

Narrator: Charlie Brush
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[side one]

Charlie Brush [CB]: It takes one to make a fish wheel, but after you finish it and sit it there, it gets fish pretty fast.

Dennis Demmert [DD]: Eliza will be coming and joining us again shortly, and I'd like to ask Charlie and Eliza to tell us, when Eliza gets here, more about the stick dance. But before Eliza comes, Charlie, there have been a number of questions. You know, you've told us about your trapping trip. There are a lot of questions more about that, and some of the stories. And I'd like you to note, too, that the comments from the students have been that they've especially liked these stories you've told, such as the raven story. I think you mentioned to me earlier that coming in here reminds you of things that you haven't thought about for a while. Hannah said the same thing. So if you lie awake at night and think about more stories about Raven, we'd like to hear about that. [laughter] But for now there were some questions about the trip that you took. When you went on a trip like your hunting trip, one question that has to do with the kinds of food that you took with you. Did you take a lot of food with you, or did you get game? Or--you took some with you. What kind did you take?

CB: Well, for out, to stay out for two or three weeks, we take quite a bit out. Like rice, plenty sugar, and we take flour. Then of course we take a bunch of bread, some crackers. And then the most dry food we take is like mostly raisins or prunes.

DD: How about any fish? Or dried...

CB: Yeah, fish. Dried fish. We got to have a bunch of, like for packing. But when we're going out with the dogs, dog team, we got to have about three bales of fish for the team. Depends on how many dogs we taking. Then there is for our own use. We put up fish special, you know. We dry them special. It's different from the dog's food. They got to put them up clean.

DD: Yeah. Also, when you were traveling, you know, like that trip you told us about, what did you do for a place to stay? Did you build any kind of shelter, or lean-to, or whatever?

CB: No, we take tent and stove along to that, on the sled, too. So every stop we make, we got to pitch up tent.

DD: How about that trip that you took, trapping, when you went over the mountains with the canoe?

CB: With the canoe? Well, we just...

DD: Did you take a tent with you that time?

CB: No, no. Oh, you mean--yeah.

DD: When you went...

CB: No, no tent. We just [inaudible] maybe. We put camp, you know. Fix up place, then that lean-over over us.

DD: How would you fix your tent?

CB: Well, first we shovel down what little snow. We shoveled that off with the snowshoes. We got work--when we start out there's snow. So where we get to place where we going to stay, 'til that

river opens, we just shoveled right down to the ground with our snowshoes. Then put spruce boughs down and built around it with spruce, you know. Then leaned over it.

DD: A lean-to over the top?

CB: Yeah. So everything we cook, it's got to be over the campfire.

DD: And how long--with a shelter like that, would you use it just once and then move on?

CB: Yeah, after the river is open up, then we start moving on.

DD: Yeah. But with a camp like that, you can put one up every night, can you, and just keep moving?

CB: Yeah, uh huh.

DD: Any questions--there?

Student: Did they use the canoe as part of the shelter?

DD: Did you use your canoe for part of the shelter in any way?

CB: No, no, we got a tarp along. Would be about, say about, ten feet by twelve tarp. Well, we never put that up every night, though. If there's no rain, then we just sleep out in the open. But when it starts rain then we put the lean over us.

Student: Did you connect it between two trees? Did you put a log between them and [inaudible].

CB: No, uh uh. We just cut down the poles. Just some skinny poles, so long, you know. What we think is long enough to stick that in the ground to lean over. That's where we put the camp

stove.

DD: Yeah. Elaine, you had a question?

Student: Charlie, when you said you took flour with you?

CB: Oh, yeah.

Student: What did you do with that? You had to cook on a campfire.

CB: Well, we got frying pan along. And cook that over campfire. Boy, I wish I had that now! [laughter] Yeah, that's just tasty hot cake.

DD: You made hot cakes, too?

CB: Yeah. That's all what we--only thing we could cook over campfire.

Student: You just make it with water?

CB: Water, baking powder, salt. Put a little sugar in there. It--this is when I cook for myself.

DD: How about when you did your traveling, Charlie, did you do any traveling after the bears came out or before they hibernated in the Fall time? Did you do some camping out?

CB: Oh yeah. Camp out. It's the same thing.

DD: Yeah. Did you ever have any problem with the bears?

CB: No, never did.

DD: Never come around when you're camping?

CB: No, only one spring they did. But we just got back to the camp just in time, before it happened to anything.

DD: What kind of a bear was it?

CB: A black bear.

