

MAKING A LIVING IN MY TIME

My mother could do just about everything!

People did all kinds of things to make a living.

My mother hunted gopher with us, with **Shānlaya** and me, up at **Kanday Kī** (a hill just north of Aishihik) and through the hills around there. She showed us how to skin gophers too. At first, she would start it for us. She showed us how to prepare them and smoke them. My mother broke the gopher's ribs back so it would lie flat. Then she scraped the ribs so they would dry quick. She set them upright just ready to cut for smoking. Then **Shānlaya** and I sewed the gophers together with young spruce roots.

My mother prepared the roots by splitting them and rolling it up before a gopher hunt. That's when she made us pull spruce roots. That's what we used to sew the gophers together. After we sewed them together we hung them up - just like blankets hanging there. A blanket of gophers sewed that way can be folded up. It can fit into one side of a dog pack, and the rest are folded into the other side. Even if it's very heavy, the dogs would pack them.

As we traveled, we camped. Whenever we camped, we would hang up the gophers again. We used to hang them up on smoke racks. That's how we stored gophers for winter. The meat does not go rotten that way. It's as big as a blanket after it is sewn together. My mother used to sharpen the ends of the spruce roots like a needle, that's how we sewed them together. We made lots of gopher blankets that time.

When we came back to camp, my mother cut out moccasins for us. She taught us how to sew high tops on the moccasins for wintertime. **Shānlaya's** mother

would come to get her, and she would ask my mother, "How did you learn how to do these things?"

My mother said that before her, people used to make small moccasin tongues with round soles. She said she was the one who started making large moccasin tops and different soles - like today's moccasins. She was the first woman to cut large tops out and made them the way they do now. She cut them out with the small knives her father made. People asked her how she thought of making moccasins like that. She said she thought she wanted to do something different. My mother said her dad made an awl for her - a skin puncher. He made it from the smaller leg bone of a lynx's hind leg. She used that awl to punch holes and to sew around the moccasin edge.

That's how people started making moccasins this way. A long time ago, they used to make small moccasin tongues. They sewed skin around under the small tongue. Some people in different areas still make moccasins the old way.

As soon as my grandfather, my mother's father **Udzi Kī** killed a lynx, he made awls. A lynx bone is same size as a regular awl. They filed it to a point. He said, "My daughter is getting married." So he gave her two awls. They didn't have scissors in those days. My mother said she cut the moccasin patterns out on a flat wood with a sharp knife. She said they sold one awl for one tanned moose hide.

People asked her how she sewed around her moccasins. They asked her to see it - the awl. Pardon Kane's father's name was Joe Kane, and he told my mother to give an awl to his wife for a price of one skin. She told him, "My father just gave it to me." But she said she gave it to him for one moose skin. A tanned

moose hide. Then Bobby Kane's mother brought two tanned moose hides for two awls.

When we were ready to go back to Aishihik – my mother and **Shänlaya** and I – we started picking berries. My mother and Daisy's mother stayed there making birch baskets. They stayed there making baskets with Elsie's mother. They were also picking berries too. When Bessie Crow (**Shänlaya**) and I picked a basket full of berries, we would give it to my mother to sew the lids on and then we would cache them. They were very heavy and they froze during the fall. During the winter when we took those berries out, they sounded just like dog food bouncing into a dish - that's when they're frozen. When blueberries are cached that way, they don't get squished. Any kind of berries are cached for the winter. Then people go and get them during the winter time. When Annie (Charlie) was a teenager she used to come with us berry picking.

At the same time, we dried moose meat where the moose were killed. We would carry everything back to our cache. We used trees to cover up the food cache, and that way nothing bothered it.

"You're Smart Like Old People"

Your Dad and I hunted for your grandparents (Jack Allen's parents) where they lived down at "Salmon Patch."

We used to follow the Kluane River to Donjek River where the two rivers flow into each other. We traveled with dog teams. Where those rivers meet, down river quite a ways on the Donjek River, there was a bluff that sheep used to climb. We climbed those mountains to kill sheep. There was no bridge yet. That's where your dad hunted sheep, because your grandma didn't eat moose

meat. He hunted sheep for them. He kept his dog team at the bottom of the bluff and climbed up to the sheep for them.

Your grandmother (Jack's mother) once said to me. "You're sure smart like the old people!"

When your father and I were trapping north of Burwash, your father killed a moose on the trap line and I stored lots of grease in a dried bladder bag. I took the moose heart bag and pulled all the fat around it off and blew that bag up and dried it. Then I made crackling and put it in the moose heart bag. When we came back to your dad's mother's camp I took all this grease and fat (crackling) out for them. She was surprised, she said, "What's that?" I stored sheep fat, too, for them!

One time, we were waiting for the supply man. We were short of tea and sugar. Your dad told them when he was in Burwash that we needed tea, sugar and rice. He also thought that your grandparents were out of tea and sugar too, since they lived a long ways up.

Sure enough, the supply man who worked for Jean Jacquot came in the late evening - his name was Ollie Wickstrom. The dogs started barking, he shouted up at us, "I got your tea and all your order." He was hollering from the river. We lived on top of the bank in a tent. He said, "Come down and help me bring some stuff up."

The supply man stayed with us that night. He told my husband, "I saw lots of sheep cross up by where your father lived. I was looking around for people [to help], but then I thought, 'Who am I looking for? I'm traveling by myself. I

can't do anything. The sheep would freeze up if I shot them.' So I went right past them."

