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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.

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Summarized by: Cecilie Ebsen

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Jimmie Toolie

00:00:23.89

[Jimmie shows a harpoon he made and explains its parts as well as how they go out on the ice and use it]

Students

00:06:09.67

If you run up to the hole, do you scare the walrus away?

Jimmie Toolie

00:06:26.23

They actually make the hole bigger and then sit and wait until the walrus comes and then they harpoon it.

Students

00:08:03.45

Do they have to get home before dark or can they travel in the dark?

Jimmie Toolie

00:08:20.20

It is not a problem to travel in the dark. They make marks in the ice, like a pile of ice, so when it is dark they can find their way back.

Students

00:09:24.07

Do they hunt walrus by foot or by boat?

Jimmie Toolie

00:09:31.81

Both. [Jimmie shows on map where they hunt walrus] Right in front of Savoonga. They go there by dog team.

Jimmie Toolie

00:11:09.76

[Discuss hunting with the harpoon again by demonstration]

Jimmie Toolie

00:12:20.34

Jimmie knows a man who went to kill a white whale. He did it with just one shot with the harpoon.

Students

00:13:14.50

What is the danger of hunting walrus?

Jimmie Toolie

00:13:25.66

The smaller walrus bite and the bigger ones have tusk. They can go right up to the boat and cut through the skin. The females with babies are dangerous because they will protect their babies. That is why there is always someone designated to be on watch for walrus in the water.

Jimmie Toolie

00:16:07.65

They have a 30-40 feet skin rope attached to the harpoon. Occasionally the walrus pulls someone into the water.

Jimmie Toolie

00:17:25.99

When Jimmie became a striker he was 21-22 years old. He learned it from his father. He was 14 years old when he started hunting walrus with his father.

Jimmie Toolie

00:22:35.70

[Demonstrate harpoon further, difficult to follow without illustration]

Jimmie Toolie

00:24:14.08

The skin rope is made from walrus hide. It is cut before the skin is dried. The fur is removed and then it is cut. It is half an inch wide. [Show how if they had two short pieces of skin rope they would put it together]

Unknown

00:27:13.25

[Not clear who is telling this story] Once there was a man who was lost. People did not usually take in strangers, but one family took this man in, they hid him

and fed him for a long time. They didn't tell anybody. The man taught them how to make rope in return. He taught them how to cut it round and round so it would be long. Eventually they showed other people in the village how to make the rope. They were all very thankful to this stranger for teaching them.

Jimmie Toolie

00:28:10.93

Jimmie has heard this story as well.

Jimmie Toolie

00:28:36.00

[Demonstrates how to make rope]

Jimmie Toolie

00:32:50.12

They divide the walrus skin between the hunters. The same with the meat.

Jimmie Toolie

00:35:57.69

Walrus has lots of fat like seals. They use it for oil. Today people don't have oil lamps anymore but they used to.

Teacher

00:38:18.00

Asks Jimmie to tell stories of his ancestors' lives.

Jimmie Toolie

00:40:10.17

He never saw his grandfather, because he died before he was born. He did see his brother: Asaula [sp?], Lincoln's brother. Asaula asked his wife to go out and see what the weather was like. His wife did not want to go out. She went out and she got lost. No one knows what happened. There were no footprints or anything.

Jimmie Toolie

00:42:47.78

He heard other stories too. A lady, he can't remember her name, went to Kukolik [sp? near Savoonga] village, which was a big village. They killed all the dogs and moved to new land. They washed their bodies every night. At night they burned big fires. One night everyone slept [died] except one lady from Gambell who survived.

Unknown

00:46:06.79

[Recorder is muffled]

Jimmie Toolie

00:46:26.36

No one knows why they died like that.

Jimmie Toolie

00:48:07.75

Once they found a body who has been frozen and so everything was intact. They took her Outside and then brought her back.

Students

00:49:03.85

There used to be a lot of other villages on St. Lawrence Island. Could Jimmie talk about where people used to live on the island outside Gambell and Savoonga?

Jimmie Toolie

00:49:51.58

There were camps all over. He does not know of other winter settlements.

Jimmie Toolie

00:51:10.15

Jimmie's family's home has always been Savoonga.

Jimmie Toolie

00:53:18.05

Jimmie was around nine years old when missionaries came to Gambell. The missionaries settled in Savoonga around 1924. They opened the school right away when they settled in Gambell. The children wanted to go to school and the people were generally supportive of the school. Shamans and missionaries did not clash as far as Jimmie knows. Before they got the church, they held church at Jimmie's house. Then they moved to the school house and then later to the church when it was build. The pastor was a Native boy.

Jimmie Toolie

00:57:23.31

Jimmie quit school when he started herding when he was 12 years old.

Students

00:58:02.90

Does Jimmie remember the whaler who settled in Gambell?

Jimmie Toolie

00:58:19.45

He does. He was the first white man to settle on the island.

Jimmie Toolie

00:59:14.98

Traders came to the island in the spring/summer months. They gave the traders walrus hide and mukluk. In return they got leave tobacco They used to make pipes to smoke the tobacco in. Only the adults were allowed to smoke it.

Jimmie Toolie

01:02:05.91

[Talk about and demonstrate how they used to smoke it to great amusement of the class]

Jimmie Toolie

01:02:25.21

Jimmie and Mabel never went to Siberia. Other boys went and they told Jimmie that the Siberian people put deerskin on the floor, because they did not want to sit directly on the ground.

Jimmie Toolie

01:04:42.32

Jimmie confirms that each man had a trading partner; they would trade with the same family every time. Sometimes wives were traded too. One man had two wives. He brought his wives to Savoonga because there wasn't much food in Siberia [It might have been Luka Manaia - his reindeer herd chief, not clear]

Jimmie Toolie

01:07:14.04

He heard of another man in Siberia who had seven wives.

Jimmie Toolie

01:07:43.69

Jimmie does not remember when they stopped traveling to Siberia. It was a white man who stopped it [correct interpretation?]. One time a man had difficulties making it back to Siberia so he went to Gambell instead until someone could help him go back. People helped each other like that a lot.

Teacher

01:10:14.21

Who started the trading? Who came over first?

Jimmie Toolie

01:11:29.47

His grandfather went to visit the Siberians. He stayed there one or two months. He stayed there like a brother or good friend. Everyone had someone to stay with over there.

Teacher

01:13:30.56

[Practical information]