DD: A black bear. The black bears aren't dangerous except they get into things, is that right?

CB: Oh yeah.

DD: Any brown bears down there?

CB: Well, out in the hills, yeah.

DD: Grizzly bears?

CB: Grizzly bears. They don't come around much. Out in the Yukon much.

DD: They're higher up in the hills?

CB: Yeah, higher up in the hills. And in the side streams where they get their salmon from.

DD: And you didn't go to the side streams or up in the hills that much, is that right?

CB: Well, we used to hunt bears in the autumn. But just only bears we seen is just bears, the black ones. No brownies.

DD: Is that the only kind you hunted, was black bears?

CB: Yeah. Brown is mostly on the north side of the Yukon.

DD: Yeah. But did you do most of your trapping on the south side? That's the place you were talking about.

CB: Yeah, yeah. Uh huh. South side. Because in my time there wasn't hardly no martens around. That's mostly where they go is for martens on the north side of these. There weren't too many of it around. Now days there's plenty of martens around, down there. And I think that's where their coming in from, on the north side of the Yukon, you know, because they catch plenty martens right around town, around the village. The only country that we used to hear about was in Northway country. They used to have plenty martens around there.

DD: Yeah, that's upriver quite a ways, huh?

CB: Yeah, that's quite a ways away from us.

DD: Well, in looking at the map, we don't have the map here today, but...

Student: We have a map in the [inaudible].

DD: Oh, do we? [inaudible] Well, maybe...

Student: Charlie, what happened to those maps? Over at your place still?

CB: Yeah.

DD: Okay, maybe you can pull that out and show us where Nulato is on that map. Two of you can just hold it out there.

CB: Oh, that map. I couldn't understand that map. That's a kids map, I call it. Just like playing with crayons.

DD: Okay, where's Nulato on here?

CB: Well, it's around there, yeah.

DD: Charlie, on that map there, the colors are for the different kinds of Athabascan people...

CB: Well...

Student: Once you get those other ones on.

DD: Then Nulato is kind of close to where the Eskimo people come. Did you ever...

CB: Yeah, there's Nulato. We were [inaudible] trapping [inaudible]. I don't understand that kind of map. Yeah, but this is [inaudible].

[inaudible conversation as class gathers around the map and away from the microphone]

Student: Dennis, you want me to get those other maps, maybe?

DD: No, I think we can do that another time.

CB: Well, maybe we can get it tomorrow.

DD: Yeah, we've got maps upstairs.

[inaudible conversation]

DD: What I was going to ask you, Charlie, was that Nulato is fairly close to the Eskimo country. Did you ever run across them when you were hunting or...

CB: No, no, never did.

Eliza Jones [EJ]: There was a trading between Unalakleet and the villages down there, though, huh?

CB: Kaltag, yeah. But from Noorvik, I remember there used to be some Eskimo used to come over. They came down far as Nulato, trading. Trading babiche and like, lamtaks...

DD: Babiche and what?

CB: Lamtak, that's the one...

EJ: L-a-m-t-a-k? Lamtak.

DD: What is that?

EJ: It's an ugruk sole.

CB: It's an ugruk sole. That's the kind Eskimo use for boots.

EJ: Lamtak is supposed to be an English translation of that.

[laughter]

CB: And then, like caribou skins or leggings. That's the kind he used to trade that. You heard that this--I think--what the heck is--Jim or something was his name.

EJ: [inaudible]

CB: Jim.

EJ: Jim, uh, uh...

CB: I guess you heard of his name.

DD: Frederick?

CB: Yeah. Eskimo. He used to trade that stuff or something, you know. He exchanged that stuff.

Student: How do you say that?

EJ: Exchange.

Student: No, he said there's a word for it.

CB: Yeah, [Athabascan word spoken]. Exchange.

EJ: Yeah, [inaudible].

CB: Yeah, special. [Athabascan word spoken], that's special friend.

EJ: So the people in Nulato have special friends in Noorvik that they trade with?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: [Athabascan word spoken] means that they--between the Eskimo village people and the people in the Athabascan villages, individuals become special friends so that they always trade with each others? And if one person goes to Noorvik or Nulato, that family would be responsible for their special friend? And if somebody from Noorvik come, and they have a special friend in Nulato, then they would be responsible for taking care of him. And they also always exchange presents.

Student: How long would they stay?

CB: As long as you want.

DD: What time of the year did they do their trading?

CB: This used to happen in month of January and February.

DD: So right in the middle of winter?

