Elder PROFILE

Edna Quock

"Es zih'e Dōsi," says Edna Quock, introducing herself in Tāłtān.

Ninety years young, Edna Quock was born in Tahltan Village in 1925, up near the old church on the reserve. She is the daughter of Mary Etzerza (nee Brown) and Belfry Etzerza. Growing up in Tahltan Village, Edna had a very different experience than today's youth. Tahltan Village was where they went to school and church, and where they worked. "We did a lot of work," she recalls, "we used to cut wood and carry water; my dad used to go hunting and get moose and just cut it all up and leave it there and me and my brother would go there and haul it all in with his dog team." After that, they would make a rack where they could hang and smoke the meat, since "there were no freezers back then" (laughs). The dried meat would have to be soaked overnight to rehydrate it. "Fish too, we'd dry it and salt it." The fish were caught in a net, gutted and washed, then nailed up to dry. They'd put smoke underneath them to keep the bugs away. Today, Edna's smokehouse has screens, "so no bugs can get in there. But it tastes the same!"

Her fondest memories involve her many friends "as a kid in Tahltan Village… I had a lot of friends up there. There was the Quash family, the Inkster family, the Dennis family…" Edna notices a big difference in the types of activities geared at today's youth. Back then, there was simply more that needed to be done -- and she liked it better that way. "There were no games back then," remembers Edna, but "in the wintertime we'd go sliding and setting rabbit snares." They got a lot of physical activity, including lots of walking! They'd leave the community on foot, to get what they needed from the store and pick up their mail in town.

Edna's wish is for today's Tahltan youth to have traditional knowledge passed onto them

Having lived for nearly a century, Edna has a wealth of knowledge, ranging from burial rituals, to traditional medicines, to Tāłtān language. Edna, whose Tāłtān name is Dōsi, shared some of her secrets to youthfulness and longevity. She eats healthy food and drinks a traditional tea of balsam bark and caribou leaves boiled together "It's good for everything," she promises. Her definition of healthy eating consists of food from the land: mostly fish and moose meat, with some greens in the summer. Edna's wish is for today's Tahtlan youth to have traditional knowledge passed onto them; this includes learning the right way to sew moccasins, mittens, or tuth-law (traditional sewing pouches).

Meduh to Edna for helping us learn more about our Tahltan traditions and teachings.

WHAT'S COOKING IN EDNA'S KITCHEN?

Caribou Leaves (Hodzih łanāw)

This plant, also called 'Caribou Weed,' is known as a traditional Tahltan cure-all. Chew it to cure a sore throat, apply it as a poultice on wounds, or brew it into an herbal tea by boiling it in water and straining it through cheesecloth. The tea can be made with balsam bark to enhance its effects.

Balsam bark (ts'Os•tsi•ye la')

The sap, or resin, from balsam bark is used topically to heal cuts or sores. When steeped, the inner bark and resin has a range of benefits, including reducing asthma symptoms and helping to relieve coughs, colds and chest pain.

Sockeye Salmon (de-k'ä.ne);

Fish are an important part of the traditional Tahltan diet. Salmon is a powerhouse of nutrition, containing protein and essential fatty acids that can reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer while helping to keep our mind, joints and skin healthy!