go there, but he went down to that little trail, you know. Why they don't want him to go. Somebody there met him. He say, "I can show you where. You look like you want to go home. I know where you home," he say. "You have to make three boats. Three little boats put together inside. In one fit in another. And you get some." "How I going to go," he say. "I got no help." "You can

get you some people. I know somebody can help you," he say. So he makes boats and they don't know, them other people. He kill that man, though, that man that was going to kill him. Later on he kill him. He kick around everybody he don't like. And finally, he went back. He got that boat, and the little woman show him how to go and what help he gets for him. He went down in that boat. Two helper he got. And he told them, "You got to go through three falls down, all the way down, different places. If you fall, one fall you went down, that one boat going to broke. Then you come to other one, and another one going to broke. And then to last one you go, when you went down," he say, "Don't just get out, and you better shut you eye every time, you know, fall." "Down there," he say, "you get some kind of a tree, you wheel around, you get grab a hold of something before you open your eyes," he say. When they went down to that last one he did, he go find a tree. And he just stayed there for a while, shut his eyes. Then he opened his eyes, recognized where they cut wood and everything, by that water where they get water. And later on he just stayed there. His brother comes. But he don't know who he was, he'd been gone so long. He went and tell his mother, say, "My brother, I think my brother up there." She tell him, "Don't talk about him, he's gone. He died." And he make--he tell his mama, "You go up and see him." He went up see him. It was him. He grew up, too, by that time, you know. He get bigger. Then he come back. Just somehow he--this means to kids, you know, teach kids how to go by when they go get lost and, you know, it teach us.

Story like this they used to tell us. There's so many stories they tell us. In the evening time, winter time, you know, like nothing to do outdoor after all play. When that's the best time to tell stories. Summer time we don't get [gives Athabascan word].

Summer time tell stories. They got work to do then before. So that's what the [gives Athabascan word] is. That lots of things can happen.

EJ: So that boy came home to his family.

ME: His family. He make it back by himself. And that dog, I guess he lost it, so many years. I thought that was nice, you know. I told that to my grandchildren, too. Think about how...

EJ: So he went down three levels.

ME: Three down waterfalls...

EJ: Three waterfalls...

ME: Yeah, uh huh.

EJ: And the boat that he made, it was--he made three boats...

ME: Yeah, one. Um hmm, yeah. There were three falls. But they going to broke. One broke and then they got two more left, and then they could go down. And the other one broke and to the last one. Then he got home after that.

EJ: Around home, when we tell stories, when people are listening they say, "Mmmm, mmmm."

ME: Um hmm, our people that way too. But no more. Kids don't do that.

EJ: Oh, yeah.

ME: Young kids. Like, kids like that. Sometimes we just gather around table, you know, tell story. And they just love listen [inaudible] [laughs]. [inaudible]. We do, us, you know. We do

same thing.

EJ: So, long ago, when people tell stories, people--the story teller sits right there, and everybody sit around?

ME: Um hmm. Yeah. Some people ready too, they do. Everybody just sit down. Even the oldest people used to tell it out, you know, stories like that, and we used to listen. Then we know what it means. We try to understand too, what they tell us, you know. What it means. Why. They teach us lots.

EJ: Um hmm. And do you say anything at the end of telling this kind of stories?

ME: Um hmm. We say, "[Athabaskan spoken]." This means, "Winter short and summer long."

EJ: Um hmm. And you say that at the end of every story?

ME: Yeah. Yeah, then we know story's end.

EJ: Um hmm. So it's like praying for short winter and let the summer be long?

ME: Um hmm, yeah. I think it's really nice for kids to learn back--I know our kids is not like us, you know, when we grow up. And kids, what they know is make them think something. I know most of my age is different from all others, and my daughters they different. Because they know--they grew up with this. Their grandpa was living then, my dad. He's lots of help. Old people is really helping our kids. They like to listen to them. If we just don't talk, we don't tell nothing nobody, how they going to know, how they going to learn? Kids can't learn nothing. They just go and do what they want. Run around. They don't even know it's bad.

You know, we told them like [Athabascan word spoken], you know, after dark they're not supposed to run around, too. Not supposed to go out. Maybe you people that way too? After night, [Athabascan word spoken] to go around night, dark outdoors.

EJ: How about how girls, how they trained girls when girls were growing up, like when you were young. Did you have special kind of training?

ME: Yeah, we had training. About fifteen years old, start to train. Like, you know, they had like cape, a hood, something about that long. Then that that hood that's on there got fringe around. You can't--nobody can see our face. It's really funny, that we laugh at it now. You know, how we used to stand it. I went through it myself.

EJ: Um hmm. So you parents made this--what do you call it? We call it [gives Athabascan word].