CB: Yeah. Just soon as days start getting longer.

DD: Okay.

EJ: So you remember when they used to do this then, huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh. When was the last time they did that, do you know?

CB: Well, the last time they done it was in January. That was done in, yeah, January. I remember.

EJ: About what year?

CB: Oh, I was still single yet, last time I seen that.

DD: So, let's see, when were you married? In 1932?

CB: 1932.

DD: So before 1932 was the last time that...

CB: Yeah, sometime in the '20's. Maybe I would put it mid '20's. And so that would be around '25.

DD: Around 1925 was the last time you remember them trading?

CB: Or '26, yeah. Yeah.

DD: And what did the Athabaskan people give in trade. You got babiche and...

CB: Well, they have the babiche and, like the Yukoners, they might have like moose skin, moccasins made out of moose skin, anything like that.

EJ: Wolverines...

CB: Wolverines, yeah. That's that they used to mostly go for the Eskimos.

EJ: Beaver...

CB: Beaver skins, yeah.

EJ: Beaver tail?

CB: Yeah. Mostly that's when they used to go for the Eskimos, see, them days.

DD: Yeah. Other questions? [inaudible]

Student: Do a lot of people upriver--did everybody around there know the Eskimos were going to come? Far away, or just Nulato itself?

CB: Well, no. It's Koyukuk and places, they know it. Wherever they come to first. Because Koyukuk, they had no one from Koyukuk River. They had no way to know what's happening on the Yukon. Because there was no radios, no telephone, no telegraph wire ran out that way. They just ran out along the Yukon River. And from Kaltag out to Unalakleet.

Student: What kinds of things did the Athabascans like to get from the Eskimos in trading?

CB: Well, mostly they went for this ugruk, that lamtak they used to call it, and babiche.

Student: Did they get seal oil and ivory?

CB: Seal oil.

Student: Did they ever trade for ivory?

CB: Well they never--that's hard to handle much ivory stuff, back them days. That I don't know.

Student: [inaudible] Is that more for tourists, the ivory?

EJ: Yeah, ivory is more for tourists.

Student: [inaudible]

CB: I guess then, at their time, they wasn't too interested in them kind of things, the Eskimos.

DD: In ivory?

CB: Yeah, because now days they're making lot of money with that.

DD: Did you do any trading, Charlie, when this was going on?

CB: No. No.

DD: But you remember people coming.

CB: Yeah.

EJ: I guess, right now, that's part of what's going on between Kaltag and Unalakleet?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: They go to Unalakleet a lot. There's a real close tie between Unalakleet and Kaltag people [inaudible].

CB: Yeah. Yeah they--from Kaltag. They say it's just ninety miles portage from Kaltag to Unalakleet.

EJ: And then there were some villages between Unalakleet and Kaltag along the trail?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: You used to hear about those villages?

CB: Yeah. It, well, they call it [Athabascan word spoken].
That's a where there used to been a village.

EJ: That's between Unalakleet and Kaltag?

CB: Yeah.

DD: Is that an Athabascan village or Eskimo?

CB: Eskimo. Well some--half and half they were. There was some Eskimos and Athabascans there. Just a few families. But they make better living in there.

EJ: Must be a good fishing place there.

CB: Yeah. They catch all these--all the trout. Trouts, they used to catch there. Nothing but trouts.

EJ: [inaudible]?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: And how about that, there was a [inaudible]? Or is that on the Yukon?

CB: That's on the Yukon. That's [Athabascan word spoken]. That's twenty-five miles. Yeah.

EJ: Oh, okay.

CB: That's straight across from mouth of [Athabascan word spoken].

EJ: Oh, uh-huh.

DD: Lois, do you have a question?

Student: Yeah, I was just wondering if the Eskimos and the Indians intermarried?

EJ: At this place at [inaudible]?

CB: Yeah, at--that's how come there's some people down at Kaltag, they got some Eskimo blood in them, 'cause the Athabascan and Eskimo used to get married. They're [inaudible].

DD: Yeah. Anymore questions on the trapping and fur trade?

EJ: You used to do [Athabascan word spoken], between the Eskimos and the Athabascans? Or just between the villages?

CB: No, uh-uh, just between the villages.

DD: What is that, now?

EJ: Well, [Athabascan word spoken] was sort of a game in a greeting that went between villages, like between Kaltag and Nulato, and between Kaltag and Koyukuk.

DD: It was a game?

EJ: Yeah.

