

EXCERPT FROM RECORDED INTERVIEW OF WALTER JOHNSON TALKING ABOUT
THE USE OF WILLOW BARK
CONDUCTED BY KAREN BREWSTER
IN HOMER, ALASKA
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WALTER JOHNSON: And I could relate many, you know, things that they had taken care of in -- with very innovative methods.

KAREN BREWSTER: Can you think of just one example?

WALTER JOHNSON: Well, there was an old timer, a Gussuk, a White man there, who had developed urinary obstruction. And at a time before, they were in radio contact with -- with the hospital. Because as I say, there was no BIA school in Kwiguk. And you know, this, well, it would be fatal. And I can remember getting such a call from St. Lawrence Island, and I have to admit that I was at a loss as to what they should do about it. And since I would say now that they should just put a needle in, just over, right over the pubic bone, and hopefully they could drain the bladder. But Axel had taken a willow and used as a catheter and relieved the obstruction. And I -- I could never quite envision how he would get the bark of the willow to make a tube that would be inserted. But while I was sitting with Pearlle, she happened to bring that up and described how he had actually taken the bark off and very carefully rounded the point of this limber willow twig and had used that as a probe to -- to relieve the urinary obstruction. And I guess it was used a number of times and -- and years later, O'Connor ended up in the Pioneer Home down in Sitka, and I think lived another 15 years, into his 90s down there.

KAREN BREWSTER: Neat.