ME: [gives Athabascan word], we call it.

EJ: [repeats Athabascan word], uh huh. And it's a hat, or it's kind of a hood, like, that girls wore during puberty period. After first when they get their period. They have to go through this whole training for a whole year.

ME: Whole year. And then they got on top what they put on if they get, you know, moose [inaudible]. They cut a little off. Caribou and stuff. Everything. Any kind of [inaudible] they get. Animals. They bound it up and they put put them on the side, buttons or something, you know. They make buttons.

EJ: Oh, they decorate it.

ME: Yeah, they mold it to make noise. I don't know why they do that. I didn't ask that.

EJ: Maybe that's to chase away the...[laughter]

ME: Maybe they know where you are that way [laughs].

EJ: So, did you have to stay in the house by yourself or...

ME: Yeah.

EJ: ...in a room?

ME: Um hmm, in a room. You stayed there...

EJ: It was in your parent's house, though.

ME: Uh huh, sew all the time. Work. Early morning cut wood, get water.

EJ: That was before everybody get up?

ME: Yeah. They make button out of what they call mica. Sometimes they call it [inaudible]. We call--I think it's mica. In the water they get it. You know, some they get bigger pieces. And it look like button. We got one creek down at Chitina way that we find those.

EJ: Oh, what you call it?

ME: Oh, [gives Athabascan word] we call it.

EJ: [repeats Athabascan word].

ME: [repeats Athabascan word] Look like button. It [inaudible] like button.

EJ: Oh, uh huh. Is it some kind of seashell or something?

ME: Well, it's almost like it, but it's from mountain. Mica, I think they call it. White people call it.

EJ: Um hmm. And what they use it for?

ME: Button.

EJ: Oh, they use it for button.

ME: Uh huh, they make button out of it.

EJ: And did they put that on the [gives Athabascan word], too?

ME: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, they put--with the other things, you know. They put it. Oh, they make pretty! Up front there's lots of things. You can't see. Nobody could see our face.

EJ: Um hmm. Do you have any of this passed around anymore, or what...

ME: Nobody got it anymore. No, they've been gone a long time. See, I was the last one, I think, down that way.

EJ: What did you do with yours?

ME: I don't know what happened to it [laughs]. Lots of time I think, you know, why didn't I save that [gives Athabascan word]. We've been moving too much, too, you know. I can't keep nothing. Even that knife, you know, like I tell you, there's a couple of knife. I'd like to save it now. I think about really lot, but we can't. I don't know why we don't. We never think nothing like this, because, you know, it's just...

EJ: It was something you use everyday.

ME: Yeah, I didn't know now we'd need to show it to kids, too.
That's what we never know. We didn't know.

EJ: And what kind of food were you allowed to eat during this time?

ME: That training?

EJ: Uh huh.

ME: Oh, they gave us food just what they eat too. Same thing.
Meat and [inaudible]...

EJ: Were you allowed to eat fresh food?

ME: Fish. Yeah, we eat fresh berries and stuff.

EJ: Uh huh. Were you allowed to eat fresh meat and fresh fish?

ME: Not really fresh meat. That's [gives Athabascan word], too.

EJ: Oh, okay, oh okay. So they ate aged [inaudible].

ME: Yeah, uh huh. About maybe two or three days. We always age that much now, too, if we can. Natives don't eat really fresh meat.

EJ: Oh, okay, so you ate your food a little bit [inaudible]?

ME: Yeah, uh huh. Fish, we eat fresh fish. That only thing we can eat it fresh. Fish, grayling and salmon. Anything.

EJ: What about bear meat? Were you allowed to eat bear meat at that time?

ME: Some people used to eat it, but I don't like it. We never eat it. Sometimes my dad and mama eat black bear meat. Us kids didn't

care for it. If we hungry we will eat it, but, you know, there's no need when we got--if we don't want it we wouldn't eat it. Now when we hungry we just eat anything, when people hungry.

EJ: And during this time, they tell you stories, too, about how to behave and stuff?

ME: Um hmm.

EJ: What kind of things did they tell you?

ME: Oh, behave is what--we don't go to other people's house, too. And they keep us home. You know, that's a bad habit to go. Some people now, they kids you can't hardly hold them. They want to stay overnight somewhere. That's what I can't stand. My girls got kids, you know. They want to do it. I just start hollering, "Get down with them right now." I can't help it. That's the way I raised up, you know. I told them, "No! You can't. You got your own home. What if somebody's house burned up and you going to be in there? We can't take care of you somewhere else." So that's my word all the time to kids. I don't--'cause we never grow up that way. We stay home all the time.

EJ: After this one year period when you took your [gives Athabascan word] off...

