

Knowledge of Native Elders ANS 401
Edward and Margaret Penatac
Summary by John Bartlett

Notes of October 18, 1988

Edward showed the photograph of King Island and pointed out where the gravesites were behind the village. The houses are rotting now because there is no one living in them, keeping them warm. The Schoolhouse is in pretty good shape, even though the glass windows have all been broken. The Church has been torn down.

The grass has overgrown the trails and the graves now, they are pretty hard to find now.

Babies got their Eskimo names from those who have recently died, there was no distinction of male/female names.

Edward's Eskimo name is Murisac, means reindeer fawn, he got it from his uncle. Margaret has two names, the first is Amasook, from her uncle and the second is Engnac from a relative of her dad's.

King Islander's got their English name when they were baptised, the priest named them. Before the school came only Eskimo names were used. Edward and Margaret's kids have both Eskimo and English names.

The Eskimo name for King Island is Uviak, it means "winter over there". The big rock in front of the village is called Imoorok. All big rocks had names all over the island so everyone would know at what place something happened.

Eskimo raincoats were made of oogrook gut, Edward said they were wind proof. Female walrus were used to cover umiaks.

hides

Margaret said there was no certain way for women to prepare for childbirth, you got enough exercise just walking around the island. There was a male midwife. After the baby was born it was patted on the butt. The ANS hospital was in Kotzebue or Anchorage. Long ago lots of King Islanders had TB.

The teachers put on a Christmas play about how Jesus was born. The statue of Jesus was put up in 1937 when Edward and Margaret were still kids, its still there.

Spring Day. The men go out hunting around 3 or 4 in the morning. During walrus hunting no one got much sleep, just naps when they could. Edward's uncle would always wake him up. Margaret would cut and scrape skins, then hang them out to dry. They would have to pull them in quick if it rained rain would ruin the skins. The skins were hung on big racks on top of the houses. Margaret spent much time sewing and making mukluks for her family, and baking bread.

Women mostly did skinsewing, some women did ivory carving after everyone went to Nome.