

Knowledge of Native Elders.
Jonathan and Rosie David.
Summarized by Christopher Simon
March 3, 1988.

Jonathan talked some more about how families used to move around in the hills during the winter. They would set up camp where they would stay for about a week. The men went hunting for caribou or bear. When they get game. They had to pack everything, there were no dogs. They usually asked the young men to pack the meat home. Big Birch bark baskets were used as a backpack to carry big loads. Birch bark baskets were also used to cook in. These baskets were four layers thick to make them waterproof. To cook the food, the baskets were placed near the fire. Water and meat was added then hot stones were placed in the basket. When the stones cooled they were taken out and more hot stones were added this was repeated until the food was cooked. They used a wooden fork to lift the stones in and out of the basket.

To let people know where they were travelling to, they used arrows to point the direction. The arrow would be placed by the fireplace. If the person(s) did not come back, a good runner and walker were sent after them.

For temporary camp they usually made a lean-to by a big spruce tree. Spruce bough on top and spruce bough and grass for flooring. A big fire was made to keep warm. On the extended travel with families they used to hauled a teepee-like skin tent called naasoobalee and the poles to put it up. The tent had a hole on top to let the smoke out. These were hauled on a sleigh without a basket. These sleds had runners that were bent up on both ends.

Rabbit skins were used for many things like blanket, mattress, pillow, and so forth. They were filled with grain or squirrel nests. They were also used for lining children's parkas, mittens and boots. Rabbit skins were cut into long strips starting from the head. It was then twisted and knitted by hand.

Porcupine quills were used as beads. They were dyed with berries or ochre.

Muskrats were hunted with bow and arrow to make clothing. In the fall, muskrats are easier to tan because they are fat. In the Spring it is difficult because they have very little fat.

Moose ears were sometimes used to make mitts or scarf. Moose were often killed in the spring because it was easier. Now it is illegal. Hats were made of Martin, beaver, and muskrat. Martin is the preferred fur for hats because it is warmer. Beaver fur is too thick. Fur leggings were also worn when traveling. They cover the whole leg. The bottom fit over the boots. They were held up by two strings in the front and two in the back tied to a belt.

A teen-age girl was instructed about her first period. There were a lot of taboos she had to observe. She was instructed to put some spruce boughs down in the woods and wait for someone when she got her period. She was instructed to whistle when she heard someone calling her. They weren't suppose to listen to social activities in the village or camp. The young women were isolated about two or three miles from the village. They sometimes kept a dog with them. The dog went to the girls parents with messages when she needed something. For instance she'd tie a piece of stick to the dog's neck when she needs wood. Here they learned to sew. There were certain food they were not allowed to eat such as fresh meat, fish and some berries.

Lamps were carved out of wood, which held animal fat preferably bear fat because it burns the cleanest. Cloth was wound in tight string and held in place by three stones in the lamp.

By the time Jonathan and Rosie were traveling with their parents hand made canvas tents were used by their parents. They also used Yukon stoves. Dogs were also being used. A person had three dogs at the most. When setting up camp the men got the poles to put up the tent and the women shoveled snow and got the floor material.

Hammocks made of a blanket and rope were put up in the tent for babies to lay in. Squirrel nests were placed on the bottom for babies to sleep on. Toddlers wore muskrat skins pants with squirrel nests or grass for diapers. Jonathan said when travelling in the winter it is important to change clothes when you first get cold. Also you should stop and build a fire. Another tip is to turn your socks around when your feet sweat so the bottom of the socks is on top of your feet. When travelling they mostly carried dryfish and drymeat. Later on flour, baking powder, and beans were bought. Feathers were used for filling in mattress, blankets and pillows.