ME: One year after, yeah.

EJ: ...did you wear a bandanna or anything. Or...

ME: Sometimes, yeah.

EJ: Oh, uh huh. I know women around home used to wear bandannas and they always had it way out like that.

ME: Yeah. Sometimes we used to use that. We used to stay across the river all the time. We don't see people, too.

EJ: Oh, you were kind of in camp like? Uh huh.

ME: Yeah, uh huh, where they trap and fish, and we don't go down until--I forgot what year that school start. BIA school. Otherwise, we don't--we stay in the--across the river, you know. We're hunting and trapping. That's where we learn. Otherwise, if we go town, stay somewhere, you know, big village or something, then we not going to learn nothing. It's like now, now kids stay in town. All they want is comb their hair good and dress up nice and just don't even think about wash dishes or going to mop floor and bring wood in. That kind of different life they got now. Now days it's different. If I just grow up like that I wouldn't have nothing now. I'm glad I know our way, really, I know a lot--so much. Really means lots to me, that old way back. You know, people tell story. I like that, too. I had grand-uncle and grandpa. I only know one grandpa. My mother's dad die long time. Only my dad's father. He come from around here, too. Down here where the Solja, or they call it Solja, or...?

EJ: Oh, Salcha!

ME: Yeah, Salcha. [inaudible] they used to call it, long time ago. [inaudible]. Now Salcha they call it.

EJ: Oh!

ME: That's where he come from. He got different language. It sound like--sound like Yukon language. I don't know where he come from really. That's where he was before he met my grandma.

EJ: So he spoke a different language than your grandmother, then?

ME: Yeah. Uh huh. You don't know Andrew Isaac?

EJ: Uh huh.

ME: You know him? That's my cousin. His dad is a cousin to my grandpa. Oscar, Oscar Andrew at Tana--what do you call it? Tanacross.

EJ: Um hmm. Last year--there's an old lady that died here last year. She spoke--I guess she spoke the Salcha language. It was really different.

ME: Yeah, I know.

EJ: Only her daughter speaks it now. What is her name? Oh gosh.

Student: Her last name was Barnabas.

EJ: Oh! Bessie Barnabas. You must have heard of her.

ME: Oh yeah, I know her, too. Yeah.

EJ: Yeah, uh huh. In some of her stories she told, she said she was a young woman when the first white people came to Fairbanks.

ME: Yeah.

EJ: Um hmm. She was already, you know, she was teenager then, I guess. So she must have been pretty old when she died. They didn't have a real good record of her. Her age. I guess her...

ME: Yeah, it's hard long time ago, you know. Nobody know what year we born. Only how they find out mine is that that railroad came to Chitina 1909. And 1910, that year after, that's when I born. Only way they know. Otherwise nobody know. Nobody know

what year people born.

EJ: So when you were born, then there was no missionaries around, so you weren't baptized at that time, then, huh?

ME: Not when they're born. No, not until when I grow up already. I was about, maybe, seventeen. That's when that Russian...?

EJ: Russian Orthodox?

ME: Yeah, they come. They baptize kids and us.

EJ: Uh huh. So is most of the people from Chitina Russian Orthodox?

ME: Yeah, uh huh. No, we don't know what--about that. Not really, we don't know nothing about it, you know. We know they are doing it for God or some. We know that, but we didn't learn nothing from it.

EJ: Oh, they didn't establish any church in that area.

ME: Uh uh. They had use one house, but all they do is, you know, sing and the people [inaudible]. After that we got missionaries came to Chitina 1937, I think that was. Real missionary. He died [inaudible].

EJ: What church he go to, I wonder.

ME: Non-denominational, I guess.

EJ: Oh.

ME: When that church that come in Chitina. Then we learn something. We learn about Bible and, I don't know, that first time, you know, he talk about son of God? Oh, I don't know what he

talking about. How come? How could be? You know, I was already older than my--I got little kids, too. Roy was little. He was about four years old, I guess.

EJ: When the missionary came to Chitina?

ME: Yeah. Then we learned from them. I read a little bit from them. Bible. Bible. That's the only thing I could read, now, too. I don't know any book, too.

EJ: Um hmm. Did anybody work on translating the Bible in your language in that area?

ME: I do some now. Yeah. Like song and stuff. Some Bible stories.

EJ: I forgot to bring that questions. Students asked questions yesterday, and I forgot to bring it with me.

ME: That's good! We talk too much here. You girls are got questions. Yesterday, too, we did the same thing. We forgot you guys [laughs]!

EJ: And they wanted to know if you have ghost stories.

ME: Ghost?

EJ: Uh huh. That was one of the questions. Scary stories.

