

Storyteller for Alaska State Museum . . .

If he passed away he would be succeeded by a nephew or the next brother in line.

The social organization of the Tlingit was matrilineal.

"Everything was reckoned through the mother, including clan name, clan history, membership in the clan, identity established at birth, sense of security, sense of belonging, in other words, the Tlingit way of thinking—you are going to remain loyal to your mother's clan until the day you cease to become a Tlingit."

The maternal uncle, the mother's brother, worked closely with his sister. The brother-sister combination worked to train and discipline the young nephews, who at the age of eight or nine moved in with their uncle to serve him and be trained. The grandparents took care of them when they were small, teaching them essentially social values.

The father was not considered important enough or qualified to teach his own sons because his group was socially opposed to his wife's. Therefore the maternal uncle became the top disciplinarian, giving the fullest support to his sister. In the event of a family feud, the sons would not fight on their father's side. The sons would have to fight against their father, even if it meant killing him. The father, in turn, would assume responsibility for training his sister's sons.

This way of life has changed and is still changing, Williams noted. There are fewer full-blooded Tlingits and a great deal of cross-cultural development is taking place.

"It was bound to happen,"

said the elders. "We're not going to be around all the time. Now we have cross-cultural relatives all over the world. Who knows but if I go to New York, stay around there long enough—if I can afford to stay there one day—maybe I'll see a relative and say, 'I'm an Eagle like you, sure, how about five bucks. I'll pay you back next summer.'" (laughter).

Williams' commentary during the tour ranges from the practical to the humorous to the supernatural. Sometimes all three characteristics are present in a story simultaneously. For example, Williams told the visitors how a tree was chosen and cut for a dugout canoe.

"A little ceremony went along with the building of a 50-60-foot canoe out of one piece," he explained.

He reviewed the other types of Indian canoes found in Alaska.

"Walrus female skin for Eskimo umiak. Skins for bidarkas. Birch bark canoes for interior Athabascans traveling on the lakes and small rivers, not too strongly put together. Walrus female skin was preferred. More pliable, easier for the water proof stitching that the women had to do. Much depended on how well they did their work. They wanted their husbands to come back dry and not swimming all the way home. (laughter).

"Here, red cedar, one piece. One day the maternal uncle, who was the top disciplinarian in the house group, goes into the woods. Because of the mysterious supernatural force that they acknowledge moving above them, they talk to mammals, they talk to animals as if

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they were friends. They lived in tune with Mother Nature, never disturbing it.

"They acknowledged that mysterious force above them as controlling their minds and their destiny. So the food supply was naturally and intimately tied to the supernatural. So not disturb Mother Nature and do not abuse, do not waste anything. Next year may be a tough one, but if you're careful how you manage Mother Nature's supply, there will always be an abundance of salmon, land animals, you will live a long life.

"There was the belief, the belief in the concept of space. So they talked to everything to keep their mind on what they were doing. Concentration, success, in other words. Personal accomplishment, comes from the words of the maternal uncle.

"The expression used (when addressing nature) is 'my beloved brother-in-law.' The brother-in-law in every family, his conduct and behavior, his expression was likened to that of the most gentle animal in the forest—the deer. Not that they were willing to take advantage of their brother-in-law, or even attempt to take advantage of him. He was the 'gentle person married to my sister.'

"So the timber, animals,

mammals, they talk; so the maternal uncle talks in the woods. He says, 'Big cedar,' that's what he wants. They're going to fall that with their primitive tools, for their dugout canoe. They need that big canoe.

"You look fine today, my beloved brother-in-law. You look fine today. Tomorrow I am going to bring all my sisters and everybody. They're going to admire you. You are going to hear them talking. But I'll bring some other things along, too. Some other presents. You wonderful looking man! Oh, you look fine! I am going to lay all of my finest furs all the way down where you are going to lie. You're not even going to feel anything when you fall.

