

EXCERPT FROM RECORDING OF JOSEPH LOMACK TALKING ABOUT THE USE OF
WILLOW AND BIRCH
CONDUCTED BY SOPHIE KASAYULIE
IN AKIACHAK, ALASKA
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WRITTEN TRANSLATION BY FRANK CHINGLIAK AND ANNA JACOBSON

SOPHIE KASAYULIE: During those days, were you one of the first health aides?

JOSEPH LOMACK: I was a health aide at the same time while I was working at the school. I didn't know medical terminologies or illnesses, but I contacted the hospital through the Northern Lights radio. And when my hearing was good, I was able to detect broken bones by the creaking sounds of broken bones. Doctors were amazed at my diagnoses without making mistakes with my sense of hearing. That was when my hearing was near perfect. During that time I also used a piece of wood, about a foot long with a piece of soft cloth wrapped on one end, and I would place the other end on my ear and the other end on a person's chest and listen like a stethoscope. People who've begun to have tuberculosis symptoms would emit rattling sounds. People with tuberculosis would have itching throats and cough a lot with those symptoms we knew they had TB. The more conventional method for testing TB was with the modern testing methods.

But, people who've been diagnosed with cancer would eventually become very skinny and it was amazing how long they survived under those conditions. Consuming and utilizing traditional medicines such as willow tree bark would miraculously heal some people from tuberculosis.

Then, there was an incident where there was a report of someone smoking Buhach. There were confirmed reports that the person recovered from tuberculosis. When people were infected with tuberculosis, they had to take a lot of medicine tablets. Some infected people chew medicinal plants to help them get better. Certain tree products with medicinal value were consumed and helped cure tuberculosis in many.

SOPHIE KASAYULIE: What kinds of tree leaves were consumed?

JOSEPH LOMACK: Soft edible willow leaves. There were other tree products that had medicinal value; there was also the birch tree. The birch trees sap or juice was extracted and it resembled apple juice, as I later saw how apple juice looked. The dosage recommended was one teaspoon of birch sap a day. There was also extract from boiled pine needles. There were a variety of traditional medicines that the Yup'ik people made.