ME: Maybe we got some too. I don't really...

EJ: You don't have to answer it today. Maybe you could think about it and then talk about it later.

ME: Yeah. I know that woods people. That's one thing we got. That's a true story, that one.

EJ: What do you call it?

ME: [Gives Athabascan name], we call it.

EJ: [Repeats Athabascan name]?

ME: [Repeats Athabascan name], yeah.

EJ: [Repeats Athabascan name].

ME: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh. Okay, [repeats Athabascan name] means--how do you translate that? [repeats Athabascan name].

ME: "You hardly see them." Something like that, you know. It's maybe you see little bit...

EJ: You notice them every now and then. Um hmm.

ME: ...then you don't see it no more, you know. Just little, somewhere. They don't see it. But it always bother people, used to be before. Like he don't hurt people, one thing. And he took kids away. Little ones. Even like--well, not really too small. One time they say it try to take that big boy away. Like probably sixteen years old. Mostly small kids he look for. I believe it because...

EJ: He took kids to raise...

ME: Yeah.

EJ: ...for his own?

ME: I guess that's why. I don't know. I see what they always tell about, you know. He got grass. Twisted grass about that long

they tell. Long time ago they tell. When I was about ten years, eleven I guess, I see [at] fish camp that our tent was shake that night. I don't know what happened. My sister tell me I was asleep already. And my mom been asleep already, too. I told them next day, you know, last night that bed net we had--they got their own and us kids got our own bed net for mosquitoes, you know.

EJ: Oh, mosquito net, uh huh.

ME: Yeah, uh huh. I told them that my sister told me that bed net was shake. Then that one dog looked one way, that way. Where nobody around. So we start to look around there that day, my aunt--I got two aunts, my dad's sisters. We look around. We say we see tracks something like, you know--I was just scared. I never look around much, you know. I just hang on to my mother. Then my aunt went to that brush, with brush around it and grass inside, you know. That grass part that was short, really soft. She went look in there. She say, "Look at here! There's track here, now." In that grass, big tracks in there.

EJ: Long?

ME: Um hmm. Just, you know, just stand there. And she went in there. She's the only one got more--she's bigger. She got number nine shoes she wear. So she went in there and stepped in that. She say, "This not people. This something--this not human." With big feet, you know. Then she reach down. "Look at that," she say. That grass. Now, that's what I heard about, you know. When I was small they tell about it. That grass. Twisted grass.

EJ: What--it twists. It's picked and it's...

ME: Yeah, it's twisted. Then you twist it back. It can--you

know, they twist it one way, then it go back. Like rope, what they do. Yeah, that's the way it is. Like rope. So, that's when I saw it. Otherwise, I wouldn't believe it. If I don't see it.

Then we hear that whistle lots of times. Just us, we hear that one. Me and Roy when we grow up. We went around each way. We saw some kind of a wheat. Than Indian medicine? We went and get our car. "Let's pick that," we say. We [inaudible].

EJ: I'll turn this around.

[side two]

ME: And then my daughter was in the car with her baby. Anita, she's about twenty-seven years...

EJ: You were on the highway, then?

ME: Yeah, Valdez road. Then we heard that whistle. That first time I ever heard it, too.

EJ: You were in the car, or you got out of the car?

ME: I was with Roy up on the hill there. Just a little ways from us, that whistle. Just like what they tell stories. I heard that one for myself. I heard them talk about it, before. And then other time I heard it is way up [when] we hunt, me and Millie and her husband. You know Millie, my daughter. And she took little dogs. She walks around with little dogs down that hill there. And I was in the car. Too much mosquitoes, gnats. The boys went hunting, and that trail is up that way. Pretty soon we hear that funny whistle. Like, you know, I never heard nothing like that before. Millie just stand there, too. She come pretty soon. She stand again, listen. And we heard again. She grab her dog and

run!

Boy, those things are--I don't like it [inaudible]. When we camp, you know, I don't like that. Fish camp, we really smelled that time. It smell like ether. You know, they say, the story they tell is--it make people passed out, you know, like you giving shot, you know.

EJ: Oh, if they get too near.

ME: Yeah, and they smell it. Just like ether. They can sleep and pass out from it. You know, fish camp we done last year--two years ago, we was down there. My grandchildren and my daughter was there. We just cut that brush [so] that wind go through that fish rack, you know, where we got fish. Below there we cut grass and cut...

EJ: So the fish rack can get lots of wind?

