

Knowledge of Native Elders ... Rosie and Jonathan David
March 31, 1988
Summary by Bonnie Herbold

Place names: Seth te'ghee'o- Chief Charlie's Camp
at New Minto. Menh Tee- Lakes

Menh Tee Khughonttheet -- towards the river. The lakes are behind the old village of Minto. Long Lake/ Clear Lake/ Swan Lake Slough. The names of the lakes are sometimes a translation and in Athabascan may be different words all together. The lakes were about four hours above the village of Old Minto. There were summer camps there and people would set up camp for the whole summer. There they built elevated caches called Dukhtso. There are people buried on the hill overlooking one of the lakes. Beaver dams had stopped the fish from migrating so some of the lakes were dead. These were good places for hunting ducks in the spring too. In the winter time around Thanksgiving the people would move back to the village. Ch'etilakh khu means creek where the fish go. This creek is located on the south bank of the Tanana above Tolovana Creek.

Fifteen years ago, the people of Old Minto moved to New Minto because three times the village had been flooded. They moved by motor boat to the new site. The Government (HUD) offered to build houses for the people on higher ground. The first houses built were frame and were up off the ground. These were very cold and not suitable. The people built log houses which are satisfactory. The housing is similar to that in Nenana. The new village has a well and the houses have running water. In old Minto, water used to hauled from Long Lake. Jonathan would haul ice and put it in six big barrels he would use flouride tablets to purify the water. The six big barrels would last the family one whole month. The barrels were packed on a sled and pulled by a sno-go. Jonathan has worked as a carpenter, painter, custodian at the school. People still go to the Minto Flats in the spring where they fish for pike and white fish and hunt for beaver.

Christmas and St. Mark's Mission: Rosie got her first Christmas presents at the age of 8. Her family would go to Nenana by dog team the day before Christmas. Everybody went, Old people and children.

The Mission introduced the people to a different kind of calendar. There they learned about the different holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. Presents were given to each family. Churches from outside sent the gifts up to Nenana. It was the first time that they had seen knitted gloves. There was candy, scarves, socks, apples and oranges in the sacks. There was lots of stuff soap, candy apples. Mothers would go to a dormitory downtown and get hot cake and bread. First, there was a church meeting held and then at 7:00 pm the sacks were given out. There was a territorial guard or Army in Nenana and at Tanana.

Stories of the fierce Russians coming up the River, were told to Rosie. The Russians had a fierce fight in Tanana. The people would sometimes hide their wives in a cache and lock them in. The people told the Russians to go back, they were too rough around here. The men could not keep track of their wives. The Russians raided the caches and took blankets. In the spring the Russians went back down river.

Eliza remembered a story about when the Russians were coming and the men were out hunting. The women bundled up their children and fled into the cold winter weather. One child lost an ear because it froze. These are old time storie.

There used to be five teachers in Old Minto: There are now six teachers in Minto. There are three school buildings. There is no high school. The teenagers have to go elsewhere to finish their schooling. There is a good deal of substance abuse education for the little kids and they teach the kids about proper diet.

How Rosie used to tan a Moosehide: She would soak the hide for one day in water and then soak it another day turned around. This is done so that all parts of the hide are thoroughly soaked. Rosie would scrape the hide and soak it in luke warm water with fermented brain for 36 hours. She would then stretch it and scrape it using a pole and ropes. She would tan it and scrape it and take all the rough spots out. She would make it soft so a needle could go through it. This was done while the hide was still damp. It had to be worked in order to keep the hide pliable. She would place a dish pan under the hide to catch the drip.

After scraping the hide it was folded in half and sewn together. About a foot of canvas was sewn on to the bottom of the hide. The canvas hung over the smoking spruce and kept the smoker air tight to prevent flames while providing space between the smoke and the hide. This made the smoking more even. The red color for the hide comes from dry rotted spruce. The smoker is airtight. It might take one and half hours, others smoke the hide all day. It has to be checked regularly.

Were the hot springs used for healing? People used to go there when they got sick. They were first found when the snow was wet and when the people touched the water it was warm. They dug out the springs and made soaking pools. Tolavana means hot springs. Moss could be soaked in the water and used as a pack over an ache. Where the water was too hot for soaking, the people would lay spruce poles across the spring which had canvas on top and steam. You cover yourself up and after about an hour of steaming you rub yourself real good. You can stay for a week or ten days which is very good. One man was brought there who couldn't walk, he set up camp and after more than a week became better. His family pulled on his leg and he hollered. They packed his leg with moss. He got better.

The dentalia used in making a necklace for a Chief is actually a mollusk. They got it from the lakes and creeks. They used meat for bait. They take it out of the water and boil it. This is a fresh water shellfish that was traded. A Chitina lady that Eliza knew told how to harvest the dentalia. Sink a carcass of rabbit to the lake bottom, the next day the carcass will be covered by dentalia.

Rosie remembers the moose skin coat that her grandmother made for her. It was given to her at a potlatch and had beading for decoration. The beads had be obtained through trading. It was very beautiful and she wore it to special occasions like the potlatch. She danced in it too. Jonathan remembers her in the coat too. When she grew out of it, it was given to her relatives and cut up by the grandmother.

Rosie and Jonathan had an arranged marriage. They had gone together secretly though. Rosie advises that the girls should not go with anyone they don't intend

to marry.

Their relationship has been most educational to watch and experience. They have a strong devotion to one another and start and finish one another's sentences. They had a very good natured relationship and truly wanted to share their knowledge with those who wanted to learn. This was their last class and Jonathan put on his mooseskin jacket and gloves, which were beautiful seedbead flowers. These are used for celebrations and dances. We shared food together and informal chatting.

The coat and mittens were made by
Jonathan's classmates,