

90-06-49

Elders in Residence Collection.

Jimmie and Mabel Toolie are interviewed by students of the Alaska Native Studies 401 class at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Keywords: St. Lawrence Island, traditional lifestyle, dwellings, walrus, hunting, fishing, songs, drums, airplanes.

Release agreement: yes, no Internet

Recording date: 02.27.1984

Summarized by: Cecilie Ebsen

Summary date: 09.11.14

Length of recording: 01.17.29

Teacher

00:00:07.33

Asks the students to introduce themselves.

Students

00:01:21.84

[All introduce themselves]

Jimmie Toolie

00:05:45.20

He was born in Gambell. When he was a young boy, the white men used to ask him where the igloos were. He never used an igloo. Instead they used walrus hide to make their houses. His father went walrus and seal hunting in early spring. They needed the blubber for oil to heat and cook with. They didn't have any tea back then but when they cooked walrus or seal they would drink the soup like a tea. It would keep them warm.

In the wintertime they used harpoons. The ice was thick and the seal and walrus would pop up through holes in the ice every 20 minutes. When they came up the men would harpoon them. The elders used to tell them that when they harpooned, they should make sure to get away from the harpoon's line to not get caught in it.

In the summertime they used skin boats to hunt walrus.

Jimmie Toolie

00:11:20.29

When he was 14 years old he moved to Savoonga. It was 1914. That was when he became a reindeer herder. In the springtime they corralled the reindeer [show on map where]. They would butcher the reindeer near skin boats and trade meat and skin for walrus rope and skin.

Jimmie Toolie

00:14:50.01

Back then they did not have any village store. Traders came in early spring, in

May, led by Captain Petersson [sp?]. They traded for coffee and other goods in return for walrus skin and rope. At some point him and his wife bought a woodstove.

Mabel Toolie

00:17:22.49

[Talk in Yup'ik] In the springtime they moved to [placename not clear] for hunting and for looking after the reindeer. When school started they moved to Savoonga. Mabel started school when she was 15 years old.

Jimmie Toolie

00:19:24.49

Explains how Mabel used to work the walrus skins. She split the hides to fit them to the boats. She would split them starting late July and let them dry. They used two walrus hide for each skin boat. Sometimes she would split up to four hides a day with her knife.

In 1924 he married Mabel. Now he is 80 years old.

Jimmie Toolie

00:22:05.16

His reindeer are marked on the right side ear with an L [correct interpretation?]. Others have a V. They watch over the reindeer to make sure wild animals don't go after them. He was the chief herder for 25 years.

Teacher

00:24:31.35

Wants to know what Jimmie made his ropes out of for harpooning?

Jimmie Toolie

00:24:42.23

He made them out of walrus hide. It was skin ropes.

Students

00:26:32.46

Asks Jimmie and Mabel to talk about their children.

Jimmie Toolie

00:26:51.06

They have six boys and two girls. They have lost two boys. They have about 40 [30?] grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

Mabel Toolie

00:27:32.42

Mabel corrects him to 14 grandchildren. [Mentions the names of their children]

Mabel Toolie

00:28:51.01

Mabel confirms that their son Raymond is a whaler.

Jimmie Toolie

00:28:52.37

He has caught two whales already. He's also killed numerous polar bears.

Jimmie Toolie

00:29:31.58

When going whale hunting they drag the skin boats 50-60 miles from Savoonga. [Show on map where the whales come by the island]. Every spring they drag out six skin boats. They give the muktuk [sp?] to the people of Savoonga. The limit pr. season is two whales. Only people from Gambell hunted whales, people from Savoonga did not because the whales didn't come by there during hunting season.

Students

00:36:47.34

What did you do when you lived in Anchorage for one year?

Jimmie Toolie

00:37:06.58

He worked as a carpenter for the air force. He doesn't hunt walrus anymore because his eyes are not too good.

Students

00:39:03.49

Wants to know how he fishes: with nets?

Jimmie Toolie

00:39:15.81

Yes and rod.

Teacher

00:39:21.63

Wants to know if he has ever taught anything?

Jimmie Toolie

00:39:28.21

He did ivory carving. He taught dance at Savoonga high school. Mostly for girls, as many boys didn't want to dance. He did that for three years but had to quit because they did not have hours for it anymore.

Jimmie Toolie

00:42:13.60

He likes to sing and dance. He considers himself a singer while his wife is a dancer. He writes his own songs. His father-in-law taught him how to sing. He writes about hunting, basketball, egg picking, walrus, a graduation song and much more.

Students

00:44:34.86

Do all singers make up their own songs?

Jimmie Toolie

00:44:44.00

They do. Sometimes good singers will help sing other people's songs. Jimmie also dance. They sometimes borrow songs from other places. When he was a little boy Siberian people visited with Gambell people.

Unknown

00:46:14.94

[Recorder breaks off and comes back on]

Jimmie Toolie

00:46:40.94

The Siberians stopped visiting around 1940. Jimmie never went over to visit them.

Students

00:47:22.31

The Central Yup'ik Eskimos hit the drums in a different way than Jimmie does, why?

Jimmie Toolie

00:48:38.68

He is not clear in his answer. They seem to have developed differently. The mainlanders use thinner skin perhaps.

Teacher

00:49:45.21

Asks if Jimmie remembers when planes started flying to the island.

Jimmie Toolie

00:50:05.49

He does. The first plane landed on the ice on the lake outside Gambell. It was around 1924 when the air force arrived in Gambell. In 1945 the mail planes started coming. Lots of people gathered to see the airplanes. No one knew what it was. People stood too close to the airplane when it was going to take off and the pilot had to tell them to move away.

Jimmie Toolie

00:54:18.16

People sometimes prayed when the planes came in. The pilot sometimes landed on the water and had to row to land. Sometimes the planes would go upside down. It could be scary.

Teacher

00:55:11.32

[Practical information about other activities that Jimmie and Mabel will participate in]

Jimmie Toolie

00:59:17.99

He only went to school through second grade.

Students

00:59:18.40

Did Jimmie's father take him to the qasgiq [men's house] and teach him things?

Jimmie Toolie

00:59:44.91

He did. He taught him how to build a house. They would build them during fall. They did not have any logs or trees on the island. They used driftwood they found on the beach and walrus hide.

Jimmie Toolie

01:03:39.58

It was 1951 when he took his first trip to Northeast Cape where his family had a camp. The air force was there already at that time. In the wintertime they got there by dogsled. Each year they would build a new house at the camp.

Teacher

01:06:35.77

Asks Mabel what kind of food she used to gather

Mabel Toolie

01:06:47.63

She gathered all sort of greens. She cooked the big leaves

Students

01:09:34.69

Was your marriage arranged?

Jimmie Toolie

01:09:41.98

A long time ago the parents of a young man talked to the parents of a young woman and asked if he could marry their daughter.

Teacher

01:13:48.14

[Discussion of future classes and activities]