

Knowledge of Native Elders

Oscar Nictune

Summarized by MaryJane Derendoff

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Oscar started out by talking about weather forecasting. He said that they use to look at the sky and the horizon, especially at night. If at night the star's are twinkling, then there will be a storm. In the winter if there is a circle around the sun then it means there will be a storm. If there are two red posts on either side of the sun then it will be cold.

On the coast, hunters really have to watch carefully for ice flows and if the wind start blowing then they could only land in Russia cause that's the only way the wind blows. They can't drift back towards home cause of the West wind.

Other ways of weather forecasting is by your pet dog. If your dog shakes its body like there was water on it when there actually is none then it will rain. If your dog plays and rolls around on the ground then it will be sunshine or good weather.

Another way of weather forecasting is by watching the ground squirrel. If the ground squirrel has both cheeks full of berries then it will rain for long time. If the ground squirrel has only one cheek full of berries then it will only rain for a few days.

He said that no one can foretell an earthquake although the big earthquake in Anchorage was felt in Allakaket. He said he was cutting wood and the trees was swaying even though there was no wind.

The next subject he talked about was "trading partners". He said Eskimoes and Indians use to trade goods and is still common today. The Eskimoes would bring seal oil, ready made boots, sealskin, oogrook, reindeer skin and reindeer legging boots. The Athabascans would trade wolverine skin, beaver skin, otter skin and some mink and lynx. The wolverine skin was the main item that the Eskimoes wanted. Then they would go other places to trade the

wolverine skins and could easily up the price because the need was so strong for Eskimoes to have wolverine skins.

Charlie Custer came to Allakaket to have potlatch for his trading partner Leon. The potlatch lasted about 1 week to 10 days. In the evenings the Athabascans and Eskimoes would sing native songs that was made for the deceased. The People that attended the potlatch came from South Fork, Allakaket, Hughes, Hog River, Kateel and Koyukuk Station. The best song was made by a man named Charlie. After the potlatch is over then the people don't sing their native songs anymore cause it's taboo, Hooclanni' in Indian. After the potlatch is over then they have dance with mouth organ and accordion music. Lil' Beetus from Southfork use to play music for dance. He was a big person but there were so many other Beetuses that they called him Lil' Beetus. When they dance women use to wear dresses or skirts and jackets while the men used business suits.