

ANS 401

Summary for April 9, 87

By JoAnn Jorgensen

Today Kitty McClellan, an Athabascan anthropologist, shared with us some slides that were taken in 1954 in the Chitna area. This allowed us to visually see the area where Margaret Eskilida grew up in, thier customs, and their arts. With each slide, Margaret elaborated or told a story of what the slides showed. There were people doing their chores, working different tools, tanning skins, fishing, and camping.

The first few slides were pictures of Chitna, the Chitna river, the surrounding mountians, old buildings, The Copper river, the Chena river, and Mantasta Village.

Margaret said that when the Wrangle Mountain was active, the smoke they saw coming from it was a form of a spirit. These spirits were thought to come from another world that people traveled to when they died.

The picture of the lake near Northway had a very interesting story. In this lake, they collected beautiful snail shells. They did this by submerging an animal's corpse in the lake overnight. When they pulled it in, snails would cover the body.

① usually a rabbit with the fur on

We also saw how fishing platforms were constructed. They were built so that it would be easy to relocate them if they had to. The platforms extended out about four feet into the river. On this, families dip-netted throughout the day for fish. The model we saw was made by Tony Jackson.

The traditional dip-net was made with willow roots. This carefully constructed net was ~~light~~ and stood erect.

The picture of the fishing wheel also had a story behind it. The people in the Chitna area had heard about the fishing wheel but did not know how to construct one. They heard of it from the Youkon area. Finally, someone traveled to the area to see how the fishing wheel was constructed so that they too may use this technique.

We also saw a picture of a string of fish that was left in the river to clean off the slime. This made the fish easier to work with. There more pictures of fish hanging, stored in holes, and salmon eggs drying for the dogs. There was a smoke tent used to smoke the fish, which hung directly beneath the smoldered fire.

Another way in which they caught fish was in a ^{Fish} wooden trap. It was barrel shaped, made of wood strips, and had a funnel like cap set in it backwards. This kept the fish trapped inside. This was set in streams or lakes. Another method was to use a fench-like trap to trap in white fish.

There was a model of how the sweat bath was constructed. The frame was made of willows and covered with bark, grass, and dirt. The sweat baths were used daily by all members of the family.

A winter house was large enough to sleep the entire family. In the middle of the house was a fire pit and a smoke hole directly above it. A sweat bath was usually connected to the back end of the house. Margaret said it was engie to live without a sweat bath. The entrance was usually covered with a bear skin to keep out the cold wind and snow.

At camp, the sweat bath was usually constructed first. It was roughly built because they did not have shovels. To get steam, they used special rocks with holes in them to throw out steam when hot.

The slides showed models of dead ^{fall} traps made to instantly kill many animals. These are considered to be very dangerous because they kill man and animal instantly.

The canvas ^Bconce was neatly constructed so that it was light and easy to carry. The light frame was tightly covered with tarp and made to be easliy maneuvered. The large ^aconoes were large enough to carry 10 people and 3 moose.

Traditionally crafted snowshoes took practice and patience to make. People used the moose tripe as a guide to weave snowshoes.

The slides also showed women picking berries, plants, mushrooms, and spruce bark. Spruce bark was peeled and had many uses.

Women tanned moose hide till it was soft and white, then it was used to create beautifully decorated dresses. Tanning the hide took lots of work and time. They used stones to remove the tissue from the skin.