ME: Yeah, lots of wind. And here was little brush. Not too big. Maybe he was in there. I don't know. Pretty soon--I cut that brush, you know. Pretty soon we done. I say, "Oh, we got to go wait. And got two kids here and help me." You know, they pull it other way, that brush, and then I cut it with knife. Pretty soon I smell something like, down here, spray. Like ether. I told them kids, "What smell now? Something smell here." I don't know what was it. I didn't even think about it. They say, "Yeah, something bad," they say. And I start cutting again, and I cut that last one. Then more--I breathe with it. It just seemed like it just ran my, you know--I don't like it. When I went from--five miles from Chitina we camped. All way down I just [breathes out]. I try to get it out. Boy, that was something. I don't know what he got, anyway. Well, we left. We say, "Let's go. There's something

around."

EJ: That was around your camp?

ME: Yeah. That dog was bark funny. I thought that was bear. I told them kids, "Now bear coming, hurry up." Dog is something wrong with him. That's what he was doing. I couldn't think about that, what do you call it, ghost, some more.

EJ: The other question--one of the other questions they asked was, "What kind of games did you play when you were a child? What kind of games did children play?"

ME: Well, they played jump rope and stuff. And other things. You stay around and jump over the stick. With long pole. They jump with that, too.

EJ: Oh, pole vault.

ME: And then they play some kinds of games too, like...

EJ: Did girls play that too, or was that just for boys?

ME: Yeah, girls play that too.

EJ: Oh, uh huh.

ME: Yeah. As long as--they all small, you know. We all small. We used to play. Twelve years ages. Fourteen, thirteen. There's some other games they play, too. Like chipper, you know, old time chipper.

EJ: What you call that? Do you have a name for that?

ME: [Gives Athabascan name], uh uh. [Gives Athabascan name].

EJ: [Repeats Athabascan name]?

ME: Um hmm. They don't play like now. You know, they play different way, that games.

EJ: Yeah.

ME: At the old days, they played another way.

EJ: Which--what they used? What you need to play that game?

ME: They got boards, you know. Same as chipper now. But they little bit different they play before. They block up that.

EJ: The rules were different.

ME: Uh huh. Same thing. They got twenty-four chippers. But they block up that, you know, thing. Then they paint it. It's almost same thing.

EJ: Um hmm. And it's called [gives Athabascan name]?

ME: [Repeats Athabascan name], yeah. You call it different way?

EJ: [Gives Athabascan name] [laughs]. Around home, they used to play with a broom, too. When you take a broom, and you put it down, and you try to twist all the way around like that. I can't even bend over now. You used to play that, too?

ME: Um hmm, yeah.

EJ: Uh huh, to see who could get the closest to the floor and stuff. Do you have a name for that one, too? Or is it just...

ME: No, we don't have. Just play that one. They used to take stick in warm weather, too, you know. Who going to beat other ones, you know, barefooted. Up nice trail. Nothing on the road,

so they run nice soft weather days, winter time.

EJ: See who can run the farthest?

ME: Yeah. Somebody could put the stick there. And then maybe another one going to carry it more.

EJ: Oh! To see who can go the furthest barefoot.

ME: Yeah, furthest. And then they can't--nobody beat this guy, you know, then he beat them. [inaudible].

EJ: Uh huh. My husband said, him and his brothers and his cousins, he said, first thing in the morning they used to run out and then they run down to the lake and then they run back. And they always try to beat each other. See who could run the furthest [laughs].

ME: Yeah, they used to do that. Snowshoes, too. Race, they raced. Just play.

EJ: What about dart games, like in the summer or springtime?

ME: Yeah, they used to do that, too. They make them, you know, like stick. All my grandson do that. They do now.

EJ: Like spear and they make--they throw this hoop?

ME: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh. Somebody threw the hoop, and they try to poke a hole or poke the spear through it as it's rolling down? Or different?

ME: No, this one just different. Anything they--like they try to hit squirrel, but, you know, squirrel is fast. So that's what they like. They like bother squirrel because it's fast. When they climb tree, too. So many kids, you know, get on that tree and they

throw it down [inaudible].

EJ: Do you want to take a short break?

[pause for break]

EJ: Okay.

ME: What else we going to talk about?

EJ: She wanted to know about beadwork.

ME: Oh, beadwork. Yeah, we used to work lots with beadwork.

EJ: Do you still do it?

ME: I still do it, yeah. I still do it. I should bring some, but it's not on leather, a hide. It's like a necklace and earrings.

EJ: That's the kind of beadwork you do in your area, huh?

ME: No, we do that hides, slippers, and all that kind of stuff, too.

EJ: Oh, okay.

ME: Dress, you know. Beadwork. But, what I do now is--what I got is that earring and beadwork.

EJ: What about long time ago? How did they design clothing in your area? Did they use porcupine quills and like that?

ME: Yeah.

EJ: Long time ago?

ME: Yeah, porcupine quills is what they use.

