

Interviewee: August 20, 1953 here at Stebbins.

Interviewer: Um hmm. And did you grow up in Stebbins?

Interviewee: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Okay. And did you live your whole live here?

Interviewee: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Okay. So what is your first language?

Interviewee: My first name?

Interviewer: Your first language.

Interviewee: My first language was Yupik and when I turned six years old, you know, that's when I went to school, the first school.

Interviewer: And that's where you learned English?

Interviewee: Um hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay and are you single, married?

Interviewee: Married.

Interviewer: Married, okay. What is your highest grade of education or highest level of education?

Interviewee: Eleventh.

Interviewer: Eleventh?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How many people including yourself are living in your place right now?

Interviewee: Okay, there's five.

Interviewer: Five? And where would you like to live your remaining years?

Interviewee: Here.

Interviewer: Here?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. All right and your PO Box is?

Interviewee: 71092.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you.

So with that, so you were identified as a successful aging elder and we were curious, how did you become an elder? What was your life –

Interviewee: How become –

Interviewer: How did you become an elder?

Interviewee: Elder?

Interviewer: Um hmm.

Interviewee: From my parents, you know. As I grew up, well, actually, my parents were reindeer herders and we used to travel with the reindeer in the flats area all through the winter. That's what my dad's been like, taking care of the reindeers ever since he was a young man.

Interviewer: So you learned all your skills and everything, how to become or how to grow old successfully from your parents and from your dad?

Interviewee: Yeah, and he also taught – well, he taught me how to do some hunting, carving and told me stories about his parents. You know, they were from Nelson Island.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah.

Interviewee: They're all from Nelson Island. And they moved here by canoe before, long time ago. Yep. Then that's why they call us **Galuiaq**. **Galuiaq** means you're drifting out with a canoe. That's what it is. And so I grew up here. The old village, which is called **Atroik**, it's right below the bluff over there, that old village. And there was another one down at **Batshardo** point, which is called **Tunuk**. That's Sourdough Point. There used to be people living there too. But for the people that came in from down south like Nelson Island, they made their own living, down below and they called it **Tapraq**, which is Stebbins.

Interviewer: Okay. Great, thank you.

Interviewee: Um hmm.

Interviewer: And how does it feel to be viewed as an – to be an elder?

Interviewee: Huh?

Interviewer: How does it feel to be seen by your community as an elder?

Interviewee: Oh, it feels good to me because as you get older and you get wiser and that's why and that's why as you feel wiser, you start telling your children and other children about the old days and how to survive.

Interviewer: So you feel like you accrued a lot of knowledge and now you feel sharing that knowledge with the younger people?

Interviewee: Yeah, with my little ones. Yeah. I have so many little grandchildren. They're somewhere here, most of them are here, but I have some coming in tomorrow and they're staying with me. I can't wait to see them.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. Are they very little?

Interviewee: They are. One's five and one just turned four months old.

Interviewer: Oh nice. That's sweet. What do you think it means to age well? What do you think it means to age in a good way? How would you know that someone is aging in a good way?

Interviewee: Well, you see, right now, right now living, the younger parents living right now is, they're all too young and they don't know Yupik language very well and they don't know surviving, when you go out there. So these are all young parents and the elders, the parents teaching them how to survive, get food before the winter. So it's got to be the elders that have to teach their kids that are parents right now just talk to them about their – talk to them about hunting and surviving and things like that.

Interviewer: So someone who is aging but someone who is involved in the community is someone who is teaching their children how to go out and make a living out here.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So where would you think you learned, and you mentioned that a little bit that you said your dad showed you a lot of how to live _____, like was it only from your parents or were other people involved as well?

Interviewee: Other people like my aunt and my uncle and mostly my mother. My mother she taught me how to cut fish and put them away for the winter. She taught me how. So – and she taught me how to do a lot of cooking. I love to cook, so yeah.

Interviewer: So did they share also a lot of stories about –

Interviewee: Yeah, stories about what the parents used to do a long time ago, mostly traveling by dog teams and getting mail by dog team, you know, traveling by dog team to get mail. So it is hard times, hard times were around a long time ago. Like food, especially just the

one time we had reindeer herders and starvation was going on. And my mom had caught two **tomcats**, she caught two tomcats and there were seven reindeer herders down at the island. And out of those two tomcats, she fed all those reindeer herders.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: It's something.

Interviewer: So she had some very good skills.

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you usually spend your day? What do you do on a day to day basis?

Interviewee: Like getting up in the morning, make breakfast. Yep. I do, I make my kids first and then I think about something quick to do. What am I gonna do? Well, I like to go outings. I like outings. I like, hooking and hunting. Right now, I'm kind of old at that. I can't shoot too good, so I have my kids, my boys do the hunting. I taught them how to hunt.

Interviewer: So you join them or –

Interviewee: No, they find their own, but I used to go hunting, yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Okay. Do you think that getting older has changed or becoming an elder has changed any of your relationships with your family or with the community?

Interviewee: Yeah, in a way, like as you get old, you feel yourself, you know, you're an elder and the kids and the childrens will have respect on you. Once you talk with them about the old ways and they'll have respect on you and they'll listen. Every once in a while, I have – we have bilingual teacher at the school, Becky, and she called me up to go do some storytelling for the kids, for the students.

Interviewer: How nice.

Interviewee: So yeah, I do that. Not always, but only when I get calls.

Interviewer: Okay. So you find yourself being a bit more involved in the community by telling stories and when you're invited, talking to children?

