

Bears and Superstitions

Today Effie talked about Bears and their Superstitions ^{about them} from the book "Make Prayers to the Raven." She said people always respected bears. The women for instance were not supposed to talk to or look at bears, young people are not supposed to eat bears because when the bear skin is hung to dry it looks like a human. When the women had their period they did not eat bear meat, they did not use it for clothing, they did not sit on it as a mattress. The women did not eat bear meat until after they passed their menopause. The bear skin was never brought home because it would bring you bad luck and if a person misused the bear meat they had bad luck for at least 10 years. Long ago people did not show off the bear skin, they respected the bear but today they start showing it off, put it out as a prize and do not show respect.

To respect the bear, its skull is hung on a tree. It can be burnt with clean brushes or a clean wood pile. Women were not allowed to kill a bear only in self defense. Women were taught that if she happened to meet a bear do not be afraid, do not run just stand still and lift your dress up to show that you are not afraid. You can tell the bear that you're helpless against his power and that he should walk away and not to bother you.

Today the young people do not respect

the bear. They bring the bear skin home to dry and they start bringing in the bear skin for people to walk on it.

When do the men go out hunting for bears?

They go out hunting in the fall time. In the Spring time in June the bears come out and start looking for food. In late August and early September the bears start eating berries and their meat is sweet like pork. There was no refrigeration in those days so the best time to kill the bear was during their hibernation.

Did the women cook the bear grease?

Yes. The older women were the ones who would handle it. Young girls did not handle it. When Effie was 15 her mother was bedridden so she was the one who would handle it. Because there was no one else to handle it. The bear grease is rendered and it is made into grease. It is used like mayonnaise or to cook with, to mix with berries, it is different from moose tallow.

Do the men kill the bears when they are not in their dens or do they try to get them when they are in the dens?

The bears can be caught in the fall when they see them in the fall. Usually they did not preserve

the bear in the fall because it cannot be kept like moose. That is the reason why the men catch the bear in the fall.

During potlaches the bear fat is distributed to older people in the family and visitors. They then render the grease for themselves, it is used to eat with meat, berries and dried fish.

In the Athabaskan culture there is a taboo about pointing at a bear. If you do see a bear do not point at it because they can feel the impact of your finger. If you want to say where the bear is, don't point and describe where it is at.

If kids are present at a killing of animals they were hidden under a blanket because they were not supposed to look at them. Also, another reason why kids aren't allowed to look at the killing of an animal is they do not understand that that is their food.

Title Why The Willow Grouse have white meat

Eggle told a story about why the willow grouse's meat is white. In a little settlement there was a Dotson's Sa^{the Great Raven}. At this time ~~it~~ was early fall and ^{as usual this time of year} the men were not hunting. Dotson's Sa stayed at home being lazy. One day the women were going out berry picking across the river. There were a lot of berries at ^a that particular place. Dotson's Sa had a canoe so he told the women we would take them over. ^{Hauling a few} but they all ^{at a time} couldn't fit all at once. He took a

couple of women at a time across the river and came back. There was this young girl who wanted to go across but Dotson's son said, "no, you wait, let these older women go over first.", and she was getting scared because she had to avoid him. On the ^{next} last trip over she was the only one left and she tried to get into the canoe but he told her "no, you wait", and he took the last woman across. He came back to ~~get~~ her. ~~so~~ she got into the back of the canoe. He started paddling across the river and when they reached the middle of the river he turned his canoe down stream and he started paddling fast saying "the current is taking us away, the current is taking us away." He was also helping the current. The women on the bank couldn't help them out ~~so~~ he kidnapped the girl. They went down the river and she was thinking "oh, how am I going to get away." She finally said "I have to go to the bathroom" and he said "here is my drinking cup use it back there" because he wanted to get as far away as he can. She said "oh no, I can't do that" (women men to respect the men's dishes, etc) So he said "well go on the beach where I can keep my eye on you", she said "oh no, I can't do that." So she said "why don't you tie a ~~rope~~ ^{rope} ~~around~~ ^{around} my waist and let me just go up on the bank, and you can hold the ~~rope~~ ^{rope}." He said "okay" So he tied the ~~rope~~ ^{rope} around her and

She went up ~~to~~ the bank. As she reached the bank she untied the ~~string~~^{rope} and tied it ~~around~~^{to} a little spruce tree because they are soft and if he pulled on it it would feel as though he was pulling on her. She started running home and she was getting cuts from branches and thorns. He sat there and asked her "Come on down, how long is it going to take you?", he started pulling on the string. He waited awhile and said "Come on, come on". Soon he pulled on the rope very hard because he was getting impatient and he pulled the little spruce tree out. He got very angry. He made it home somehow. By that time ~~she~~^{the girl} made it back to the village and she was very sick. She had scratches and cuts from the branches, thorns and sticks. So the family she was staying with rubbed some aged urine all over her body, and the Dotson Sa said "Okay, she thinks she's so smart, I hope she bleeds to death." So, her legs kept bleeding and bleeding and pretty soon she had no more blood and so she died. Just as she died her body turned into a willow grouse and it flew away and perched itself on a tree. And that is how the willow grouse got its white meat. ~~because she didn't let Dotson Sa~~
~~kidnap her.~~