

Pauline Walter  
ANS 401 - Margaret Eskilida  
Spring Semester 1987 - April 7, 1987

We watched a video tape of the Chitina dance group in which Margaret is the elder. She has been with them for 2-3 years, and it has grown. They meet every other weekend after school. She likes it because the children like to learn.

The other things the children can learn to do by participation are: cooking the traditional way by way of burying food on top of rocks because they had no containers then; how to get fish by dip nets, they want to know what roots, leaves are edible; how to prepare food in case they get stuck somewhere. She said, "We got to think about things before we get stuck in somewhere. How to do it. We use roots even on the sand bar. We can make little dip net. We can get fish if we need it. That's what I teach the kids." She told us a story a man told them years ago (1929+). This man was lost near Chistochina in the mountain. He didn't look at a mountains or river to mark the direction he was going and he got lost. He went around and round in a circle. He was lost for a month. He didn't have food and he didn't eat well that time. He could have eaten plants but he didn't know what kind of plants were eatable. He had a collie dog. He said the last 3 days that he was out he thought about killing his dog, his only friend, and could not bring himself to kill it. He hadn't eaten for a month. He finally followed a creek that led to the highway. He was real weak by then.

Margaret tells the kids to mark something and stay in one place if they get lost before they go too far. She thinks the best way to have people learn is by showing. She also tells stories at bedtime, true stories too. She has been with kids and raised 9 herself. She's concerned about alcohol and drugs and dances (english).

Moon stories were told during the lecture. When the moon eclipses, it is "ingi" (bad luck) because it brings starvation. Long time ago no matter what time of the night it is the people act like they pack up and move and bring enough food. They move to one corner of the house and they act like they are setting up camp and they talk about handling food. They act like they are chopping wood. Then they pack up and move clockwise to the next corner of the house and do the same thing. They do that on all four corners of the house. That's for good luck. Also, when the new moon comes out and it's real narrow and it is hanging. That means bad luck too. That means someone will die of a sudden death such as shot by a gun and drown. At night

people have to pack no matter what time of night and bring enough food. All four corners are observed for good luck, for example when you cut wood or cook, this is done. During the first moon, when its hanging, it is also considered "ingi." Bad accidents like drowning, shock, crib death occur at that time.

There are the signs for telling certain kinds of weather by observing the sky. Sun dog means its going to be cold. The ring around the moon means snow. Northern lights bring cold weather.

Margaret also told us about the calendar months. For example:

June: fish month

July: month when fowls molt and animal shed its fur

August: when berries are ripe

September: hunting

Other signs indicated when to hunt in

August: when fireweed opens and turns into cotton  
when foxhair (weed) turns white

Questions: how do you store fish in wintertime?

In a cache. The wind provides ventilation and fish is prevented from molding. Margaret says it is dangerous to keep food such as meat and fish in an enclosed plastic bag in the cache or refrigerator if they're not kept in the freezer.

The trade of Dentaliam was between the following people: Northway, Tetlin and Canada people. They traded fur, hides and dentalia for arrowheads and copper. The Chitina people also traded copper with Tlingit people for Dentalia and land, lots of land they never saw. The Chitina people had a trading store at Taral near Chitina.

The Chitina people have land at O'Brian Creek. The Chitina people charge people to use O'Brian Creek for keeping it clean from garbage. Her concern is that too many people come to fish, and that causes their fishwheels to be empty. That is why they move to Five Mile camp above Chitina where they aren't bothered by people.

Traditionally when they picked ochre from the mountain they used to leave present in its place. They also used to do that when they step through the ground and disturb mouse cache of tsaas 'potatoes-like'. Then they dig it out and look at it. Then they put fish in there. Sometimes they dig it out and look at it. Then they put fish in there. Sometimes they used to take the food for themselves, but they leave something in its place. It's "ingi" to take something for nothing.

She likes any kind of stories, bedtime stories, told by parents, granduncles. She has been working for 20 years, which makes her forget, not talking to anyone from her language. She mentions one big store when they first came to this country.

Drownings are worst in the summertime there in Chitna. The water is dangerous (rapid) when there is open water. She told a story of a near-drown accident. A caution on rivers is not to go there alone in the first place, unless old enough.

Chitna has a non-demoninational church. One of the preacher's daughters, Margaret Crab, taught Margaret to read.

On arranged marriages: someones comes and they are around for about 2 years, getting to know the family.

To say, "Hi, how are you" in Ahtna you say Nts'aadiit'ae.  
To say good by you say Honeha.

Some people pick up the language easier than others.

Maggie doesn't play any instrument other than the drums. Some people played the guitar. An Eskimo man, Frank Hobson, who was married to Maggie's cousin used to make wonderful violins and used to play them also. Kids often make whistles out of alder brush. Maggie doesn't like it because that is all she hears all day long then! It is engie to make whistles out of grass because this will cause rain. It is engie to pop leaves too. It is also engie to kill a spider because it will rain but they do anyway! Maggie doesn't like spiders. In the old days they didn't mind them. They are harmless.

They used to catch <sup>troued</sup> squirrels by using snares that were made by bending over standing willow. They use picture wire to snare the squirrel now, but in the old days they used sinew or thin rawhide. August is a good time to catch <sup>groued</sup> squirrels. Muskrat is good then too.

Chitna has a post office where they get their mail. It is run by one woman. There is also a little store, cafe and gas station. There are lots of people there in the summer time. Maggie says they get "all of Fairbanks and all of Anchorage." Especially on weekends.