CB: Well, it's like--see, the last time they done it is from Kaltag; they sent two boys. It's a messenger boy. Two messenger boys. When they sent these boys to Koyukuk, as a messenger boys for this Koyukuk to come down to Kaltag. And they waited long time for them to come, because this Koyukuk people, they already went out to their trapping camps, up in Koyukuk River. So whoever was left in Koyukuk had to go up in Koyukuk River, went around the

camps, and they all gathered up again in Koyukuk. So they went down in a month to Kaltag. Well, they were--they all had special friends in there. They call [Athabascan spoken]. Well, whoever is [inaudible] that would be your special friend what you have to-- when you see me coming [inaudible], you would grab hold of my leader line and bring me to your place. Then unload my sled, like my bedding, you know. And then you even will tie up my dogs. You'll have place fixed up for them to tie. That's the way that goes. Then after they got through with that, then everybody go in the hall, and that's where they have all this food waiting for them. Food. And then they spread out a cloth on the floor, and they sit right there with their friend 'til they finish eating. Then, after that, they put everything away, bring them back to their place, and that evening, that's when they...

EJ: [Athabascan word spoken]?

CB: Yeah. These people that comes in from other towns, they come in with this stuff, and dance with that.

EJ: The presents for their special friends?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Uh-huh. So that evening after they bring their food home, then the village people gather in the hall? And then visitors come in one by one?

CB: One by one. Bring in the presents.

EJ: And they dance. They dance around and then give their presents to their special friends?

CB: Yeah, uh huh.

Student: What kind of presents were given? What did...

CB: Anything. Anything that you could think of. Some [inaudible]. Some money.

EJ: Uh huh. And [Athabascan spoken]?

CB: Well, they all holler.

EJ: Uh huh. [Athabascan spoken].

CB: Yeah. [Athabascan spoken], and then they call out what he's going to bring in. And during that, then they tell him whoever he is, if you don't have that to bring in, don't brag about yourself. Things like that.

EJ: Yeah, so what the people would do would be, as the visitors are coming in one by one, and as the visitors come in, they say, "Who's that who come in? Did he bring..." and then they would name an impossible gift. And then, you know, it's all in fun. When they say, "He didn't bring back [inaudible]."

CB: Yeah. They doesn't mind it. If they don't got it. It's all in fun.

Student: Is there a name for the occasion, like is it the messenger feast?

CB: [Athabascan word spoken]. They got to be two all the time, whoever they sent.

EJ: It's this thing [laughs].

DD: What name is equivalent?

EJ: I don't know what [Athabascan word spoken]. It might be an

Eskimo word.

Student: Because there's another group that, I forget what group it is, but they have a feast just like this. It's called a Messenger Feast. You know, how they invite...

EJ: Yeah, uh huh. I read the story in, I think, in [inaudible]. What's that magazine? That's printed here [inaudible]?

DD: Yeah, Permafrost?

EJ: [inaudible].

DD: Oh, okay.

EJ: There was an article in [inaudible] where they had a messenger between missions or something, or between two villages. It's called [inaudible].

CB: Yeah, that's what they did. That's the way I understand it meant. They got no way writing to send a note, so they sent somebody with these.

EJ: So when they sent these two messengers, do they, these messengers carry stick with messages?

CB: Yeah. And they mark that. This stick is so long. They mark it so the ones that they sent for, they got to keep that stick, 'til maybe year or two. Then they'll send that two messenger boys [Athabaskan word spoken], and they'll mark that, they'll put their own mark on it. Certain way, you know. That's the way how they used to understand.

Student: Did everybody know everybody else's mark?

CB: Oh, yeah. Well, in their way. It's in their way.

EJ: And the messenger boys have to remember individual messages for all the people who send message [laughs]. They also have to be fast runners.

DD: Any other questions?

Student: Did the white man do a lot of trading with these-- I mean how did you get into the whole--they seemed to be real intimate. I mean, these people knew each other and they only dealt with their good friends. How did that work? Did you just go to a trading post and do your business with the white man, was that how it was done, for cash?

CB: Well, you see, they buy this stuff from the traders that-- sure.

Student: Did they ever go to [inaudible].

CB: Them storekeepers?

Student: Any of the white--were white people allowed in, or was it just...

CB: Well, there was one trader was like that. His name was Adolph Miller. He was a trader down there in Kaltag.

DD: Adolph?

CB: Yeah.

DD: What was his last name?

CB: Miller.

DD: Miller?

CB: Yeah. He was really interested in Indians, you know. Well, that's--he was among Indians. He was married to a Indian woman.

