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Elders in Residence Collection. Jimmie and Mabel Toolie are interviewed in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Keywords: dwellings, walrus hide, daylight hunting, survival food, hard times, seal oil lamps, hunting technology, employment opportunities, money, food prices, propane and oil, trading, first whalers, religion, missionaries

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Summarized by: Cecilie R. Ebsen

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Jimmie Toolie

00:01:34.32

Jimmie talks about how they made houses in the old days. They made them out of walrus skin among other things.

Jimmie Toolie

00:03:39.59

Every day his father would go hunting just before daylight. They used deer skin tents and clothing when they went hunting. Jimmie still uses a harpoon for hunting walrus.

Mabel Toolie

00:09:41.45

[Mabel talks in Yup'ik]

Jimmie Toolie

00:11:42.76

Jimmie talks about not having enough to eat. Sometimes they had to eat deerskin before going hunting.

Jimmie Toolie

00:17:36.09

Jimmie explains how they hunted walrus with harpoons. They would drag them home 3-4 miles.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:20:25.84

Theresa and Jimmie discuss the use of seal blubber for oil lamps.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:21:04.10

Asks where they get money from for buying stuff at the store.

Jimmie Toolie

00:21:20.54

They used to sell skin to the store and get grocery in return. Before they had the store they sold their skin to boats that came to the island. Traders came by boat in April and May.

Jimmie Toolie

00:22:44.18

Today they are retired and don't make any money.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:23:17.99

Theresa explains how a lot of people get welfare today, and very few actually work. Schools may hire 4-5 people and the rest depend on their parents and grandparents as well as social benefits. When they have money they use it on hunting equipment.

Jimmie Toolie

00:24:56.14

Right now three or four boys work at the school. Two girls cook up there too. Three people work at the village store.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:26:32.02

They often hire people part time so that they can have two people working instead of just one person.

Jimmie Toolie

00:27:15.80

Jimmie and Theresa discuss the price of gas and oil in the villages. They buy two gallons for ten dollars.

Jimmie Toolie

00:31:00.56

When Jimmie taught Eskimo dance at the school they used to pay him in money, but he asked them to pay him in fuel instead and so they did. He got 50 gallon a week. What he doesn't use he gives to his sons, because they are good hunters and they share their meat with their parents in return.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:33:19.47

Asks how Jimmie felt when the whalers first came

Jimmie Toolie

00:33:37.60

He felt pretty good, he says.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:33:58.72

Theresa asks Mabel as well, how she felt when she first saw the white men.

Mabel Toolie

00:34:14.11

[She laughs]

Jimmie Toolie

00:34:45.08

Everyone was excited to see the boats. And they were happy to see them because they could trade them for things they had never had before. Like coffee and sugar and tobacco.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:36:50.46

Asks if the white men were good to them?

Jimmie Toolie

00:36:59.95

Jimmie says they were. They helped them.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:37:14.00

Asks if they tried to take their women?

Students

00:37:24.20

[Everyone laughs]

Jimmie Toolie

00:37:30.72

Jimmie does not think so.

Mabel Toolie

00:37:42.59

Mabel has only seen and heard about this in the movies.

Jimmie Toolie

00:38:03.98

They came once maybe twice in the spring.

Jimmie Toolie

00:40:55.14

Sometimes they carved ivory and sold that to the store as well. It was 40 dollars a piece.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:42:00.61

Asks how much a white fox is worth today

Jimmie Toolie

00:42:10.85

He doesn't know. They trade it for fuel, not money.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:43:18.31

What was the religion like before the missionaries came?

Mabel Toolie

00:43:28.45

[Theresa translates for Mabel] They had God before the missionaries came called apakluq [sp?]. They always asked for good weather and things like that.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:45:19.53

Asks why they go to church today, while they never used to in the old days?

Mabel Toolie

00:45:35.23

[Theresa translates for Mabel] When they talked to God back then they would open the door and talk up to the sky for example.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:48:31.36

[Translates for Mabel] They have different kinds of medicine. They sang songs - very different from spiritual songs within Christianity. They sang in the darkness all day.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:54:45.04

[Translates for Mabel] When shamans were singing and drumming, there would be something [not clear what] circling on top of the drums and they would get bigger when there was darker in the house and smaller when it was lighter.

Students

00:57:26.38

Asks if there are people who still believe in shamans?

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:57:38.76

Asks if there are shamans today?

Jimmie Toolie

00:57:42.96

He answers no.

Mabel Toolie

00:57:54.16

She answers no.

Jimmie Toolie

00:58:19.70

Only the Eskimo dance still exists.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:58:31.76

Asks if they are happy that they are gone.

Mabel Toolie

00:58:42.40

Yes because they were scary. Now they go to church instead.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:59:12.36

Some churches have treated shamans negatively and talked about them as bad so there is a lot of fear.

Jimmie Toolie

01:00:49.72

They don't know that much about the medicine men.

Mabel Toolie

01:00:57.22

Her grandmother used to grow a plant for medicine. They dried the plant and then they used it as a kind of vaporizer. They use it for colds.

Jimmie Toolie

01:02:26.84

[Talks about what they did if someone was really sick, not clear what he is

actually saying]

Teacher (Theresa John)

01:04:54.22

How come there were medicine men otherwise - what did they do? And were there medicine women too?

Mabel Toolie

01:05:22.08

Yes, her grandmother was a medicine woman.

Teacher (Theresa John)

01:06:21.00

As far as she knows, there were many healers and they would have competitions for it. They would predict weather, talk to the underground and many other things. They used their minds in powerful ways.

Students

01:08:00.43

When the flu epidemic came the medicine men couldn't stop it, which turned a lot of people against them and towards the missionaries.

Students

01:08:44.19

Asks if Jimmie and Mabel think things are generally better today than a long time ago.

Mabel Toolie

01:09:14.96

Yes generally.

Teacher (Theresa John)

01:09:48.10

A lot of young people are really good composers.

Students

01:10:41.50

Did boats also come from the Lower 48s' or was it only from Siberia?

Jimmie Toolie

01:11:10.58

Later on boats came from all over - sometimes eight or nine boats.