

Margaret (Maggie) Eskilida
ANS 401
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Connie Kind

Maggie began this session by describing her camping experiences. Today they go to camp in the mountains by truck, but long ago they went by walking and by boat. They had to carry everything they used. This was very difficult especially on hot days. It took them 2 days to reach their camp. Everyone went to camp, parents, uncles and kids. It was hard for just one family to go. In case of trouble or if someone got lost it was important that everyone was close by. There were no telephones? They stayed at camp from August to September until it got cold, but they could not leave until the meat (moose) was dry.

In June they use a dip net to gather fish. The dip net is made from spruce roots so it is really light. Wire nets are heavier and harder to get the fish out of. Maggie used to make her own net but hasn't for a long time. Everybody used to make their own nets, even the kids. It didn't take very long.

The kids used to dip net too. They would tie themselves with a rope so they wouldn't fall into the river when they caught a king salmon. They did this until the kids were around 15 years old because the water is fast and dangerous.

They gather lots of fish during a fish run. Otherwise it is a slower process and often you had to wait 2-3 hours between catching fish. Even the fishwheel sometimes took 2-3 days to catch fish. When it was operating at the time there was no fish run. All the fish had to be dried before they could go hunting.

Maggie has killed both a bear and a moose. There are no taboos against women hunting bear. Maggie told us a story about a bear that came into her camp when she was alone with her granddaughters. She tried to chase the bear away by banging cans, but he would not go away. She didn't want to shoot it, but it would not leave. Maggie said "Good thing I had a bad temper! It made me mad." "Alright! If you want to come. I don't want to shoot you," I say. "If you

Another time Maggie shot a bear to protect she and her daughter-in-law. Her daughter-in-law was a good shot but couldn't think fast and didn't shoot. Maggie said this happens sometimes with people and can get them into trouble. Maggie stressed the importance of carrying a gun for protection from bear when at fish camp for gathering berries. Although there is no taboo for women shooting bear it is "engie" to go out when a woman is menstruating.

Maggie can't go as far as she used to. She cannot hold a gun as still as she should. She is 76 almost 77. It is her experiences, however, that have taught her how to take care of herself when there is trouble. She knows she can help herself and her kids. She knows from experience to look out for bear and to keep everything where they can reach it in case of trouble.

One of the stories she tells her children is about her aunt that died while they were camping in the mountains. As long as the body was in the mountains it rained. Even the little creeks were high. When they got the body half way down the mountain the rain stopped. They know then that it is "engie" to have a body in the mountains. It will rain or snow even if they kill a bird. It is also engie to create an echo for this will also bring bad weather.

It is dangerous country where Maggie lives. There are floods and lots of wind. A tree once was blown on top of Maggie's house. She had never seen a wind like the one that happened 2 years ago. Huge trees were pulled out of the ground and all laying in one direction. Maggie said, "It looked like a big cat had been around!"

They go to other villages to Potlatch. Often take boats to get there. Once one man took some white people up the river to a Potlatch, but they drowned so no one went there anymore. It was too dangerous.

Maggie expressed a great concern for the people who come to Chitna to dip net on the sand bar. If there should be a flood she is afraid they would not have a way out. Once their fish camp was flooded and they lost a large fish rack full of fish. The village of Chitna is located on higher ground so it is never flooded. Because of the wind there are no mosquitoes and you can easily weed the garden!

Maggie used to sew many different kinds of skins. She made beaver caps and fur mittens. They use moose hide, fox, wolverine, as well as beaver. Sometimes they use coyote. Wolverine is hard to tan. She prefers beaver. They did not have coyote before 1926 or 1929. The first coyote that was caught in a trap was thought to be a dog because no one had seen one before. Maggie thinks that the first coyote came from Haines across an old trail. They have a bounty on coyote now. If one is caught they must save the left leg bone and send it in so the government can see how many are being caught.

It is hard to get moose hide today. They use to be able to get those that were killed on the road but no more. Too many people hunt this area now making it very difficult. Maggie says a moose does not take very long to skin. A beaver is slower because of the amount of fat it has. Moose liver and the moose head are eaten right way. Moose head makes very good soup. Maggie says her granddaughter likes moose tongue!

Spruce roots and birch bark are used to make baskets. Birch is used for many things. They make sleds, snowshoes, dishes, spoons and the fungus that grows on the birch tree is burned for a fire. Two very white rocks found along the river bed were used to start a fire by striking them together before they had matches. They got their first matches from the Russian people in Cordova. Maggie had matches when she was small, but would like to try to start a fire the old way.

When Lt. Allen came Maggie's people shared their sweatbaths with him and showed his people how to dipnet for fish and how to cook them. She told us a humorous story of her people want to sew one of the white men's pants because they were torn. They took them off of him and Lt. Allen's men were quite concerned about what they were trying to do until they finally understood!

They did lots of dancing when Maggie was small at Potlatches and in the "big houses". They mostly danced in the evening. It was lots of fun! They also had a tug-of-war when everyone got together. They tied two pieces of cloth together for the tug-of-war and when they

were done they cut them and divided the up.

Hiding a stick in the sand was one of the games Maggie used to play. They sometimes hid a match stick deep into the hair of a caribou skin where it was very hard to find. The boys used to play with a spruce bark ball. It was very light and wouldn't hurt anyone. Mostly boys used to jump with sticks, but girls used to jump during their training days. Usually the girls got enough exercise by packing water early in the morning. If it was winter they would have to cut holes in the ice in order to get the water. Maggie still packs water because she doesn't like well water. It is too hard. She prefers spring water.

Maggie had a dog team for 30 years. She had seven dogs. Her brother had a dog team and ran a trap line. Dogs were used to haul Moose in winter. The first thing Maggie will do when she gets back to Chitna is to cook for her two dogs. She cooks dry fish and beef fat for them.

Maggie smokes fish. They use alder, cutting trees, and willow (big). Maggie prefers a ^{cutting} ~~cutting~~ tree or large willow because although alder has a good flavor it makes the fish too dark.

In old times people did not share the names of the dead. This was done as a respect for the dead. It was taboo to call a dead person's name. They were gone so it was no use. Now they share names. Because of this tradition of not sharing names, Maggie does not know her grandmothers' names. She knows her grandfather's name which was an English name - Douglas. Her father's name was John Bellum (?) Her husbands name (Eskilida) is an indian name. It is an old name and Maggie doesn't remember what it means.

Kids don't call old people by their names. They tell them "You are too small to call me by my name." They call them auntie, uncle or grandpa. Maggie had an indian name but she can't remember what it was because she has not been called it for so long. She was given the name Margaret (Maggie for short) when she was born. A white women helped her mother at the time of the birth and helped her name Maggie.