EJ: [inaudible]

CB: She was from Anvik. Mona was her name.

EJ: Huh?

CB: Mona.

EJ: Oh, uh huh.

CB: He was something like Dominique [inaudible]. He cared a lot about Indians. I remember one time he told--when he was [inaudible] start in '41, that's when they start putting that [inaudible]. This one white fellow, his name was Stanley [inaudible], he was Marshall of [inaudible]. He told Dominique, "Lets sell things high to the Indians, and sell things cheap to the whites." But he told them, and said, "I make my money from the Indians." He told them, "Whites and Indians is just the same to me," told this guy. See, that's what--some whites think that a long time ago. They never did [inaudible] for Indians. I know it. Even now some is like that.

EJ: Did you used to have bingles [sp.?], the traders?

CB: Oh yeah. And to trade with...

EJ: So you...

CB: You know, that's like money then. Some as big as a dollar. Made out of aluminum. I guess you seen that kind. Some as big as fifty cents.

DD: And that was what they paid you with?

CB: Well, yes. This Miller used to trade with that kind. But that's--then if you want cash then you could turn it in for cash, too.

EJ: Well, with the bingles, if you sell your furs to him and you have some money coming, you could take the bingles and then when you want to buy something you use it like cash.

CB: Yeah. You use it like cash.

DD: But only with that one trader, is that right?

CB: I think Dominique did something like that, too.

EJ: Yeah, all the traders had individual bingles, with their names on it.

CB: Yeah, but then again, they didn't--I didn't see it too long, you know.

EJ: ...it has the trader's name on it.

CB: Yeah.

Student: [inaudible]

CB: And it's only good for trade, used to be on then. Yeah, it was just as good as buying with cash. Only in that store. You could not buy with it from other store, though.

DD: Let's take a break and let me ask you, would you like to continue the discussion on trade when we get back, or the other thing that there were a lot of questions on was to learn more about the stick dance.

Student: Which would you rather tell us about, Charlie?

CB: Well, there's not much to it.

DD: I asked you folks. No answers? Okay.

[inaudible conversation during break]

DD: Okay, can we get started again? Okay, we're going to spend some time now talking a little bit about the stick dance. It lasts for a week or so, but there's a lot more that goes into that before it happens. And I think between Eliza and Charlie, we can get a better picture of the stick dance. In the report from last week, I think there's a little bit of an ambiguity there in regard to how often it is. I think it said every other year. I think it's every other year in each village. It alternates years. Is that right?

EJ: It alternates years, yeah.

DD: So there's a stick dance every year, but only every other year in each village?

EJ: Well, no. Sometimes there's years when there's none, but like if they would have it at Nulato and then the next time they would have it at Kaltag. [inaudible]?

CB: Yeah, you see now they're going to have theirs at Kaltag this year. Then next year it's going to be in Nulato.

DD: So usually it moves back and forth every year?

CB: Yeah. Back and forth. Sometimes they let it go, too, for another year.

DD: Some years they don't have it, huh?

CB: Yeah. It would be--they let it go for three years, sometimes.

DD: Yeah, oh, okay. You said it's up to the family that sponsors it? How do they decide to sponsor it?

EJ: Well, the family who's members have deceased since the last stick dance, they decide when they're going to have it. They're waiting for [inaudible], and I don't know how much of it Charlie talked about last time. But the way they start is by--like there might be a food potlatch at one time, and then the family who decided to have a stick dance would give a dish a food--they would ask a certain person to be at the food potlatch. And, at that food potlatch, this person would be given a dish of food. And that's-- is that about the first time they make a public announcement, like?

CB: Yeah, that's...

EJ: That's their way of making the announcement that they're going to do a stick dance. So that the person who receives the dish is going to be dressed for the deceased person. And it will be like a year before the real stick dance took place.

DD: So they announce it a year in advance, that they're going to have a stick dance.

EJ: Uh huh. So this person receives a dish of food, it's a whole meal.

DD: Who receives a dish of food?

EJ: The person who is going to be--see, stick dance, the family of the deceased sponsors--you know, say they're going to have a stick dance for your relative. Okay, maybe there's two or three people

in that family that want to dress somebody in memory of this person. They pick out--they decide who it's going to be. And they tell that person to be at this food potlatch. And then, when this person comes to the food potlatch, they receive a dish of food, and it's usually in a large, like, bowl. And there's a whole meal in there. And this person sits there and eats that. And then you take the dish home and [Athabaskan spoken], huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: And refill the bowl with food and sends it back or brings it back to the person who give him the meal. And then, so the next time there's something going on in the village, some kind of party or potlatch or something, they would give them a dish of food again. They would always use the same dish. And then they kept that up for, like, a year.