Interviewee: Um hmm. Yeah, the other thing I talk to them about is surviving and things that you've got to prepare food, all that and how to get ready for the winter and haul some logs from anywhere, wood logs, pile some logs. Right now, they don't have no dog teams. They all have snow machines, which is easy. It's easy to get. In the old days, either way, you either were walking to get wood or you had to use

your dog team. Two choices. I used to get wood with my mom just by pulling. Long time ago. And then chainsaws started showing up, them chainsaw, which is much easier. In the old ways, we used to use those long _____.

Interviewer: That takes a while.

Interviewee: And a lot of exercises, which is good. A lot of exercise.

Interviewer: Sounds like you still try to stay active and –

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Okay. What do you think are some of the things that help you to age well?

Interviewee: Eating our native foods. Native foods are always good to me because, you know, they're healthy, they're healthy type of foods, even some greens from out in the tundra, which is good too. Yep.

Interviewer: Okay. Why do you think some elders age well and others not so much?

Interviewee: Age well?

Interviewer: Um hmm. Like why do you think some are doing better than others?

Interviewee: I don't know about that.

Interviewer: You don't know?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why do you think some elders can age in good way and some are aging not in a good way?

Interviewee: It's kind of hard to tell 'cause you use yourself as a good way, an elder. It's all in your mind to use that good will to you and to your children. But to see – but seeing the other elders, you see them drinking and doing all kinds of drugs, which is running on right now, and it's not – it's not very good. It's not healthy.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee 2: He's one of our drummers.

Interviewee: I am.

Interviewer: Nice.

Interviewee: I'm one of their drummers and this coming Friday, we're gonna sing down at the hall for this Assembly of God, the people that came in here last week I guess.

Interviewer: How does someone get to be an elder?

Interviewee: All kinds of questions that are hard.

[Laughter]

Interviewee: Well, I guess you learn it from your parents and the other people that are old too. You learn from them by seeing them. Me, I learned by watching and never asked – well, I'd ask questions once to my dad and by looking at what he's doing, I learned and I practice it for myself. You have hands to work. You've got to have hands to work.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That's how I see it with the other – well not all, but other people like my buddies. I have quite a few buddies that are like that, that they're good.

Interviewer: So you still get together too?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Good. So for an elder, is it different now than it has been 20 years ago?

Interviewee: It's different. A lot of things change because of the new generations that are going on, computers and all that things. Those are new.

Interviewer: Do you think it's better now or just –

Interviewee: I guess I think it's better and easier, you know, you get your – like in your thing, you want to talk to somebody and it's all right there and just use that –

Interviewer: Yeah. It helps to stay connected.

Interviewee: Really easy. To me it's really simple. You get it there when you want it, when you want to get the job done, the paperwork, yeah, send fax, it's there. It's amazing.

Interviewer: So all that technology is helping out a little bit?

Interviewee: Yeah. Um hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Why do you think some of the elders actually move away from Stebbins?

Interviewee: Well, some of them move out because I think they get tired of Stebbins, living in here.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: I don't know. It's their own way of, you know, their way of doing things. If they want to move, they can move.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you think that aging is different here in Stebbins as supposed to maybe Anchorage?

Interviewee: Anchorage is big town, so many cars, so many traffics. But here, you can go – we have four wheelers, but you can go anywhere, anywhere, no traffics.

Interviewer: So you think it's easier here?

Interviewee: It's easier here than being in town and trying to live in other places, which might be hard and too many people, people that you don't know. I say, well, you can find a lot of friends.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for people in your community who would like to age well?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: If someone would come and ask you, "Hey, how do I become a successful elder? What do I need to do now?" What would you say?

Interviewee: Who would I pick?

Interviewer: What would you say, like if they asked you for advice?

Interviewee: I'd say, "Hey, you know what, it's good to be an elder because you have lot of things to say to your kids and teach your kids our respectful ways."

Interviewer: So one way would be to learn from your elders and then also to give it to the next generation?

Interviewee: Um hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you share with younger generations what you know? Do you get together a lot with them and share what you have learned about life and culture?

Interviewee: Yes. Yes, I can by singing songs to them and teaching them how to drum. That's the only way. That's our traditional from long time. I started singing and drumming in 1973 and I'm still going on. Yeah. I've seen kids at school wanting to learn how to drum and dance – drum and sing and dance, of course, which is good.

Interviewer: Yeah, I can tell. You're gleaming just talking about it.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Sweet. Okay. Is there anything else that we haven't asked about that you would like us to know about what it is to – what is helpful to age well? Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Interviewee: No. I'll keep that to myself. But, you know, but if I would see a young parent doing wrong, I think I have to go talk with them, you know, correct them. That's the only way to correct them instead of beating up their kids. Well, not beating up, but then, you know, treating them in a bad way. I put it that way.

Interviewer: How do you tell them in a way they'll listen?

Interviewee: You know, you call them up and, you know, and be alone, talk to them. Either way, you can use Yupik word because some of the students know Yupik languages like waqaa, quyana and all those easy words and yeah, I think it would be better to talk with them, our young children, young generations.

Interviewer: What would be a challenge of sharing with the youth?

Interviewee: Carving, singing, drumming, hunting and gathering food, which is easier for me. I grew up with my parents and gathering food, starting on this spring, which is spring you get started. A long time ago, I used to see growing up I used to see parents using these – you know, the seal skins that are aired up? Um hmm, they used that for putting away food like this and not spilling seal oil this. And they stay fresh like that all through spring and through winter. And tasty. Okay.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for us?

Interviewee: You guys leaving after? How long are you going to be here?

Interviewer: We got in yesterday morning.

Interviewee: So and leaving when?

Interviewer: This afternoon, we're driving over to St. Michael.

Interviewee: Oh, so quick.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I thought you were going to be here till Friday.

Interviewer: I know. I wish we could come see you drum and stuff. That would be really nice.

Interviewee: Yeah, having fun watching, sing and dance.

Interviewer: Yeah.

[End of Audio]