

90-06-348

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

Keywords: Siberian Yup'ik Eskimos, St. Lawrence Island, mukluks, walrus hunting, drift wood, reindeer

Release agreement: Yes, no Internet

Date of recording: 10.02.1993

Summarized by Cecilie R. Ebsen

Summary date: 10.19.14.

Length of recording: 00.24.30

Students

00:00:43.16

Asks if people still make fur garments like mukluks?

Grace Slwooko

00:01:01.52

Yes they do. Today people save up from benefits and job payments to make parkas and boots. They still hunt seals and use the meat for food. They watch the movement of ice to see when they can go out and hunt. They hunt them in spring when the ice breaks. The ice arrives from north in November.

Grace Slwooko

00:03:42.71

They made their boats out of walrus hide. However when the white man came they brought with them wooden boats. The white men traded these boats for white fox skin. The wooden boats are not great when there is ice though because if they hit ice they break easily. So they use the walrus hide boats instead.

Grace Slwooko

00:06:17.87

There are herds of walruses. It is a lot of work bringing them home. In the springtime when some ice is still left they go out. They also get whales at that time. They pour the whole things out on the ice and work to take the skin of in one piece. They clean the blubber off with their traditional knives called ulaq [sp?].

Grace Slwooko

00:09:04.38

There are some places along the shores of the island where piles of wood have drifted in from the sea. They use those logs for building boat frames. The walrus hide is placed on those frames. [Continues to talk about building boats]

Students

00:14:11.08

Asks if people still use harpoons or just rifles?

Grace Slwooko

00:14:21.16

They use both. For whales they use harpoons. There is a bond between hunter and whale.

Students

00:15:03.30

Will the walrus sink if you shoot it?

Grace Slwooko

00:15:11.24

Yes, so they have to be careful. And all the other walrus will try to get away and take the dead walrus with them.

Grace Slwooko

00:19:41.18

Sometimes they find a dead walrus along the shore. They can still use them if they don't smell too bad.

Grace Slwooko

00:20:51.10

At some point they began to have reindeer herds all over the island. They used to get skin from Siberia before they got their own.

Grace Slwooko

00:22:13.57

Grace was born in walrus hide home with reindeer skin rugs. Today they have different homes with electricity and everything.