

Knowledge of Native Elders
ANS 401
Effie Kokrine
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Summarized by Carl Chamblee

Effie talked about first aid in the first part of the class. What do you do when you're out in the woods and have nothing? For example, Effie's grandchild threw sand in his eyes; she used her tongue to clean it out.. The child went back to playing in a few minutes.

She gave us a method for cleaning a babies nose if we don't have the proper equipment (syringe) available. Put your hand over the infants mouth then put your mouth over the infants nose and suck.

Effie also said a damp diaper could be used to clean and disinfect a babies face ... or just about anything.

What do you do if a a baby is bound up (constipated). Cut a piece off from a bar of ivory soap and carve it into a tapered shape the size of a pencil. Stick it into a warm water until it is wet and slippery. Insert it in the babies buttock and wait a minute or so (whatever the baby will allow) and the baby should relieve itself. An effective remedy for a baby's diarrhea is cornstarch. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of cornstarch with water and give to the baby. It will coat the baby's stomach.

After sharing a bit of her knowledge on first-aid Effie devoted the rest of the class time to traditional native stories.

Dotson' Sa [the Great Raven] is Mr. Crow. He is sly, a cheat, a magician, a liar, and a thief; he was everything. Most of the time he was lazy. He had no good clothes or anything, he just lived off other people. He would make excuses to stay home from hunting.

How Crow Killed the Fogman

There was a settlement on the river near a creek. One fall men began disappearing. A man went up the creek to go hunting and he never came back. So another man went up the creek to search for him and he disappeared also. Then someone else went out searching and disappeared. One by one all the men had disappeared. The only man left was Mr. Crow. The women pleaded with him to do something. He finally left in his beat up old canoe. He landed a little way up the creek to where there was timber and chewed spruce some gum. He shaped it into a knife and spear. Then he sprinkled some of the magic on to the beat up old canoe and

on himself. Then he closed his eyes and made a wish that everything would be transformed into something beautiful. When he opened his eyes everything was beautiful. He continued his journey up the creek. Soon it started to get foggy. He couldn't see anything but he kept going looking for something. Then out of the fog he could see the tip of a canoe coming towards him. It was Mr. Fogman. Dotson' Sa was ready. They came abreast of each other and Dotson' Sa said, "Oh my friend, oh my dear friend we haven't seen each for so long. I want to give you a present. I want to give you my beautiful canoe, paddle and weapons". The Fogman was very suspicious of him. Dotson' Sa talked real fast and soon convinced Fogman to trade the canoe and weapons. They were paddling side by side. Dotson' Sa said something and the Fogman's canoe started to crumble. The Fogman realized what was happening. He grabbed his spear and threw it at Dotson' Sa and it crumbled on contact. The Fogman's canoe crumbled and while he was drowning, Dotson' Sa killed him with a spear.

Dotson' Sa returned to the village with Fogman's hunting equipment. He was a hero.

Ch'ititaalkkaanee
'One Who Traveled and Met Many Animals'

Effie says many of the stories contain animated animals. Some stories are long and take many days to tell. Ch'ititaalkkaanee is one of them. It used to take a good story teller 4 days to tell the whole story. Ch'ititaalkkaanee is composed of many short stories. He came down the Yukon River and fixed things as he went. The stories of his journey cover many aspects of nature and how it got to be the way it is.

The part that Effie told pertains to the Rapids on the Yukon, above her family's fish camp, where there are mountains on both sides of the river. On the north bank, there are boulders and rocks in the Yukon, in a line stretching into the river. It is said they are the remnants of a destroyed wolverine trap.

A wolverine lived there and had a rock trap to catch river travelers. Ch'ititaalkkaanee crumbled the rock trap into boulders. Mr. Wolverine could no longer press the rocks together and capture travelers. Pieces of the rock trap can still be found there to this day. The place is called Niftseeł Hutseeł Totaalyits Dinh, meaning 'Place Where the Wolverine's Weir was Wrecked'.

There is another place called Donigh Ts'oonigh Dinh 'Place Where Rock Scrapers are Picked up'. Ch'ititaalkkaanee came upon a woman on the beach scraping a

hide with her nose. He broke her nose to pieces. Scrapers found on the beaches of the Yukon River came from her nose.

When Ch'ititaalkkaanee finished his trip down the Yukon River. He ran out into the ocean as a giant. The lakes are where he stepped on his way to the ocean.

The next story Effie told is how the animals got their colors.

