

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW OF WILLA ASHENFELTER AND IRENE

AUKONGAK

TALKING ABOUT THE USE OF STINKWEED

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

IN NOME, ALASKA

SEPTEMBER 13, 2005

ORAL HISTORY 2004-17-16\_PT.2

KAREN: Do you know any of the plants that they used to use? Did you learn that?

IRENE: Yeah.

WILLA: Stinkweed, charqak.

IRENE: They have a lot of those ikituk, was big, you know, there was some.

WILLA: Yeah.

IRENE: You'd always want to land on those flower types, ikituk. And sometimes you use -- they use that -- that wild tea.

WILLA: Oh. Iuke.

IRENE: Iuke. Even -- they even use that like pine -- pine cone -- pine trees. They boil that. Make water -- I mean juice.

WILLA: I remember growing up and one of my girlfriends, she lived next door, she got a infected on her -- a scratch got infected on her hand, and her mom cut trade charqak leaves, and really powder them and put it on and cover it with -- I don't remember if it was -- something clean anyway, she covered it. And by the next day, it was starting to heal. So that -- so that worked. But I remember she had that for a couple days before they tried that.

IRENE: I remember my mama, too, she used to use a lot of that bark root. And more mine, I had a sore spot right -- you could see the scar now, real small. I had a sore spot, she used that stuff. Went away and never grew back, when I was a little girl.

I had a lot of stuff going on with me like -- I like to climb trees, too. And that's how I got this thing. I tried to -- we were far from the village and we were on our way to our fall camp, she put this down real neat and put that stuff and really wrapped it.

WILLA: What you do to your finger?

IRENE: I was climbing a tree and I slid down. Right down there and broke -- I must have cut my --

WILLA: Your tendon?

IRENE: My tendon. They are still using that now when I went home this summer. My sister is still using that for medicine.

WILLA: Chagrik?

IRENE: Chagrik. And they drink it, too. My dad used to drink that.

WILLA: My husband did it and for him, it worked. And I think -- I think in my head, it's -- it's working for him because he believed in it.

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But he used to pick it in the fall, dry it, and boil both -- boil it in a pot, and save the juice, he drank the juice. If he drank too much, he said it will -- it will make him sleepy. And it did, for him, it worked.

KAREN: Did either of you ever use those kinds of traditional plants or medicines or -- as a health aide? Did you --

WILLA: I didn't.

IRENE: I tried using it on myself that -- that juice of that plant.

WILLA: It doesn't taste very --

IRENE: I tried -- I tried for a while.

WILLA: But we didn't use it.

IRENE: My mother-in-law used to drink it.

WILLA: But they kind of -- but we didn't give it to patients to try.

IRENE: No, we didn't. But some of them are still doing that. Mostly elder ladies.