

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW OF WASSILLIE EVAN AND JOHN PHILLIP,

PART 1

TALKING ABOUT BECOMING A HEALER AND MOUSE FOOD

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ORAL HISTORY 2004-07-23\_PT. 1

BILL SCHNEIDER: You were known as a healer. Can you tell us who taught you that and how you learned that?

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik). Dr. Evan. (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP: (Yupik).

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik). Heavy work. (Yupik). My -- my help. Like this body. BILL SCHNEIDER: Huh.

WASSILLIE EVAN: Same as this one.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Blood pressure?

WASSILLIE EVAN: Yeah. -- body like this. Like this body.

BILL SCHNEIDER: You can tell pressure?

WASSILLIE EVAN: Yeah. You can find wh -- why do you hurt. Like this, body.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh. Oh, feeling?

WASSILLIE EVAN: Hm-mm. (Yupik).

BILL SCHNEIDER: What do you do when you find place that hurts?

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik).

BILL SCHNEIDER: Can you help us here a little bit, John?

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Yeah. But like where -- where the muscles made the -- make the women and men.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Did one of -- poke anything.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Right -- right in there. Or (Yupik)?

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP: (Yupik).

WASSILLIE EVAN: Yeah. (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Oh yeah, just, you know, it's just right on top.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Just to make it bleed.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Oh, okay.

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JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Not way in there.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Mm.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Either women or men.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Oh, so if they have swelling in there, you poke it and draw the blood out?

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Hm-mm. That's the way you get to the --

WASSILLIE EVAN: Don't -- don't cut the nerve.

JOHN PHILLIP: (Yupik).

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Like it don't -- like --

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): If you don't bleed, you get hurt.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): That blood that hard in there and --

BILL SCHNEIDER: Huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): -- starts to pain up. And he got to get that old blood drained out or something. Make it bleed. Like one time I did. Only one time, he did me. Poked like that. Right in here, or somewhere around there.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Wassillie did?

JOHN PHILLIP: Yeah, he did, with my stepfather. That's where he -- that's where he learned that. Doing that thing. From him.

BILL SCHNEIDER: From your stepfather?

JOHN PHILLIP: My stepdad.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Oh.

JOHN PHILLIP: So, one -- like early spring, I was -- I was carrying small motor, 15 horse, right on my shoulder. Take it down to put them and flip them right onto, you know, that motor onto the edge. And got blue. And it got good, you know. But in like, like in August, early August, it start -- it start paining up, you know. I didn't even tell nobody about it. So one time I was fishing. Drifting. Fishing. I couldn't help it. I couldn't help it no more. You know, I was -- just can't even row. Barely pick up that net in the boat. It was long. And I drove to our fish camp down below a couple of bends, and I told my stepdad about that. That I got hurt early spring and start showing up bad. Hardly breathing, too. It really hurt. He tell me, "Come over here." And I showed him right in here. Sure enough, you know, one hit right there bad. Got to -- So, he was -- he was teaching him how to do that, you know. The one, you know, to make -- And that's a -- And it bleed. You know, it -- bubbles were -- bubbles were coming out and that old blood, you know, really dark. Through that -- you know --

BILL SCHNEIDER: Massaging?

JOHN PHILLIP: Mm-mm. Let it come out. And then, get away just like that. I never have any -- no -- no -- didn't bother me after that no more. But he tell me to take it easy. So, I did for about a week.

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP: That's what he told me. Not to lift heavy things. Just take it easy on the -- No more pain.

WASSILLIE EVAN: Four days and five days.

JOHN PHILLIP: (Yupik).

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik). Maybe twenty minutes. (Yupik).

JOHN PHILLIP: There's -- there's some -- You guys have translators? Okay. We were there about that one.

BILL SCHNEIDER: What was he -- tell us in general what he was talking about.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Yeah, you know, mice they -- they gather up some -- some --

BILL SCHNEIDER: Hm-mm.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): -- stuff to eat in wintertime for them -- for themselves. But, you know the one time, he opened one. Like that, you know. He see some worms. So long. And he just watch them. You know, 'cause he knew that mouse were, you know, taking care of their food. He thought it was them. He said he was watching for twenty minutes. Twenty minutes, something like that. Then he look away, and when he look back, them worms were gone. Change to, you know, some mouse nuts. Just like that.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Huh.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): He said, you know, soon as he open it and see those worms and take one or feel it or rub it to his hands, he'd be a healer like that.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Hm.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Instead of, you know --

BILL SCHNEIDER: Hm. Was that old time way?

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Hm-mm. Yeah. That's very few I've heard, too, down -- down coast. This one -- one boy. Or old enough to know things. He see some dried up frog. Little frog. Clean the bone and then he start, you know -- If you take that thing and rub it through his hands, turn out something. 'Cause he heard about that, you know, before from his old mother or grandpa or something like that. So he did. Only frog. Little frog.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Hm-mm.

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): Dead frog. Then after that, you know, he just test himself. You know, this one guy was really hurting. And he rub it with his hands, and tell him that it will get away from you. Sure enough, it's happened.

BILL SCHNEIDER: Mm. Did --

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): That's what -- If you ever -- if you ever take -- take one of those worms and feel it with his hands, he'd be a healer like that.

BILL SCHNEIDER: But, you never did that?

JOHN PHILLIP (translating Wassillie's comments into English): He -- he never. He turned around and looked back to these worms, there was some mouse nuts. Turn into, you know. And that's what you mean about that. You know, he --

BILL SCHNEIDER: How do you feel about that?

JOHN PHILLIP: (translating the question into Yupik)

WASSILLIE EVAN: (Yupik). I scared. (laughter) (Yupik).