

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH TED MELGENAK TALKING ABOUT
WILD SPINACH
CONDUCTED BY PAT PARTNOW
IN KING SALMON, ALASKA
MARCH 22, 1998
ORAL HISTORY 98-22-04

PAT PARTNOW: And did you ever go with her to collect the -- I don't know what they call it, mouse food, or the wild rice or any greens? Anything like that?

TED MELGENAK: Oh yeah, we used to take two different kinds of spinach, you know. We call them ciwasaq.

PAT PARTNOW: Ciwasaq.

TED MELGENAK: Mary Jane knows that. Ciwasaq. That's wild spinach. There's a lot of 'em, even right up here. They're all over on the beach. We pick them like spinach.

PAT PARTNOW: First thing in the spring?

TED MELGENAK: Mm hm. You get 'em before they get too long. When they get too long, they'd be bony and no good, no more good. But you get 'em when they're growing.

Ciwasaq is like a spinach. And you could cook them also. Cook them in you could cook a whole pot and when you boil them they shrunk. And you cool 'em off. Take all the water out, and cut 'em up in nice small pieces, and you could mix the lard and sugar in it, and really ___.

The only ones I know are these wild spinach and these ciwasaqs. I always pick them up.

PAT PARTNOW: You still do?

TED MELGENAK: Last year, right by my cabin over here, there are a lot of 'em right by the beach, and I picked some and I boiled some. They were good. That wild spinach.

They're two different kinds, the ciwasaq also. That other one is a big leaf, that's all it is, big leaf. Pull that out one at a time. Then altogether they're different from these spinach again, this ciwasaq. Pick them up like one at a time, you know, they just pick them up.

PAT PARTNOW: Sounds almost like skunk cabbage. It's not skunk cabbage, no? Skunk cabbage? It's like a lily and it's got, inside the leaf it's got a white

TED MELGENAK: I'll show you what these ciwasaq look like, I'll draw that. Ciwasaq would be something like that.

PAT PARTNOW: Oh, almost looks like a dandelion.

TED MELGENAK: They grow up like that, but they come almost like that, tobacco-like, you know. It would be a big leaf. Long, you know.