"Get the idea? He doesn't want the tree to crack or break in half. So finally they get to work, fire and adz and everybody working. The tree falls, no crack, no nothing. In good shape. And the final ceremony, as he promised.

"I'll bring him something else, too. All my pity my beloved brother-in-law. Come night, come morning you are going to be cold, your head is going to be cold. I have the finest present for you. Eagle down. I'll put it on top of your

head. It will always keep you warm, nice and warm."

"End of ceremony. They slide the red cedar down the beach. Put skids under it. Not alder, but hemlock. The bark is slick. Slide it down and start working. Adzing, using fire oil. All in one piece. That's the way the dugout canoes were built by the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimpshean."

Williams' tours will continue daily throughout the summer, and he makes several tours per day. Some groups he will take on a long comprehensive tour throughout the entire museum. Others, if he sees they are tired or impatient, will be directed from the opening discussion of the map of Alaska straight to the concluding presentation on the eagle tree and totems. Even in his abbreviated tours it's difficult to absorb all of the information he has to impart.



Never play a comb without first removing it from your hair.

Swimmer's itch cases reported

In the last few weeks there have been very large numbers of cases of Shistosoma Dermatitis, commonly known as "Swimmer's Itch," reported to the Environmental Health Section of the Alaska Division of Public Health. Outbreaks of cases have been reported after swimming in many of the more commonly used borrow pits in the Interior.

Swimmer's itch is a skin eruption caused when free swimming larvae attach themselves to the swimmer's skin and burrow into it upon emergence from the water. They then die and cause irritation and itching about 4 hours later.

The schistosoma or larvae are put into the water by a warm-blooded host (bird or animal) and multiply in snails which live in the water. In the Fairbanks area, abandoned borrow or gravel pits are the primary areas where these conditions occur.

The Environmental Health

Section cannot recommend swimming in these areas because of possible bacterial contamination and safety factors (glass, abandoned metal parts, no life-guard). However, to anyone who swims in ponds or abandoned gravel pits, it is recommended that they vigorously towel themselves immediately upon leaving the water. This will remove all or most of any schistosomes from the skin before they burrow in. If any skin rash has developed after swimming, it is recommended that your local physician be contacted.

Signs are currently being made for posting at some of the suspected areas and advice for ridding the water of snails is available from the Environmental Health Section.

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A FEW MORE REASONS

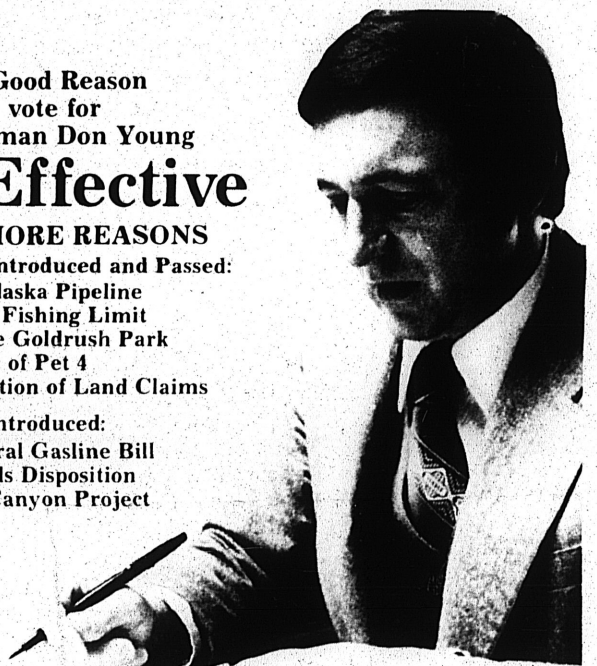
Legislation Introduced and Passed:

- Trans Alaska Pipeline
- 200 Mile Fishing Limit
- Klondike Goldrush Park
- Transfer of Pet 4
- Clarification of Land Claims

Legislation Introduced:

- Procedural Gasline Bill
- D-2 Lands Disposition
- Devil's Canyon Project

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