

ANS 401  
Knowledge of Native Elders  
Effie Kokrine  
Sept. 29. 1987

Summary by Mildred Hanson and Eliza Jones

The tape for some reason didn't record today's session, so this is a summary from class notes and memory.

Today Effie started the class by showing us a traditional lunch or food bag that she had made. It was made of membranous sac enclosing a moose heart. It was used to carry food in when traveling. The moose heart is taken out of the bag and dried. Effie sewed a strip of tanned moose hide around the top with holes in it for a draw string.

She also brought a moose bladder that can be used for a container. It can be used to hold water or fish oil. She said the bladder is blown up like a balloon and dried. Before it is completely dried a stick is inserted where it is tied to make the hole for filling and pouring. This can be plugged with a stick.

She also talked about how to make a pickled salmon bellies. She said salmon eggs were mostly used for dog feed. The whitefish and pike eggs were eaten cooked or raw.

#### Marriage

When asked if parents arranged marriage for their children a long time ago. She answered that a lot of them did. It was important to arrange a marriage for the daughters as soon as possible. A girl was considered old enough when they get their period. Girls were a burden to the family and they become more of a burden when they have a baby out of wedlock.

#### Trading with Koyukuk River People

She also talked about trading with the people from the Koyukuk River. They didn't trade with the Eskimos because in those days Kobuk was too far away. The people from Yukon traded dried fish for furs and sometime tanned moosehide.

There were no intermarriages with the Eskimo a long time ago. The Indians believed the spirit of the Eskimos were different.

#### Christian and Native Beliefs

When asked if Christian belief replaced her Native belief. She answered that you can live by both beliefs.

That one doesn't cancel out the other. The only thing is that medicine men had strong power long time ago. But because they started misusing their power while drinking and things. Their power was taken away. When Effie was a child people used to go to church every Sunday. The town people walked three miles to go to church at the Mission. The children including Effie walked three miles to Sunday school every Sunday. All the men and women used to dress up real nice for church. They also didn't work on Sundays. There was also a potlatch at Christmas and New Years. People wear their best clothes during the holidays. Including beaded mittens and fancy boots and parkas.

#### Wild plants

The only plants Effie know of that is used for flavoring is wild onions that grow on the sandbar and between rocks on the Yukon River. They have whitish flowers like clover flowers. These are picked in the spring when the salmon first start running in June. The salmon is cooked with it. The other wild plants that are eaten is tsok 'Indian potatoes, wild carrots'. These grow on the sand bars or where cottonwood trees grow. They are picked late in the fall or early in the spring. A long stick is used to dig up the roots. The roots close to the top are woody and rest are good. They are very tasty when eaten raw. They can be boiled or baked with with fish and meat but it is not as tasty when it is cooked.

#### Medicine

Some traditional medicine that were used are spruce boughs. These were boiled and used to wash affected areas. They also used to drink them. Aged urine was also used to clean or wash cuts and scratches. A year old dog turds were also used for medicine. They were made powdery and dusted on cuts. It was also used for sore eyes. The medicine people used to use some other things to make medicine with. People have lots of respect for medicine people.

#### Superstition

There were lots of things that people do and weren't suppose to do. Some of the things that is a taboo is you shouldn't step on fish blood if possible. That could give you a bad luck with fishing or hunting.

#### Toys

When asked what kind of toys they played with as children. Effie said they used to skin squirrels and dry the skins. They used to play with those. And in the spring they used to skin duck heads and stretch them to dry. In the

summer they pretend they did beadwork. They picked flowers and tacked them down on leaves with grass. They played with whatever was available to them in the woods. The boys carved play boats and other things. They also played with bow and arrows.

#### Traveling in the Winter

The winters were a lot colder long time ago. People had to have real warm clothes. She remembered when it took them three days to travel fifty miles to their winter camp at Fish Creek [called Stevens Creek on the map] above Tanana. It was cold and windy. It snowed so much while they were in the village that they had to break trail all the way. They camped at cabins along the way. The first cabin they came to was Chief Matthew's camp six miles above Tanana. The next cabin was a relieve cabin sixteen miles above Tanana. Chief Matthew sometimes stayed there. Then Mrs. Jordan and her husband used to live below Rapids year around. She was married to a white man.