

90-06-51_SIDE_A

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 R. Ebsen

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Length of recording: 00.46.10

Students

00:00:02.90

A student asks Jimmie to talk about tribal councils or any kind of government that existed when he was a boy

Jimmie Toolie

00:01:02.44

When Jimmie was a little boy they had different groups, for example there were two groups making decisions in Gambell [Correct interpretation?]. They had a really big house where 10-12 families would meet and plan things.

Jimmie Toolie

00:03:42.34

Sometimes they had to meet and decide what to do about Siberians they were in war with. They made a hole in the wall of the big house so they could watch out for the Siberians. One time they got into a bow and arrow fight. They also had to jump around to avoid spears [correct interpretations?]. Jimmie does not know why they were at war.

Jimmie Toolie

00:06:51.61

When he was a little boy and went around between villages, the elders would have running sticks. They put them in the back and if they got slow they would hit it and they would go faster. That is why he later did running training while he was a herder.

Students

00:08:20.30

Did the two different sides of the village have a chief each or were all men equal and all had a voice.

Jimmie Toolie

00:08:40.85

Everyone decided; everyone had a say.

Students

00:09:09.76

Did they make friends with the Siberians after fighting with them?

Jimmie Toolie

00:09:32.79

At some point they fighting stopped. He is not sure what year they stopped fighting, but they did.

Jimmie Toolie

00:10:37.57

On the fourth of July, they were playing with a spear. Harrison's father was using a jumping spear, they hit him [not sure who, might be talking about a walrus] with a spear and he fell down.

Students

00:12:56.64

What did the women do during war?

Jimmie Toolie

00:13:23.93

The families stayed in their houses, but after the first fight, Jimmie's father build a big house for everyone so they would be safe during the next fights; they would stay inside together.

Students

00:14:48.41

How did they decide which men would go fight and which would stay back?

Jimmie Toolie

00:15:10.11

Jimmie doesn't know. Sometimes the girls were stolen so that might be why some men had to stay back. That was also the reason why they were fighting sometimes. Normally when there was a fight all the men would go. Many men died.

Jimmie Toolie

00:17:27.81

When he was a little boy lots of people came from Siberia in June and July. They would stay for about a week. They would eat, then they would run around. After running they would wrestle. After wrestling, they would do Eskimo dance. In the

evening they played ball; a kind of softball.

Teacher

00:20:15.75

Last night, Jimmie taught them a basketball song that he made.

Jimmie Toolie

00:20:30.66

In the softball game the young boys chase the girls around. When they ate, they ate dried meat. They also brought different things for gifts such as deerskin. They traded walrus hide and mukluk.

Students

00:24:01.17

When the Siberians came over and they had potlatches, did they stay in their houses?

Jimmie Toolie

00:24:22.60

Yes, they stayed with them in Gambell. Everyone had friends they stayed with.

Jimmie Toolie

00:26:40.26

They also played a game with a stick and a piece of rope [Demonstrates, not clear without illustration]. They would also kick a ball around. It was made of sealskin and was almost the size of a basketball. One man, Konuka [sp?] was a very good runner. No one could catch him. He was short but fast.

Mabel Toolie

00:30:39.42

Mabel does not want to comment on whether Jimmie was a fast runner. She says she doesn't know.

Teacher

00:31:44.24

Asks Jimmie if he knows what dances they performed with the Siberians?

Jimmie Toolie

00:31:59.82

They would put an eight feet long mukluk in the middle of the room. People would sit down on it. In the front of the room the old people would sit. The old people would holler loudly. Six or seven boys got out drums and the girls would dance. In Kotzebue, mainland boys like to dance too, but not so much on St. Lawrence island: here it is the girls who dance.

Jimmie Toolie

00:36:58.73

In the springtime young boys stay out late at night. If they see bears near by the old people tell the young people to go home. Today the young people do whatever they want and no one says anything.

Students

00:38:15.85

How did young people get married/coupled off?

Jimmie Toolie

00:38:31.91

A man was about 15 or 16 when he got a wife. He would give walrus hide and rope and other things to the wife. Today they give flour, sugar, axe etc. Basically they buy the girl. The boy will work for one year for his new wife's family: chop wood, get water, and hunt seal. Jimmie's grandson got a girlfriend. When Jimmie goes back he will pay him some money.

Students

00:42:27.42

What if the father of the girl says no?

