

ANS. 401- Knowledge of Native Elders.

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Oscar Nictune

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Qayag

Our guest elder is Oscar Nictune, an interior Inupiaq from Alatna, Ak. He was born on July 8, 1901 at Alatna. His eskimo name is Kalaq. Alatna is located ~~right~~ ^{Kobuk River} on the interior across from Allakaket an Athabaskan Indian village. He has lived in Alatna all his life.

His mother was born in Kobuk and his father came from Kiana. So he's a full blooded eskimo from two places. I guess his ancestors came from Pt. Hope.

Oscar said that the scientists say that they've been living there since 5,000 years ago. He speaks both Athabaskan and Inupiaq and believes that a long time ago people used to speak one language and crossed the Bering Sea and landed at Pt. Hope then journeyed west to Noatak, Kobuk and others, all the way to Alatna.

In the old days when Oscar was small they went to fish camp to Inuacuaq lake, which had a lot of fish in it. Also he said that in the old days people never got hungry, because there was plenty of game which they hunted using a bow and arrow. Also had to do with what they have or make their own stuff like his mother used to make rope or twine ^{from the bark} out of sand bar willows. They also made their own tools like stone knives which they used for carving and others.

Sheep Hunting: In the old days when people didn't have motors on their boats it took 2 weeks to get to their sheep hunting site in July or middle of August at this time the leg skin of sheep are good for boots and the fur just right for mittens and things like that. Sheep hunting was done in the Brooks Range ^{and} they traveled up the Alatna river also using the John river, which is the easiest way and is still used today. Today they are not allowed to get lambs but can get only one. The sheep skins were used for clothing such as parka's mittens, and boots when there weren't any clothing stores available.

Oscar was a sheep hunter in his younger days. They were advised not to drag the sheep that they killed or skin it on the trail due to the belief that if the sheep were dragged or skinned on the trail they wouldn't be able to get anymore or have bad luck.

How did they get trimmings for parka's?

In the old days they used to make certain types of snares such as dead fall to trap wolverines. But with the wolves they would wait until the wolves breed then they'd take 1 pup home and raised it as a pet and kill it during December when the fur of the wolf got prime or just right and used that as parka ruff or trimming.

Medicine men.

In the old days they also had medicine men, who were like doctors and made people well who had illnesses. Also some people who were cruel sang songs to kill people, especially when they envy them. They had a lot of songs for everything.

Trapping and Trading:

In the old days people used to do a lot of trapping using seal skin

and sinew for traps. They would trade their furs to this one guy, Solloog- a wealthy man who did his trading in Kotzebue. He would often trade the furs for example, 1 marten skin for 1 dipper of alcohol, he made a lot of the eskimos drunk and back then they didn't have any jails.

They also sold fish to miners up along the mining camps. The highest price for fish was \$1.00, which was a lot of money. With the money they got from selling fish they bought groceries from the N.C. Company for such items

as flour, sugar, coffee and tobacco, which they smoked using their homemade pipes made out of willows.

First Airplane:

Oscar first saw an airplane in 1927 at Alatna. The people were just excited to see their first airplane on Easter Sunday. There were pilots such as Noel Wein, Captain Wilkins, Billy English and Lindberg. 1927 was the year when the first plane landed at Alatna.

At what point did Alatna become a village?

1907 when the first episcopal church built a church there, but people were always there even before Oscar was born. Alatna is also called Alasoq. It is a good place to go hunting for game and fishing. Allakaket is an Athabaskan village right across from Alatna. The kaket and atna at the end of these names mean at the mouth of the river.

main types of games played when Oscar was a child were football or more like baseball to see which one could run faster and also to see who had more endurance. The main types of foods eaten were shee fish and beaver when he was small.

He also told a story about how in 1920 the caribou got driven up North to Barrow by his Aunt, who took off her pants while the caribou were migrating. This made the caribou crazy and drove them all the way up to Barrow, and ever since then there's caribou up north.

When people were fishing late in the fall how did they store their fish?

People stored their fish in wooden boxes with willows at the bottom so that rocks and stuff wouldn't get stuck to the fish. These boxes were 6 to 8 feet wide and about 2½ feet deep. This was done about last part of August and October, also in October you couldn't fish anymore due to too much ice floating on the river. Oscar also said that they don't store their fish this way anymore.

Did eskimo people go up the old man river?

Yes, they went up but not in the summer time. Long time ago mostly indian people lived on that river. In the earlier days when Oscar hunted over there there was an old man by that name, who snared caribou. This river was named for that old man.

Oscar was given his eskimo name Kayaq by his parents and since the white men couldn't spell it he was given his name Oscar by an Irish woman in school.