EJ: Did you ever see...

ME: Did you see that kind of dress that woman--I saw you on other
book down over there, the other day?

EJ: Uh huh.

ME: That kind [inaudible] that some kind of dress that they make,
and then they use that hide, skin. Caribou skin--I mean, sheep
skin. See, that button was here, too. And they can use the old
days. Way back is used even bottom here, that hem? Porcupine
quill. They put on. But it's hide, skin. They can't do it on
cloth.

EJ: When they used the porcupine, how did they do it?

ME: They wrapped it around that sinew. Then they stitch it in.
They wrapped it around sinew.

EJ: Did they have to flatten it?

ME: Yeah, they flatten it.

EJ: Okay, they flatten it. So they put a stitch across and then
they fold it over?

ME: Yeah, um hmm. Yeah, around that sinew. They twist it around
and then they put it on.

EJ: So they keep folding it back and forth like that.

ME: Um hmm. Just as they stitched it, put it on. They do that to
yarn, too. [inaudible].

EJ: Did they dye the quills, the porcupine quills?

ME: Uh huh, yeah. We got some kind of dye, too. Out of wheat,

you know, grass, and those red things. I don't know what they call them. I know they used to boil it and dye with it.

EJ: Grass?

ME: Yeah, and then some kind of wheat. It's about that long, I think. There's lots of red stuff on top. I don't know what they call it. Some people say they eat those things, too.

EJ: Where does it grow?

ME: Just anywhere, down that way. I don't know about around here. Lot's of things we didn't--we forgot, too, you know. That's a long time ago, they call it. Oh, I've been too many years with white people, too. I've been working ten years Anchorage at hospital.

EJ: You worked in Anchorage?

ME: Yeah, I worked in the kitchen. Take care of diet and all, so I'm crazy [laughs]. I'm not smart anymore. Too much work, boy, that's bad. Then I came back.

EJ: So you lived in Anchorage and worked, huh?

ME: Yeah. Twelve years I was over there. I worked ten years in the hospital. Then I can back during the earthquake to Glenallen. My daughters don't want to stay home, you know. Everything fall over there. Big building. Like those high buildings? And they don't like that. Anchorage hospital is all corners. Everything light hanging down, you know. Oh yeah, building was bad [inaudible].

EJ: So you were in Anchorage when it happened?

ME: No, I was home.

EJ: Oh.

ME: They told me that bed, you know, got rolled under. Wheels, they just go all over there. All them patients. Was really terrible. So they told me come back and stay home, now. They don't want me--I come back in '64, I think, earthquake was. Then I got another job up there. I was--about year, I guess, I never work. Went home, and I drewed that unemployment, what they call. Then the school, I got job. There I got another ten years. I just got no time to talk my language, too. It just, nobody talk my language, so I just talk, you know, white people and kids. I work with lots of kids there, too. Glenallen. It was a big school...

EJ: What kind of job were you doing?

ME: That custodian.

EJ: Oh.

ME: Work floor waxing and all that kind of stuff. Take care of school desk. Lots of work that time. That's good job, we like that.

EJ: So you didn't bring any of the stuff with you that are beaded stuffs, huh, except for the earrings and things?

ME: Yeah, I got some over there. The earrings.

EJ: Uh huh. Do people still do beadwork on moose skins and...

ME: Yeah, um hmm. Yeah, still. We still do that. Same as you people, that kind of mittens and stuff. We do same thing. Everybody see that, you know, when that dance go on. You guys go round that, on table? We do same thing [in the community] hall.

Show that kind of stuff. We don't sew mukluks so much, but we just--I don't know, hardly anybody use it now. They got, you know, them boots. Moon boots and stuff. Everything took over different way. So we just don't make that. We make slipper and stuff for our moccasins. Little kids moccasins. Kids like moccasins.

EJ: What about, on winter boots we do designs around here. Do you do designs like that?

ME: Yeah. If we need it, we do it. Uh huh.

EJ: Is that sometimes beads?

ME: Beads, yeah.

EJ: Around home we use--some women use calfskins, black and white calfskins. And they do like patchwork on there.

ME: Yeah. Uh huh, I know what you mean. Yeah, we use that too.

Student: Is Chitina in the mountains? Is it in the mountains?

ME: Yeah, it's in the mountains. It's just a valley, uh huh. Really big mountains we got there. Everywhere just mountains.

EJ: If you look at this map, there's the Wrangell Mountains right there.

ME: It's pretty. In summertime it's real pretty down there.

EJ: You can look at the map if you want to.

ME: We live right in town. That little town. It's got lake in there and another lake down there. All way down. From Four-Mile all way down we got lake. All got fish in there.