We sent back some sheep meat and fat with the supply man to your grandma at - Salmon Patch.

That's when your dad kept going up the mountain. I stayed home preparing meat and fat to send to your grandma. Your father said that when he brought the sheep meat and fat into her, she was really pleased. She said, "Oh, my grandchild!" The grease I sent was in a bladder bag.

She said she hurried and cooked the sheep ribs for your grandfather. He was cutting wood up back. He said, "What is that you're cooking?" She said "I told him, 'It's meat that our son sent us.'" She said she brought out the heart sack full of crackling and grease. She said she chipped a piece off it for him. He said, "What are you doing? Eat it yourself - I eat moose meat fat." She said she brought out the grease that was in the bladder bag too. She said, "I took that out for him too." He said, "Goodness! She knows just like the old ways, my grandchild."

Traveling from Cultus Creek to Kloo Lake with your Father

One time at Cultus Creek, a wolf tried to come into our camp, while we were looking for our colt. We were on the Gladstone Trail (see map). We left the colt and her mother with Charlie David, but as soon as they let the mother run, she followed us. We were staying with my father at Kloo Lake, hunting muskrats. Then we went through McKinley Creek. We got to Cultus Creek. Your father was looking for the horses over towards Silver Creek. I stayed with Sophie (Watt) - that's when Jim Watt's dad was still alive, when Jim Watt was already a big boy.

I told my father, Robert Isaac, to make a big fire signal when he comes back from looking for the horses, so that we will know which way he went again. So we could stay overnight again and wait for him. That's when Billy Roberts was small. Your dad came back, drank some tea and we took down the tent. We packed up the horses, he put your brother Stanley in front of him on the horse. Stanley was still small then. I followed him with the pack dogs.

We made camp on the Gladstone Trail, I chopped branches to set up our tent. Your dad went down to get the horse. Then I heard him talking. So I went down to see who he was talking to. He was throwing sticks or rocks at something behind him. I saw he was throwing things at the wolf behind him. He had the horse with him. Your dad brought the horse into the midst of the dogs that were tied up. We had no guns, the guns were with the stuff away from camp where we unpacked it. The wolf kept trying to come closer. It kept trying to get closer to the pups. We stood close to the fire. Your dad picked up an axe, in case the wolf grabbed one of our dogs. I told him, "Don't throw the axe at him, we need it."

We sat up all night watching it... it kept looking towards the creek. It probably was thirsty. I threw rocks at the wolf but it didn't move. We put the sleeping children between us. We just sat there.

Finally it got up and went down to the creek. I watched it until it went over the hill and looked back. I hurried and packed the dogs. Your dad was putting packs on the horses. My father loaned us a saddle horse. We hurried quickly, we had six dogs, we loaned two dogs to my father. I packed Rosalie in a baby pack, he put Stanley in front of him on the horse. He put the axe in the saddle bags, in case the wolf attacked.

The wolf almost caught us up after we started to my father's camp. It was dark when we got there. My father asked us how come we were traveling in the dark. He and Big Lake Joe were making tea. We told my father a wolf is following us. My father quickly picked up a gun. They woke up Isaac (Moose).

Isaac and Sam Joe shot at the wolf's legs and it ran away. It probably died somewhere. How would it hunt for itself? They lost sight of the wolf amongst the rocks on the mountains. My father said it wouldn't be following us with two broken legs. We kept looking for it while we were traveling.

From that time, I never go anywhere without my twenty-two or a rifle.

At Aishihik, too, a wolf came around our house, I shone a flashlight towards it and its eyes lit up like fire. Your dad came out with a gun but it moved around too fast.

It snowed that night and we could see it made a pass close to the dog. Your father followed it. He found a place where it lay down close to the house. Not very far away, the wolf was sleeping, facing the house. He got up close to it while it was sleeping and shot it. He hauled it back. That wolf had already killed all the colts in the village.

My father and Charlie David said wolves don't let anything go if they're after it. That's why you always carry lots of shells and a good gun wherever you go.

We Might Not Have Been Born

One time, my father and my grandfather were hunting. My mother (Sadie) told us, "When we went back, something ate the puppies already. As soon as we went past the campsite, the wolves circled us, howling."

We wouldn't have been born if the wolves killed my mother and my grandma that time.

My mother stood under the tree. The wolves kept enclosing. My mother's mother was with her then. She took a box of matches and some dried branches in a handkerchief. She tied it up and threw it amongst them. They started to play with it like a ball. They threw it up and to each other. The wolves played with it because of the noise the matches were making. The wolves wandered away while playing with the matches. You could hear them howling among the trees. They were probably saying, "Let's go."

My mother's mother tied up matches and dried branches again, just in case they came back again. She said she and her mother hurried back.

Meanwhile, my grandfather came back from hunting and he started to look for her. My grandfather asked the people where we were. And the people told him we left right after he went hunting. That's when my father met them halfway - my father walks fast. They told him, "The wolves circled us."

My mother **Ámą Kwànjia** said, "My mother **Tsäl Kàya Mą** told me to stay in a tree. If they kill me," she said, "your dad **Udzi Kì** will come for you." My mother told us, "If the wolves killed us, you wouldn't have been born." My dad probably would have got married again, I guess.

My mother said her mother told her when a wolf blocks your way that means there are lots of them. She said it didn't take them long to circle us. My mother said her mother made a fire with stumps, but the wolves didn't leave.

[YNLC tapes 2333, 2335, 2384, 2387]