

KNOWLEDGE OF NATIVE ELDERS
12 Oct 1989 Museum Visit

Elder: Tatiana Saunders

The tour started out with the description of a native wall hanging. This wall hanging was described as the type used in a home to store items in. We next were given a description of a Chiefs jacket. She stated that only the chief could wear this type of jacket and was usually worn by a richer person or the chief. The type in the museum was of the newer type as the older ones usually are made with some type of bone. Jewellery was the next item on the tour. This was an example of old time jewellery. We were shown skis. These were usually made of hickory or spruce. We saw a dog sled and the description was of the building of the sled in particular the ~~braking~~^{brake} system. The brake is attached to the sled with a rope generally of 1/2 inch and the brake was made of steel. There was also the description of how the brake was utilized. Runners for the sled were required in the spring time when the snow had crusted. This was to help prevent wear on the runners. These runners were made of spruce. A tall straight, thin spruce is selected. It is peeled and split. It is bent into shape and stored next to the stove at night to help hold its shape. Coal oil is applied to make the runner slippery.

Tools were next and there were many types. The skinning knife made of bone with a birch handle was the one most conversation centered around. The canoe was next and description of the canoe was that they generally were two feet wide and 1 1/2 foot deep. Strip timber was used for frame. The birch bark or skins are attached with spruce roots.

There were no traps in the old days - dead falls were mainly used. This consisted of a small cubby house with a bait of sometype attached to a string which in turn when pulled would release a heavy weight of some type to kill the animal. After a dead fall had been used it was to be destroyed so as not to bring bad luck to the family.

BASKETS: Generally made of birch bark. Many types were used in gathering berries and any size was used. They were held together by lacing with roots. They would go into the hills five or so miles, pick the berries, sew the top shut. A cache would be built and the berries stored there during the winter. If someone wanted berries they would go to the cache and get them.

Kaazene

The Lynx was called "~~Cousin~~^{Kaazene}". Usually caught in snare traps. Was a smart animal, would not struggle in trap. There were some stories about the lynx, but not many.

BEARS: She started out telling a story about a mother bear and her cubs she had ran across once on a trail. She said that by talking to the bear and calling her old friend in a soft gentle voice an attack was avoided. You should tell the bear that you are friends and usually the bear will just walk away. Another story was about the young couple who were out camping and hunting. A bear came into their camp and was licking the young wife on the face. She had applied a bug goop of fish gut oil as a repellent. As they were sleeping out in the open only in their parkas, the bear grabbed the young wife by the hood and began to drag her away. She could not say anything because the bear would kill her. She slowly put her arms straight and slipped out of the parka.

after slipping out she ran back to camp and woke up her husband. He was really mad and told his wife to go home and not to follow him. He found the bear and they talked about how they should settle this. The bear was aware he had done wrong also. The man told the bear they should fight without weapons to see who was the strongest. The man removed a piece of rope from his pants which served as his belt. The bear didn't see this. They began to fight. The man went low and grabbed the bear around the waist. Reaching around with both hands and the rope he eventually was able to grab the rope from both sides. He continually made the rope tighter and tighter. The bear was then unable to bend over to fight with the man. Eventually the rope was so tight it broke the bears back.

Another story told was that women should not walk over their mans clothes or gun. This was to bring bad luck. In the case of the gun there was no way you could shoot straight after your gun had been stepped over by your wife.

She really enjoyed telling the stories as this will probably be her only chance. She can remember her grandmother telling stories when she was a child. They were requied to sit still and not smile or frown - only listen.

Another item described was the baby basket. This consisted of a carrier made of birch bark. Instead of diapers the bottom of the basket is lined with fire ashes moss, and soft grass like a towel. This basket was emptied once each day.

Allen Outten