DD: Well, when the person who gets the dish of food gives back the dish with food in it, is that a celebration, too, or not?

EJ: Yeah. It is, it's all part of it.

DD: So every time there's a celebration in the village, there's dishes going one way or the other, is that right?

CB: Yeah, uh huh.

EJ: Well, it actually goes both ways...

CB: Now, see...

EJ: The person who is going to be dressed receives the food and eats it there at the potlatch. And then that very evening, he refills it and returns it.

DD: Okay, so when he returns it, it isn't at the celebration, it's afterwards, is that right?

EJ: Yeah, it's after the potlatch. He just returns it so it's back in the family house. So next time...

DD: So at the next potlatch...

EJ: So the next time there's something going on, he would receive food in it again.

CB: Now, see, this--they're going to have their stick dance at the end of Friday, see. They start this potlatch, they're having that every day, potlatch. But since this potlatch it start Monday, this dish is going back and forth like this.

EJ: Everyday.

CB: Every day. Morning, noon, and in the evening.

Student: For how many days?

EJ: For the whole week before the stick dance.

CB: Well, yeah, for the week. All week.

DD: Starting on Monday?

CB: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Friday is the last one. Three times a day.

DD: How did they decide that they're going to dress someone? How is that decision made?

EJ: Well, say that the deceased person is a young girl, maybe a teenager. Then the family would decide maybe the girl's friend or somebody of the same age would be dressed for that person. And

that person would just like represent the deceased for up until the stick dance takes place.

DD: During that week?

EJ: The whole year.

DD: The whole year? And are there more than one person dressed for the stick dance or...

EJ: Oh, yeah. There's a whole [inaudible]...

EJ: Well there are different families, yeah. You see, maybe one family would [inaudible] dressed, too.

DD: So a person that's remembered then, deceased, is not someone who died during the year, but during the year before, is that right?

EJ: Yeah. And...

DD: The preparation is all year.

EJ: Um hmm.

DD: I'm trying to jog your memory.

EJ: Oh, okay. And during this [inaudible] traditionally--now this is traditionally, I don't know if this still goes on today.

Traditionally, when they said there's going to be a stick dance, and this person, these families, are sponsoring a stick dance, then people in that community, the song composers, would make songs for memorial songs. For the deceased person. Also in the surrounding villages. That would be like Galena, Koyukuk, Kaltag, and Nulato. Sometimes people come up the Koyukuk River. [They] would make

memorial songs. And the week before--this week before the stick dance takes place, you know, in the evening, there's food potlatch. And then they take their dishes home and their food, and then they come back to their hall, and that's when they sing these memorial songs. See that--those particular songs are not sung on the night of the stick dance, itself, but it's the--it's from just like Monday, like he said, Monday through Friday. In the evening. They will sing the songs.

DD: Memorial songs were before Friday then?

EJ: Um hmm.

CB: Yeah.

Student: After dinner or before dinner?

CB: After.

EJ: [inaudible] after.

Student: After dinner?

EJ: Yes. After the potlatch. And then they returned to the hall, and they sing this song.

DD: And then what would happen on the stick dance night?

EJ: Then on the day of the stick dance--on the day [Athabascan spoken]?

CB: Yeah. During the day they goes--whoever going to be dressed up, that's the one goes back in the woods and cut the pole down. And bring it in close to the village. And then after it gets dark, while everybody is in the hall...

EJ: And they're singing the...

CB: Yeah, and then that's when they clean the bark off with knife, even though it's frozen, you know. And then, of course, they use light, lantern. Kerosene lanterns. And then they decorating...

[side two]

EJ: ...is that while they're singing...

CB: That thirteen songs.

EJ: People in the hall are singing the thirteen songs?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh. And they're doing the--the women are doing the dance. And all the women that are dancing are--have their costumes on. Usually [inaudible] and head dresses.

CB: Yeah. [Athabaskan spoken]. Because it got a hooked. But they never use that kind anymore, with a hook on it. And then after they sing these thirteen songs, then they start singing "Hee-yaah." Then that's when they bring in the stick. And they dance around with it...

EJ: They hold it upright like this or this one?

CB: Um hmm, sideways.

EJ: This way, huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: And they go around the hall with it?

CB: They--the top side is leaning around [inaudible], you know.

