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Elders in Residence Collection. Elder Grace Slwooko is interviewed in Fairbanks, Alaska.

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Summarized by Cecilie R. Ebsen.

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Teacher (Theresa John)

00:00:31.06

[General class instructions]

Grace Slwooko

00:00:49.45

Grace explains how she really appreciates life today with education and that the traditional Eskimo life was very different from the lives people live today. It is still important to honor elders.

Grace Slwooko

00:04:57.53

The Eskimos on St. Lawrence Island have many different games that they play. One is when children in the summertime go around and sing [Grace sings the song] and then adults answer in song [She demonstrates again].

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:09:48.87

Do you think that there is respect for elders today?

Grace Slwooko

00:10:14.86

In Gambell elders used to be honored and people obeyed what they said. Today people still show love and honor them but they don't listen to them as they used to.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:11:07.30

What do they elders do; what is their role?

Grace Slwooko

00:11:21.56

They used to talk a lot and make things. They still show the young people how to do traditional things like hunt seal and walrus and treat hides and prepare meat.

Grace Slwooko

00:13:57.20

Not everybody respect their elders today. Elders used to speak to the next generation, but today that is different because schools have taken over the education of the next generation and as a result elders have lost authority.

Students

00:17:58.32

What would happen to women who sewed when they weren't suppose to?

Grace Slwooko

00:18:23.16

Grace is not sure what happened. If people did something that was not nice people would talk about them. They would look at who their ancestors were and analyze why they were acting out.

Unknown

00:20:53.03

[Several people talk about Yup'ik words and phrasings]

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:22:15.72

People will talk about you because of your behavior.

Grace Slwooko

00:22:25.68

Behavior is important. For example a person who has been out on the ice and has seen how the ice is going to move will come back to shore, because he has listened to his elders and know that this is dangerous. He is a wise man then.

Students

00:24:45.77

What constitutes for being an elder? How does one become an elder?

Grace Slwooko

00:25:01.12

Elders are people who have done something nice for their people, given advice and been nice to the younger generation.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:27:12.92

A person has to acquire the position of elder, they have to earn it by leadership, by being a teacher, by living a lifestyle worthy of an Elder. They didn't used to have leaders; they just knew whom where worthy elders and who could guide the

community as a whole.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:30:13.90

Elders act as counselors and leaders. They are depended upon for a lot of things.

Grace Slwooko

00:30:59.24

Grace tells a story of a man that goes to another village to acquire for a woman as wife. She explains the whole process of acquiring a wife.

Grace Slwooko

00:38:48.44

Today a minister marries young couples at church.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:39:38.05

From what I know from friends in Savoonga, the men go to their woman's house and show that they are good hunters. They have to prove themselves before they can marry.

Grace Slwooko

00:41:53.20

Sometimes a young woman's family would come and take her home. If the man had been bad to her.

Grace Slwooko

00:43:23.06

Grace did not get married for a long time, She was 19 or 21 when she married. She came home in 1929 and got married.

Students

00:46:10.70

Is there a Yup'ik wedding ceremony?

Grace Slwooko

00:46:19.26

No, the young man just starts working for his new wife's family and at some point they start sleeping together.

Teacher (Theresa John)

00:48:01.35

Theresa's grandmother was nine when she was married off to a man. One day

she was playing with her friends, another day her grandparents brought her a fancy parka and she was put with strangers. They told her she was now a women and she had to learn all the trades and listen to her teachers. She did not sleep with her husband until she had her period a couple of years later.