

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW OF HOWARD LUKE TALKING ABOUT THE  
USE OF SPRUCE PITCH

CONDUCTED BY BILL SCHNEIDER AND CHARLES HAMBY

IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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ORAL HISTORY 96-35\_PT.1

HOWARD LUKE: All these things that I was taught, my mother taught me and then my uncle taught me how to do things. And I used to go around a lot of old people, you know, because I lost my dad when I was really young and in order to get something to eat, to get some meat or fish or whatever I used to go with the old people, you know, and go fishing with them, and then I get -- I get a little that way. And this is how I -- how I learned how what our herbs was, you know. They tell me about these things. Like when I cut my hand, you know, we -- them days we didn't have no band-aid, no nothing. All we had was iodine and nobody didn't want that, because it burns the heck out of you, you know. So nobody didn't -- didn't like that. They said they're -- they are trying to kill us, they said. They're not trying to cure us, so let's do it our way. So that's what they did. They did it their way and they cure one another. Like, you know, like the pitch. You see, I got some on the -- in that can right now. Soon as it thaws out, soon as it melts, you put it on your cut right now, you'll -- put it on your cu -- or something like that and you get healed up and stuff like that. I fell against the stove one time. In the corner of the stove, and they just cut right through my -- the whole thing it just -- You could just see my teeth. Yeah, they just cut right there and there's no scar on there at all, nothing.

CHARLES HAMBY: Now when you say the pitch, you talking spruce pitch?

HOWARD LUKE: Yeah, I got some in that can there now. And what my mother did was she just got pitch, and she just put that pitch in there, just filled up in there, and she put a piece of rag under that -- Rag to stick to that pitch. You got -- there's two kinds of pitch, you know. You got to use that really yellow stuff. The other one, the other brown stuff, you use that to -- to use to -- to -- like your glue, you know, like emery (Elmer's) glue. They use that on canoe. See, I got a canoe down there. You take a look at it after a while and you'll see where that brown pitch, they use that to fill up the holes and stuff like that.

CHARLES HAMBY: Okay, so the yellow pitch you'd use for like that -- ?

HOWARD LUKE: Yeah, yeah, the infection. I had infection. They cut my finger off one time and they didn't take all the stitch out. And I was way out in the flats, I was hunting muskrat, and my hand started getting -- started getting swollen up. And I look at it and it was getting infected. It was just going like this, you know, and I thought of it. I thought of it, so I just I poked it with a needle. I poked it with a needle and then I put that pitch on there. I put that pitch on there and I left it there. I put a lot of it on there. Next morning that pitch just drew that -- that stitch right out. It was sticking out when I got it. And that's what it was. So we used that all for everything.

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