

90-06-47

Elders in Residence Collection. Elders Jimmie Toolie and Mabel Toolie from St. Lawrence Island are interviewed by students of the Alaska Native studies 401 class at University of Alaska Fairbanks

Keywords: Technology – harpoons; legends and stories; hunting; hunting- women’s roles; skins – polar bear; food restrictions; time of day; travel and transportation; months of the year; seasons; hunting – birds; terminology – Siberian Yup’ik

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00.00

The teacher explains how Jimmie in a previous class [recording 90-06-44] expressed how he would like to show them a harpoon. Now, he has started making one for that purpose.

[Jimmie shows the harpoon in progress to the class]

04.50

One man can hold a walrus with good rope and a good harpoon.

[Jimmie continues to show how the harpoon works when hunting walrus]

05.35

He made the harpoon from scratch.

06.30

Every day he would go out by dog team and hunt for walrus. He was encouraged to learn how to do it. One time six boys all held a line for a walrus. They could not hold it.

08.40

Older people taught them how to get the walrus with just the rope.

[They discuss if the class might try out the walrus hunting methods]

10.06

Jimmie is asked to tell the story of some people who were gone for a long time. A long time ago, three men from Gambell went out hunting on the ice. They stayed on the ice for one month. They stayed on a big iceberg and tied their boat to it. They killed a seal and survived by eating the blubber. Sometimes they took walrus stomachs and melted ice in them to get drinking water. They made wide mukluks so they could mend them and still fit into them [correct interpretation?].

They started out from Gambell, drifting south for one whole month without ever getting lost. They were approximately 20-25 miles from Savoonga. Before daylight the ice stopped there and they jumped to shore ice. They made it to Savoonga. Only one man was staying there in an igloo, his name was Vincent [last name: Karpar sp?, Inuit name: Maluka sp?]. The next day they headed back to Gambell.

When Jimmie was a little boy, they would eat walrus skin if they did not have any other food. His grandfather and grandmother gave it to him. It was pretty bad. They also ate sealskin with blubber. That is what the three men ate to stay alive on the ice.

When they went hunting on the ice their parents always told them to stay close to the boat. One man's cousin would go walrus hunting far away from the others and when a storm came they left him behind with his boat. He usually would drift back to shore in his boat, but one time he did not make it. When it starts blowing you should turn back right away.

20.00

A student asks if the men, who were stuck on the ice, were on a piece of ice that floated away. Jimmie answers yes. When he went seal hunting he would go in open water, but it is slower work. The current will take the seal and put the boat in danger of tipping over. Once he went hunting with two others: Aluva [sp?] and Alfred. When they were more than 500 yards from the shore ice on open water, the current changed. Jimmie wanted to turn back to the shore ice, but Aluva did not want to. Jimmie tried to kill a seal, because he wanted to make sure they had food. The ice they were drifting on was about four feet wide. When they came closer to the shore ice again they jumped.

[Discussing the Yup'ik terms for different kinds of ice and states of sea ice]

25.10

One time some people could not get their seal back to shore, so Jimmie went out and got it for them.

A student asks if men ever went walrus hunting by themselves and if so how did they get the walrus back with them? They did go hunting by themselves. Jimmie explains how he cuts the walrus in a specific place and ties the rope to it in a specific way [gives demonstration to class] so he is able to drag it. He only takes part of it with him.

28.20

A student asks if there are any women hunting? Jimmie says no. He has heard of an old lady from King Island who went whale hunting.

The teacher asks Jimmie to talk about someone who got a polar bear and what they do with the skin. Jimmie says they give the skin to the old people in the community. They wash, dry and stretch them. Some of them are also tanned. They eat the meat; especially the smaller, younger ones are good meat.

When a young person gets their first seal or walrus or polar bear they do not keep it but give it away. Jimmie does not know why they do that. They do have a feast when a boy kills his first walrus. They cook and eat the meat. The hunters only eat about three bites when they come back after a long hunt, because they are not ready for a large amount of food. They might wait 15 minutes and then eat a little more.

35.58

The dogs eat bear. The dogs can also kill polar bears.

[Unclear speech]

38.00

Jimmie knows a man who does not use guns, but a spear to hunt. One man went out to a polar bear with a spear. The bear tried to bite him when he slipped on the ice. It broke his bones and he could not walk. Someone came and found him.

The teacher asks if Jimmie went up to the museum and saw the harpoons. He did.

[Class and Jimmie joke around about going hunting together]

41.15

A student asks if he uses a gun for hunting walrus. Jimmie first uses a harpoon and then he shoots them afterwards.

The teacher asks a question [directed at someone else, not clear who] about a program and whether that program works with elders at FNA [Fairbanks Native Association].

Teacher encourages the students to go to a luncheon, celebrating elders in the Fairbanks community put on by FNA.

Jimmie and Mabel are invited to lunch at the Episcopal Church on Friday.

44.30

[Practical arrangements and class activities are organized]

47.55

A student asks how they kept track of time when they did not have clocks. Jimmie explains that they looked at the stars. They can tell by the stars when daylight is

going to come. During the day they could not tell the time, only when it was going to get dark.

They could tell the changing of seasons. When winter started they hunted walrus for three days at the time. When bad weather came they cut and dried meat.

A long time ago they killed all the walrus, females and babies too. They used skin boats.

They used walrus hide to keep blubber warm.

51.40

They could take as many as eight female walrus. It varied from hunt to hunt. If a storm came they would turn back immediately.

A long time ago they used wooden boats with sails to sail north.

When someone killed a whale they towed it by boat [baline?].

A student asks a question about hunting limits. Jimmie explains how before they had no limits. Now Fish and Game sets limits, so they are only allowed to get four walrus.

[Discussion in Yup'ik]

55.00

[A discussion of names for the moon is going on, unclear speech]

A long time ago the old people were given a name for the moon [correct interpretation?].

Jimmie knows a few other names for the moon. [Yup'ik name] means starting to breathe.

A student asks how they know that spring is coming. Jimmie says by the low moon. That is how they know. They also watch for south winds. They do not really have any animals that signal it.

A student comments on whether the birds fly north etc. Jimmie explains that the white geese come in. When fall comes they go to the east [coast] line past Gambell. They sit there a couple hours and then take off again.

01.01.02

[Jimmie shows how the geese fly on map]

The birds only stop on St. Lawrence Island for a couple of hours on their journey two times a year. They have all stopped by within a period of two to three days.

[Discussion of Yup'ik terms for geese]

They hunt them with guns. In earlier times they might have used walrus tooth on a line [correct interpretation?].

You would have to be a really good shot to use that. Jimmie has never seen anyone do it.

01.05.30

One time he and some boys got some rocks. They tried to hit geese from different directions so that at least one of them would get it. They were four or five boys watching for the birds and then throwing rocks at them.

You would have to be a really good shot to get a goose like that.

[Brief Yup'ik continuation of story where Jimmie demonstrates]

They also did it with cranes.

Sometimes they tried to kick them instead of grabbing them [not clear what animal they are referring to here, maybe walrus]. One man, Kanuka [sp?] was very fast. He would always kick them [kick the line?]. They called him [Yup'ik name] the small man. He could jump seven feet up the air. He could catch ducks by running up to them. He was very fast.

[The class is wrapped up and practical things are organized for the last four minutes]