

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH TED MELGENAK TALKING ABOUT
STINKWEED

CONDUCTED BY PAT PARTNOW
IN KING SALMON, ALASKA

MARCH 22, 1998

ORAL HISTORY 98-22-04

TED MELGENAK: Then that -- another thing, too, she used to use that for medicine. I used to see her do that. Later she been doing that, Old Lady Gramma , I see her do that. Saw her late, some time, you know. She call it uyaleguaq.

PAT PARTNOW: Say it again?

TED MELGENAK: Uyaleguaq. And they're, the flower's only that big.

PAT PARTNOW: What color?

TED MELGENAK: I think it's green. Very few -- you don't see 'em around no place. Very few places you'll find 'em. A whole bunch of 'em will grow right along trees, you know, they're green and they're shaped like Christmas trees. Like Christmas tree right here but they're small, pretty flower, they got -- like a regular flower, you know, leaves on 'em. And they're shaped like a Christmas tree. And they're only that big. Small. You see a lot of 'em. They dig 'em out, they dig 'em out by hand, you know. Them roots are about that long. And the big roots on them, maybe as big as my finger, maybe. And they're -- take them up and she'll take the flower out and put that in a jar with water. And later that water will turn dark. And maybe, four, five, six pieces in there, seven, eight pieces in there, and she'll just leave that for medicine. You could even smell it. Smell like the green. Smells really good. And also she used to use that in the steam bath also.

PAT PARTNOW: I was going to ask if you did steam baths.

TED MELGENAK: Mm hm. You use that in the steam bath. You stove get really hot, just leave that right on top of the stove there. It'll dry up.

PAT PARTNOW: Evaporates?

TED MELGENAK: Evaporates, smells real good. That stuff is really -- we call it wi'allruq, yeah. The only ones I see she used for medicine, she used 'em in the steam bath also, made it smell really good. And also you could use it inside of the house also. She'll dry 'em up for maybe a week or two, maybe, right on top of the stove, you know, where it's nice and warm.

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TED MELGENAK: It'll get really hard, like, then you would take a can, put it in a can, light the end, and that top will smoke. Really good smell to it.

PAT PARTNOW: Like an incense almost?

TED MELGENAK: Like incense, like, a really good smell. You smell that -- you go into the house and you smell that green!

PAT PARTNOW: Nice!

TED MELGENAK: You ought to try that some time, really good. Steam bath and in the house. That one in the house, she'd dry it for maybe one or two weeks. You never burn it, just smoke, like a cigarette. Really does smell good. She even use them in her eyes.

PAT PARTNOW: The medicine?

TED MELGENAK: Yeah, keep it in a jar, closed, and she'd have it all year round in water. There'd be water, it'd be just real dark. I like that smell, the one that's in the house, that smells, the one in the steam bath too.

PAT PARTNOW: Do you have a steam bath here?

TED MELGENAK: Oh, yeah we got a steam bath. I'm gonna try -- I know how they look, I want to pick one, look for them some time down there, see if they still grow in that same spot down there.

PAT PARTNOW: By the village, Savonoski?

TED MELGENAK: Yeah. See if I find any there. That's the only place where I seen them grow. I been looking around them, I never see them around. I don't know how she know about them, but she had made for them, and she'd dig some out. Some she'd dry, some she'd put in the water.