

EXCERPT OF RECORDED INTERVIEW OF BARBARA JOHNSON, PART 1

TALKING ABOUT USING DEVIL'S CLUB

CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER

YAKUTAT, ALASKA

MAY 27, 2006

ORAL HISTORY 2004-17-29_PT.1

BARBARA JOHNSON: And she (my grandmother) used devil club juice a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

BARBARA JOHNSON: She used that a lot.

KAREN BREWSTER: What does that do?

BARBARA JOHNSON: Well, you could use it for, you know, a lot of people when they have cancer, they start using that. And sometimes that helps them, you know. And just different things they'd use it for. It was just a medicine they believed in using, and it does help.

KAREN BREWSTER: And how do you prepare that?

BARBARA JOHNSON: Oh, you have to -- I think in the springtime when the snow's still on the ground, you get the devil clubs, and you dry them and then take the -- take the thorns off of them, you know, and then you take -- take the peelings off, dry that. And that's what you boil.

KAREN BREWSTER: So that's the stem you're talking about or the weed?

BARBARA JOHNSON: The peel, the peeling, the outside, you know, like where the thorns are, you take that -- scrape that off and then you skin it.

KAREN BREWSTER: So it's like the stem.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: The stalk or whatever. Yeah. Okay.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Yeah. The outside skin of that, you boil that. Or you could -- you know, you could use like powder, you put that in the oven and you just dry it, so it's crispy, and then you grate or grind it, and you could use it as powder, too. Because I used that one time when there -- this one lady had a bad infection on her leg, you know, and she was a diabetic, and also she was allergic to penicillin. So I thought, well, I had just been back from Gustavus and there was a Native lady from Hoonah that taught us how to fix the devil club. So I had a bag of powder that we had made and so I thought, well, maybe if I mix it with the Bacitracin, it might -- maybe that will help her better. You know. So I gave it to her and you know, she used to use those kind of things, too, and oh, she was really happy that I gave it to her, and I told her to use that on her skin. It took, like, three or four days and it was healed up. Yeah. And here she was a diabetic, you know, they don't heal real easy.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNSON: So that's how I used that, you know. That was pretty good. There's someone in Sitka that makes that for -- for ointment, too.

KAREN BREWSTER: Oh.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Devil club.

KAREN BREWSTER: That they sell now?

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BARBARA JOHNSON: Uh-hum. Yeah. And soap and stuff. But that -- that's one of our medicines that we use a lot. And that's our Native medicine.

KAREN BREWSTER: I'm glad -- I'm glad it has a good purpose because when you're walking through the woods --

BARBARA JOHNSON: I know.

KAREN BREWSTER: -- it's horrible.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Yeah. It's good for something, you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah. Everything has a purpose.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Yeah.

KAREN BREWSTER: That's good.

BARBARA JOHNSON: Uh-hum.