EJ: There's Chitina, and there's the Wrangell--these are the

Wrangell Mountains.

ME: We live right close to the lake, too.

Student: You live right in town?

ME: Um hmm.

Student: Do they still have the ghost painted on the building? I remember when I was little we used to go there, and I remember they had a ghost painted on a building.

ME: Oh yeah. You been down there? That's right behind that ghost, by that door, building? Behind there that's my sister's house. And we live right next to--by that road, another log house, it's my daughter's house there. Once we live way down. You see that town lake there? That lake right around that road. Go down, that's where we live way down there. The last house. Another two house, one old and one new house.

EJ: Who painted the ghost on the building?

ME: Oh, that guy. He died long time--Slim [inaudible], he was a mail carrier to Chitina.

EJ: Oh, he was a white man?

ME: Yeah. To Anchorage. He died.

EJ: Do you know why he painted that ghost on the building?

ME: They call it ghost town [laughter]. There's one up that road. You know, that highway coming in. There was one there, standing, you know. Somebody make it really bad looking. That skull, something in there. Somebody stole that. I don't who do that.

Don't know what they steal it for [laughs]. It's gone. Yeah, that's what they call it. Ghost town. After [inaudible] gone. I don't know. That's what they called it that name for. Because once we had lots of people there, you know. We've got three big hotel in there. Overland Hotel and Commercial Hotel and Chitina Hotel. We got big store, big clothing store. That railroad came up that time. Dipper. That railroad Dipper. Lot of people come out and go to that all different hotel. Somebody always over there, you know, Overland Hotel. Oh, we was little kids, you know. We just listen to them. We don't know why they do that, but we find out after. Then everybody left after that railroad close. They quit and then it turn to ghost town. Nobody.

EJ: Hmm. When they built the BIA school there, did they--what did they say about the Native language in--if the students talked Native language in the school?

ME: They didn't say nothing.

EJ: Oh, uh huh. When you went to school...

ME: Because that guy was really understand. How can they going to talk if they just learning, you know. If they just learning the English. Couldn't help but talk that way. You can't [inaudible].

EJ: So when you went to school--how old were you when you went to school?

ME: I just been there a little while. A few months. Maybe one or two. I forgot. I never learned nothing. I don't know. I was too small.

EJ: Uh huh. How old were you then, about, do you think?

ME: I was probably--I don't know, maybe seven. I hardly remember, too, what all we done.

EJ: Um hmm. So you don't remember much about the school, then?

ME: No, I don't know. I know I tried to learn the alphabet. My sister teach me most of it. 'Cause I can't learn it this short time.

EJ: So your family, then, lived in camp mostly?

ME: Um hmm.

EJ: So your brothers and sisters didn't go to...

ME: My sister was old enough to stay with some of my uncles. Somebody down there. She went up to third grade. Them days they don't leave little kids in when they're that small. Now days kids, they can just leave them. Not them days they can't. One sister was old enough to take care of herself and help others. So she stay with her uncle and go to school. She got third grade, I think. Then she don't go to school no more, too. We went across the river.

EJ: One of the questions from yesterday was, "What does a Yukon stove look like?" So I'm going to draw it on the--or try.

ME: [laughs] She's good draw [laughter]. Sure, she do a good job at map, too.

EJ: Yukon stove is kind of like a [inaudible]. I'll show this as the front. The stove pipe goes back here. It has a round door here. It has a damper right there. And on the side, here, is a little oven.

ME: Yeah, that's the way.

EJ: And the stove pipe will be there. And then around home we used to--it didn't have legs so we always had gas cans under our stove. And so, when she was talking about stoves yesterday, and people made their own stove, they shape it something like that.

ME: And they cook on it, on top and in oven.

EJ: Yukon stoves were about, they were about that long. They're really hard to get now because...

ME: Oh, they cost money now.

EJ: Yeah, the stoves they make nowadays are real cheap, you know, real thin.

ME: Yeah, they burn up fast.

EJ: These ones used to last quite a while.

ME: My brother got one of these kind.

EJ: We used to carry this along with us from camp to camp.

ME: We pack it. Lots of work.

EJ: And when you're moving, you take the dirt out of it and dump it out. [inaudible]. Sometimes you have to leave some of the dirt in there if it's winter time. And when you set up camp, you know, you put dirt in there.

Student: I [inaudible] how heavy it is. How much does it weigh?

EJ: Oh, they're real light. Well, they're fairly light. Probably about thirty-five--what do you think, Philip?

Student: Forty pounds [inaudible].

EJ: Forty pounds. [laughs] You always move it around real easy. Take the stove pipe apart, put the stove pipe inside the stove, and then we used to make oven pans to set inside the oven. But there was commercial oven pans, too. But a lot of times you can't get them, so we'd make oven pans out of gas cans.

