The Dall Sheep Dinner Guest

INUPIAQ NARRATIVES OF NORTHWEST ALASKA

Wanni W. Anderson

STORYTELLERS:
John Patkuraq Brown
Leslie Tusraqviuraq Burnett
Flora Kuugaaq Cleveland
Lois Piñalu Cleveland
Maude Kanayuqpak Cleveland
Robert Nasruk Cleveland
Kitty Qalutchuq Foster
Sarah Qiñuqana Goode
Willie Panik Goodwin, Sr.
Miimie Aliitchuk Gray
Beatrice Anausk Mouse
Nora Paniikaaluk Norton
Nellie Qapuk Russell
Andrew Nuqaqšauraq Skin
Emma Atluk Skin
Wesley Qauluqtailaq Woods
The Goose Feather People

Flora Kuugaaq Cleveland

This story demonstrates the importance of seeing storyteller-audience interaction during the storytelling event. Here John Brown, an audience member and widower, was teased. The storyteller, Flora, and John Brown were good friends. Flora was born at Kutchinaq, Lower Selawik, and John had lived there when he first resettled on the Selawik.

Recorded in Selawik, May 7, 1972

Nora talked about an old woman. I'm going to talk about an old man.

There was a man living alone. (How did he happen to be living alone by himself? He was probably a Kobuk River man.)

One day the man went hunting. It was at that time of the year when the geese were molting. When geese are molting, they have their new wing feathers. The man picked these feathers off the geese and when he returned home, he stuck them into the ground outside his house. After that he went to bed.

He had been sleeping for a while when he either heard something outside, or maybe he just woke up on his own. When he went out to check, he discovered that all of the feathers had become people. Many, many people. He was living among them. What he had stuck into the ground had turned into people. He saw them busily working on their regular chores.

The man had been living alone. After that he had many people living with him.

The Hungry Boy

Flora Kuugaaq Cleveland

Recorded in Selawik, May 7, 1972

There was at one time a young boy who was ravenous. He asked his grandmother if he could have something to eat, but his grandmother told him to wait. She told him that if he ate then, later on he would have nothing to eat.

The boy started to cry because when his grandmother told him that she was in the middle of cooking. He could smell the delicious aroma of the food she was cooking.

When the boy's father came home from hunting, he told them that he hadn't been able to catch any game animal that day.

When the grandmother finished cooking, she served only tiny portions of the cooked food to her family. The hungry boy was so dissatisfied with the portion of food he was given that he made a promise to himself. "When I'm old enough to hunt, I will eat and eat to my heart's content."

The Girl Raised by a Grizzly Bear

Nora Paniikaaluk Norton

Recorded in Selawik, September 8, 1968

I'm going to tell another short story. I'm telling it as I know it.

There was a family making a living. The couple had two sons and a daughter. The parents went out fishing with the two sons. (They were probably doing the summer fishing.) The girl was left behind at home. When they returned home, they discovered that the little girl had disappeared.

When they left the little girl behind, someone came unannounced. It wasn't a human being. The storyteller said it was a bear. The little girl noticed that the
One day while she was outside the house singing, she saw two men approaching. When the two came closer, they turned out to be her older brothers. Her brothers grabbed her, took off, and brought her home.

When the one who raised her realized that the little girl wasn’t outside the house, she wondered, “I wonder who has taken her away? Or has the little thing returned home?” She hadn’t forgotten from where she got the little girl, so she returned to the place. But the family didn’t say anything. The grizzly bear missed the little girl very much.

The two young men afterwards told the bear, “When she grows up, she’ll go and visit you. We aren’t taking her away from you permanently. We too miss her and want to see her.”

They told the bear that was why they went to take her back. They had been wondering where she was and had suspected that she was abducted by that bear.

When the girl grew up and could do things for herself, she went back to visit the place she had lived earlier with the bear. She would spend some time there before returning home to her parents. Who knows how long she spent her life like that, traveling back and forth between her two places.

Kunuuksaayuka

Minnie Aliitchak Gray

Recorded at Onion Portage in English, August 9, 1967

A man named Kunuuksaayuka took off from his house, following the course of the river. He arrived at a slough branching off from the river. Walking along that slough, he saw a man busily digging with his adz. He watched the working man and saw that the latter dislodged the adz blade from his adz. The snowstorm was blowing so hard at the time that one couldn’t see through the blizzard.

Kunuuksaayuka went closer to the working man and hid. He didn’t want to be spotted. The working man began working again with his adz, but again he dislodged its blade. This time when the blade was dislodged, Kunuuksaayuka quickly snatched it and ran away with it in the midst of the blizzard. When the working man wasn’t able to find his adz blade, he searched and searched for it.