Then they stick it up in the middle.

EJ: Nulato has a community hall. How many corners?

CB: Four.

EJ: Just four corners, okay. Then they have a community hall that has a thing like this [draws on chalk board], so it can support this pole when it goes in the center.

Student: How tall is the pole?

EJ: These, how--I don't know.

CB: Well, depends on how high they [inaudible]. Could be about twenty foot long, because that's how high that place is. Well, [inaudible].

EJ: And then, this little thing there has windows in it.

CB: If it's too, too, they cut it back--down too big then they down with an axe, outdoors.

Student: How many people carry in the pole?

Student: [inaudible] holding on to it?

EJ: Huh? Yeah, it depends on how many people are being dressed. The people who are going to be dressed who are the ones that bring in the pole. So sometimes there's a whole, you know, bunch.

CB: There's a whole bunch of them.

EJ: Eight, ten, and you know, it varies depending on how many people are dressed.

CB: At the next potlatch, that'll be next year, they'll be, I

think, they'll be sixteen of them would be dressed at Nulato at one time.

Student: And who is that in memory of?

CB: That'll be in memory of...

DD: Sixteen different people?

CB: Aloyisius Peter...

Student: Oh, sixteen people that have died?

CB: Well, there's about four or five people.

EJ: But different people in different families--there's different people for that person.

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh. And is--when this hall have windows like this, huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Uh huh, up here? Uh huh. And they say that it's important to have the windows there because...

CB: That's the old talk, now we got that.

EJ: Oh, that new hall doesn't have it.

CB: Yeah.

DD: You have a higher ceiling on the new hall?

CB: No, it's lower ceiling, you know, about this size.

EJ: Maybe Charlie could tell us a little about the controversy that took place at the last stick dance. There was a real

controversy going on between the older people and the young people.

CB: Yeah.

EJ: See, this older person was making a stick dance for her relatives, and then they built a new hall. And she wanted an old hall because of this thing. But then they just finished the hall, and it was an real expensive hall, I guess. There was some people in the community that said it should be held at the new hall. And so there was a real anguish going on, and they ended up having it in the new hall, huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Um hmm. And that was the first time it was used.

CB: But that hall is fifty by eighty, the one that we have now. That's the new hall.

DD: But it doesn't have the windows, huh?

CB: Well, it's got the windows on the sides.

DD: But not up on the roof like that, huh?

CB: No, because they [inaudible] ain't like they showed anyways.

EJ: There's a story about this stick being up here and this window. They say it has a head and it looks around at [inaudible]. Is...?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: Yeah, you know, it has like spiritual head up at the top and, you know, it looks in all the directions. And I guess that was one of the reasons why there was a real controversy about, you know,

where they have this stick dance. The older people wanted it in the old hall, but there's so much more people in Nulato, now, that it just can't hold the people.

CB: No, that place is just only forty-five [inaudible].

Student: Why was the hall not built [inaudible]?

EJ: Maybe because of the structural...

Student: It's sixty by eighty, isn't it?

EJ: Yeah. Because it's so big that it's--I don't know, I guess maybe...

CB: And that one is, when [inaudible]...

DD: I wonder if the architect just didn't make...

EJ: That's very possible.

DD: Yeah. [inaudible]

CB: Yeah.

EJ: [inaudible]?

CB: Oh no, they don't put [inaudible].

Student: I wonder why. Maybe they should build it. But [inaudible].

EJ: Well, and I guess they saw [inaudible].

DD: Could be just the architecture of the building. I mean the architecture not knowing of the importance of that.

EJ: And then, so after they bring the stick in, then they put it

up?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: And then they sing what song?

CB: [Gives Athabascan name of song]. Then after that they start [gives Athabascan name of song].

EJ: [Gives Athabascan name of song]?

CB: Yeah. Then there's supposed to have been other songs. Four more songs after that.

DD: Four more?

CB: Yeah. [gives Athabascan name of song]

EJ: [repeats Athabascan name of song]

CB: Yeah. And then there's [gives Athabascan name of song]

EJ: [repeats Athabascan name of song]

CB: And [gives Athabascan name of song].

EJ: Uh huh. [gives Athabascan name of song] is the one they sing towards the end?

CB: Yeah. And then [gives Athabascan name of song]. I think there's six of them there.

DD: Didn't you say earlier, Charlie, that some of the younger people don't know about the six songs?

CB: No. So they only--what they first put up the stick they just sing this [gives Athabascan name of song]. Then after that they

start singing this [gives Athabascan name of song]. That goes for all night. They don't know how to sing these four other songs.