A long time ago all animals were grey. they began wishing to be all different colors. They all met up the Ray River, at the colorful mountain. Mr. Crow wanted to be the painter, and he began painting Mr. Fox red with little black and white colorings blended in. He continued painting and even painted the birds. He left the mothers grey with a little white so they could blend in and protect themselves and their young. The males he made pretty and colorful. Finally, he was the only one left. They all painted him until he was beautiful, but he was not satisfied. In disgust Mr. Fox took a basket of black paint and dumped it on Dotson's Sa. To everyone's surprise Mr. Crow was very happy with his new color. That is how animals got their color; there are many such stories.

Effie remembered another story about how the lynx got the black tips on its ears and tail.

A man and his wife lived by themselves on a river. When the man went out hunting he would be gone for a long time and hardly ever bring anything home. He didn't look as if he had been going hungry though. One day he left again and never came back. He was gone for a long time so she decided to look for him. She told her children that she was going to be gone for a while. As she knew which direction he had gone, she went looking for him in that direction. She came to a camp where her husband was living with two young women. One was cranky and always wore a frown on her face. The other one was very cheerful and was always smiling. The wife stayed hidden nearby until her husband had gone out hunting. Then she snuck up behind the two women who were stirring a large pot of grease. She killed them by dunking their heads in the pot of hot grease. Their facial expression was preserved. The wife sat them down one behind the other. She sat the smiling one in front and the frowning in the back. When the man returned. He called out... No answer. He called out again, "Hello, I am home". He could see them sitting there. One was frowning as usual and the other one was smiling as she usually did. He came up the bank and touched one and she fell over and he touched the other one and she fell over. He realized what had happened. Then his wife was satisfied and she went running home. She ran all the way home, then she stoked up the fire and put some rocks in the fire. She was waiting for him to

return. Then he came paddling upriver singing a song, "Who killed my pretty little wives." She said, "Hey, what pretty little wives is he talking about? He went hunting to provide for his children early in the spring and never returned. What pretty little wives is he talking about?" Then he was going to attack her with a weapon. She said to him, "You want to kill me with that weapon? I am not worth killing with a weapon. Why don't you kill me with that." She threw a hot rock at him from the fire with a stick. He threw his weapon down and he was going to grab the rock. His hands shriveled up around the rock and turned black. The wife said, "Grab it with your feet". He was going to grab it with his feet and his feet shriveled up and turned black. Then she said, "You might as well grab it with your nose". He touched the hot rock with his nose and his nose shriveled up and turned black also. Suddenly he was turning into a lynx. He turned around and started walking away. Then she threw a piece of charcoal at him as he walked away. It stuck to him and became his tail.

Effie stressed the importance of sharing our stories. The stories we know are not known by others and we should share them. One of our class members shared a story he had read. There were people living on the coast. They were constantly being harrassed by a large mosquito. The men went hunting for it. They had planned to catch it and kill it and be done with it. They captured it by throwing a net over it. They pulled it ashore. Then they didn't know how to kill it. Finally they said, "Let's burn it". The mosquito said, "Don't do it. You'll be sorry". They threw him on the fire and up boiled a huge black cloud of a million little mosquitoes. I suppose they were sorry.

Nich'inla'eena
'One Who Sneaks Around'

The last story is about Nich'inla'eena "Wild Man" or a man of mystery. The elders used to say they are people without a liver. That is why they were very swift. They also had strong medicine. they also had white eyes (possibly blue).. Effie thinks they were blue-eyed prospectors that had gone crazy, and grown body hair from weather exposure. They used to steal women and girls. They had the power to lure women towards themselves. They'd hypnotize women and make them go to them. People have seen them but they would have a temporary memory lapse and not be able to remember what they saw. Children would start to behave well when reminded by elders of the possibility of Nich'inla'eena hearing and getting them.

Once a woman went out and just wandered away and was gone for almost a year. When she returned she told this story. Nich'inla'eena picked her up and she lost consciousness. When she came to she was being carried

upriver. She made a point of remembering all the major landmarks she saw as she was being carried along. He brought her to a place where there were other Nich'inla'eenas. They all had white eyes. There were other women there held captive. Unlike her they didn't remember how they got there or where they came from. She stayed there all summer, as the wife of the Nich'inla'eenas that captured her. She had planned her escape by hiding food away from the camp. Finally she made her escape in the fall. She picked up the food she had hidden and left. She travelled at night and hid during the day. Sometimes they came very close to her in their search for her. It took her a long time but she finally made it back to her village. She was pregnant when she came back and gave birth to a white-eyed baby boy (possibly blue eyed).