Jimmie Toolie

00:42:55.05

Jimmie doesn't really answer. Instead he suggests that he will look around for girls to marry his grandsons [He is having a lot of fun with this subject].

Jimmie Toolie

00:44:34.70

He was married this way too. His father gave Mabel's father gifts. He didn't see Mabel when they courted her parents but when he finally did he was happy to see how slim she was [Everyone laughs]. He had been working for two years when he got married in 1924 in Savoonga.

90-06-51_SIDE_B

Length of recording: 00.36.15

Teacher

00:00:16.88

Do you see a lot of change in terms of how things used to be done and how they are done now? Before the parents of the groom would give skins and rope etc. to the parents of the bride. Today they give sugar and flowers etc. So that is kind of

the same, but have other things changed? What would you like to have stay the same have young people do today?

Jimmie Toolie

00:00:38.41

Jimmie cannot think of anything. People have changed today. Boys and girls can get together whenever they like. The boys have girlfriends. The elders can only ask if they are going to marry them, not demand it.

Teacher

00:03:36.21

Asks if missionaries changed the way that people thought?

Jimmie Toolie

00:03:58.24

Yes they did. People appreciated the missionaries. They stopped working on Sundays and people were happy to get a day of.

Teacher

00:05:19.64

Were there ever any evil, bad shamans?

Jimmie Toolie

00:05:29.56

He does not know any stories of that.

Student

00:05:47.84

A long time ago the men used to shave their heads, did Jimmie ever see that?

Jimmie Toolie

00:06:04.52

A long time ago they cut their hair [Show how short], about three inches. They cut it with a wet, sharp knife. He does not know why they did that. Jimmie's wife cut his hair like a barber.

Jimmie Toolie

00:09:23.24

The women braided their hair in two braids. The women didn't cut their hair. Women used beads that they got from the Siberians. Today they don't use beads as much. They do try to teach the young how to use beads in school just as they teach them about the old stories.

Teacher

00:12:57.73

In Jimmie's class at Savoonga school he tells old stories. Would he like to share one here?

Jimmie Toolie

00:14:13.08

He has already shared stories about hunting, because young people do not know much about hunting with harpoons for example. He explains to the teacher that he made a harpoon for this class earlier - when the other teacher was there.

Jimmie Toolie

00:18:12.41

In early spring Gambell people came to visit Savoonga for Eskimo dancing. They wanted to buy deerskin at the same time. After the butchering they would go back home.

Student

00:21:09.84

Sometimes white people come to harvest tusk and leave the dead walrus behind.

Jimmie Toolie

00:21:39.16

They would do that [Demonstrates how they cut the tusk off]. Jimmie does not really have an opinion on whether it's okay to do that. They are always watching them and making sure they stay within hunting limits.

Teacher

00:24:26.05

What would happen to people who did something that was against the law? Or what were bad things/wrong in the old things? For example if someone stole, what would happen?

Jimmie Toolie

00:25:08.81

They didn't understand it like that. If someone took something, people might ask why that person took that. Older people might punish a thief by making them work hard and watch them. Punishments were always to make people work hard.

Jimmie Toolie

00:26:58.35

A long time ago when they had spears, if someone wanted to fight, they would grab them by the foot [Correct interpretation?]. If someone was really mad others would step in and grab him [Correct interpretations?]. Jimmie does not know

what the punishment for murder was in the old days. Today it is different. The council and police punish people instead of the people doing it themselves. They have the white man's system.

Student

00:29:18.15

Do you think it will stay like this - the white man's system or will it change back to the old ways?

Jimmie Toolie

00:29:23.07

It will stay like this. He tells his grandchildren to stay home at night. They ask them what they do when they go out because they hear about things happening. The police talk to the grandchildren too. They watch them.

Student

00:30:55.68

Did they have jail a long time ago?

Jimmie Toolie

00:31:12.97

They did not. Now they do. Jimmie does not think jail is healthy. The young people don't listen to the elders, they want to do everything themselves and therefore they get it wrong and things happen. It looks like the older people are starting to talk to the young people now.

Student

00:33:44.99

Why did the old people stop talking to the young people?

Jimmie Toolie

00:33:53.86

He doesn't know. Perhaps because they figured the council and police were doing it. But the council and police don't always watch them and so the elders are realizing that they still need to do it.

Jimmie Toolie

00:35:32.04

The old way worked better: where the people would punish someone themselves. The police are not as good a solution.