DD: The other four songs, huh?

CB: Yeah.

EJ: And it's important that people, for the eighteen hours that the stick is up, it's important that somebody is singing and dancing around that pole constantly. You know, at times there may be only a few people, and the people go home and rest for a while, and then people go--but traditionally a long time ago, there was kind of like a competition for who is going to stay up and dance around the pole the longest. There was also and [inaudible] could dance a long time [inaudible].

CB: Yeah.

DD: So that'll happen on Friday night in Kaltag, is that right? This week?

CB: Yeah, this Friday night.

DD: Yeah, so people are having their potlatches every night, now?

CB: Yeah, every night.

Student: Where you go...

EJ: Starting from yesterday?

CB: Monday, yeah. That start from Monday.

Student: Will you go to Kaltag?

CB: Because I got a card from [inaudible] and she told me that some of the Kaltag people went back down on account of that.

EJ: Oh, yeah. See there was a funeral at Nulato this week, and the burial was yesterday. So some of the people had to go right back to Kaltag because of the stick dance. [inaudible]

DD: Who can go to a stick dance? Is it open to anybody or...

CB: Anybody, anybody who wants to go.

DD: Yeah.

EJ: There's a guy...

CB: Even the President can go [laughter]. You.

DD: That means everybody, then?

CB: Yeah. It's open to anyone.

EJ: Yeah, there's--what's his name? Michel.

DD: What?

EJ: Cliff Michel.

DD: Yeah, Cliff Michel? Is he...?

EJ: No, no, no, a different guy. Anyway, he was with the University at Nulato. He works with the school there. And he said this week there going to be recording, you know, as much as possible about the stick dance.

[inaudible conversation]

DD: Cliff Michel teaches in [inaudible], and he's down around there somewhere.

Student: Charlie, what year was that--did the stick dance come

back? Didn't the missionaries frown on this before? Did they not like you doing the stick dance before?

CB: No.

DD: Did they stop the stick dance for a while?

CB: Oh, that was quite a while ago, yeah. They thought it was superstitious.

DD: Was that during your lifetime. or...

CB: Yeah, yeah.

DD: When was that? In the 1940's, or when was that?

CB: In '20's.

DD: So for a while in the 1920's they didn't have it.

CB: Yeah. Then they start up with it in '30's. Yeah.

EJ: Yeah. In one of the interviews that I did with Charlie...

CB: Yeah, that's when this priest from here, when they were going to have--they were going to put one up down at Kaltag. A priest from here, his name was Father Lyons, and then I know one from Nulato, they said--I was way over in [inaudible] that winter when they had it. And went from some other village. Three priests was there just to watch how they put up this. This stick dance. And here they didn't see nothing. It was just all dancing, dancing around the pole. No superstitious about it. It's just like you you go out [inaudible].

Student: Isn't it kind of a [inaudible]?

EJ: Oh no.

CB: No.

Student: [inaudible] it's not like a thing for funerals?

EJ: There are parts of it where it's--where there's emotion, when they do it, but...

Student: Is it like the mourning that first year, you know, like everybody feels bad.

EJ: It's at the end of it, so it's really lively. There are times when--there are very emotional parts to it.

Student: Is it supposed to be something like what happens [inaudible] the spirit are let go and--anything like that?

EJ: It's like having the last farewell party for the people. So people are always saying, "Okay, let's go around one more time for..." and they mention--or they, you know, mention your relatives or something. And they say, "Okay, really dance it up." And, you know, they just keep on going like that.

CB: Yeah. It's just like a person would come walk up to you and say, "Let's have this round." It's just the same thing. I used to dance lots when I was in my--young...

Student: So that was like [inaudible]...

EJ: Huh? Yeah, it's just really saying good-bye to the person. And it's final this time. And they try to make it, you know, lively, because it's...

CB: Lively, too. Well, that's about all, all the time. No more questions [laughter].

EJ: [inaudible] people didn't do it, the things they're supposed to do at the stick dance because of the suppression that took place by the church. You know, they didn't have it for many years, so like Charlie was telling you, he should have learned every step of how to do that, but they didn't learn a lot of that because it was suppressed at the time he was supposed to be learning it.

Student: And that would be why these young people today don't know the songs in between?

EJ: Um hmm.

CB: Yeah. Now like these songs, they supposed to dance around the stick but they doesn't know how to sing that much.

[inaudible conversation]

[tape ends]