Just can't remember what some of the questions are, so maybe if you can remember, you can ask it. Or ask a question if you...

Student: How old are the youngest people that speak your language?

ME: You mean long time?

EJ: Right now.

ME: Right now? Right now, my son was four years old when the missionaries come and say, and then, you know, I teach him Bible verse and stuff and then, right along, he learned our language, too.

EJ: Um hmm. That's Roy?

ME: Yeah, he's about four years old. He don't talk it, but he understand. He know what we talking about. But then, he go to school, too, you know. That about six years old, go school. And then that language he don't learn. He understand it but he don't talk it. I don't know how come that. Some he do, but not really. His other brother talk my language pretty good.

EJ: How old is his other brother?

ME: He's older. He was born 19...--oh, I forgot. I can't remember. My grandchildren, I don't know when their birthday. Yeah. He's older. Oh, my daughter, Millie, she talk pretty good.

EJ: Um hmm. And Millie is probably in her 40's, yeah?

ME: Yeah. My daughter was here with us last winter. She's the one talk in the mike for us, you know, when there were kids dancing. I was sick. I caught the flu, soon as we come up here. Boy, I was sick. My kids know already what they doing, anyway, so they don't need me. I just sit down there. They learn pretty good. That song they learn really good. It's our language, you know. They learned that pretty good.

EJ: When you teach them the songs, do you teach them about the story behind the song?

ME: Yeah. Story, they got to know that. Yeah.

EJ: Yeah, so what kind of things do you tell them? Like, if you're teaching them one song?

ME: The story is like that groundhog they do in groundhog dance. Then I told them stories where that song come from, you know. That story, why that hawk there and hard time. People had no food, nothing. You know. Long time ago. Really lots of times. No food. Those people got nothing to get animals all--they're not like now, you know, not very many. And they got spears. No guns. so that's what they doing, you know. They trying to hit with spears. Like hawk [inaudible]...

EJ: Oh, so they...

ME: ...[inaudible], they call it...

EJ: Oh, so it's like good luck song.

ME: Yeah, that hawk means, you know--it's like they scare things,

hawk. Like even bear, you know, they come. They going to do same thing now. Hawk! Hawk! Hawk! They chased it, too. It backed up. So that's what they were doing. Hawk! [Athabascan spoken]. It means, you know, scared. They try to scare it. See, that kind of story is all behind the song. Whatever they do. Some just dance song. That one's got no story in it. Just the song. Then, like groundhog and--what was the other one? Raven dance. That one too. That very first time they got the potlatch. Somebody make potlatch long time ago. He watching raven. He don't know how to get to people together and what to tell them to do. He watch them and he got food, you know. Fish on the sandbar, they got. They were eating and then, you know, the raven always go like that. And they go around like ring, you know. Then he told his people that when potlatch start, you know, he got food. He tell them go play like a raven he sees. He say, just join hands and go around dance for you food before you got this potlatch. That's what they done.

EJ: So that's what they have to do before they eat?

ME: Uh huh. That's what them kids do. Only thing they add up is when they done that, you know, they dance around, that kid was jumping around middle. I wonder if you girls see that? Chitina dance. Yeah. When they done that, you know, then they got feather all up like that. That's only thing, you know, all way around. That's just their end, they say. That's good. That's what the add up themselves, that. Otherwise it just go around Raven Dance.

EJ: Do you have any stories or beliefs about the feathers. You know, we call it [gives Athabascan word], the down feathers? There's any good luck associated with that?

ME: Down feathers?

EJ: Uh huh.

ME: No, I know--only thing we know is that feather, they use it for dance.

EJ: Uh huh, there's any meaning behind that, when they use it for dancing?

ME: I don't think so. You know what, the Indian doctor use it, too. I don't know what they use it for. They didn't say nothing about it. I don't know. What do you guys use it for? What do you [inaudible]?

EJ: Well, they used to say that the down feathers, like when medicine people is making medicine for good luck, you know, for trapping and stuff, they used to spread it around on the floor. And then we'd pick it and put it in our mitts. I just wondered if you did anything like that.

ME: You say the doctors do that? Indian doctors do that?

EJ: Uh uh.

ME: Well, they use it for something. I don't know. They don't say nothing. But if they want something good luck, then they use, you know, some kind of stuff like skin cut out or a bread and stuff. Food, a little food, to get it. They leave it in a cache, like cloth and stuff.

EJ: Little pieces of...

ME: Yeah, um hmm. You know one time this guy died Chitina that the Indian doctor was--me and my other son, not Roy--his brother,

we went down. We hunt rabbits down there...

[tape ends]