

Traditional foods follow seasons, each other

By George Aguilar

The editors at Spilyay Tymoo have approached me to write an article on Indian foods. This will be an excerpt from the book I'm writing titled: "When the River Ran Wild." The book is about my people of Warm Springs in the era from the late 1700s to mid-1930s.

The elderly women of the village clans provided an equivalent college degree in botany. Her word and advice was law. Seasonal migrations of harvesting the native foods depended entirely upon the elderly women, time of harvest were gauged by weather conditions, perhaps observing the telltale signs of the moon. In the Columbia River system, the salmon's appearance in the river was probably the ultimate indicator for the timetable of edible root harvest for the kiksht Wasco and Tenino Shahapin. To the Tygh Shahapin, the appearance of the stone flies (salmon flies) and swallows, according to coyote stories, welcomed the advent of the chinook salmon and root harvest. The migration to the harvesting area had to be of the right places and the right time of year.

Root food seeds germinate best where the soil is constantly disturbed (from digging). This is likened unto a farmer tilling their fields for planting of a crop. It was the elderly women who caused the roots to flourish because of their constant return to the accustomed gathering places. It was the elderly women who retained the botanical information. She knew of all the edible roots, leaves, barks, mushrooms, berries and stems. She also held a vast knowledge of pharmacology (Tautnuuk - the science of drugs), of which barks and roots to use for known disease and control. She was a physician (doctor). She extracted the poison of rattlesnakes for abortions and she was the one to administer it. Some pharmacists believe that American Indian people's knowledge of herbal medicines equaled or maybe even surpassed modern man's expertise with natural drugs.

She was the master burn ecologist, getting forests to burn for an abundant return of the huckleberries. She sometimes was the psychiatrist, priest (Indian doctor Taw-te). She definitely was a historian. Her wisdom and knowledge was held in high regard within the family clan. Lewis and Clark's observation in their journals noted that when an elderly woman spoke all ears were focused upon her speech with great attentiveness. She sat in the chief places of the lodge. Clan members made mention that she was well taken care of. When asked her age the reply was, she had lived for over a hundred winters, according to the journals.

With God's abundant temporal gifts (foods), there never was such a thing as going hungry. If there was such a thing, then it was considered a very grave and shameful situation.

Indian foods, specifically celery (xamsi) and the chinook salmon were like brothers, wherever the xamsi sprouted, salmon were present in that area. The harvesting of xamsi usually followed the spring run chinook salmon, as they migrated to their accustomed places of spawning. When the spring-run chinook salmon run was near its end in the mid-Columbia River, roots and xamsi could be found maturing on the flat benches overlooking the Columbia River between Mosier and The Dalles. About three weeks later as the salmon migration progressed to Sherars Bridge, xamsi and roots were emerging above the canyons on the east side of the Deschutes River. Approximately mid-April and early-May, when salmon are present in the Warm Springs River area, Xamsi is starting to sprout at this place. When the spring chinook salmon have reached their destination in June, xamsi is coming to a close at the Log Springs area northwest of Simnasho. If anyone desires the taste of xamsi at this time of the year, they will have

to go to the ceded area east of the reservation near Shaniko. In the semi-meadowed high elevation valleys, xamsi could be found, which began to mature about mid-June and ended near July. In mid-August to early September both xamsi and the chinook salmon have propagated, thus a new cycle begins.

Xamsi was not only a food of high calcium, magnesium and zinc value, but was also used as a mystical avenue into the supernatural world. The method used was somewhat like the Urim and Thumin of the Israelites of the Holy Bible. When put to Urim and Thumin a question of yes or no, the Israelites were given an answer supernaturally by means of this method. It was about 1938 when I saw how this was done with the xamsi. Grandmother made an inquiry into the supernatural world about the fish and the eel run of the Five Mile Rapids area along the Columbia River. The answer came as a positive yes. A few days transpired, my uncle Leonard Polk Sr. came with several sacks of salmon and eels to our strawberry harvesting camp at Sandy. Every tribal member in the camp rejoiced because of the fresh eels and salmon. In later years, about the spring of 1956, I demonstrated the xamsi

phenomenon to my wife, which resulted in an astonishing accuracy of the answer. When harvesting xamsi, grandmother often showed me which of the plants was the most succulent. She would

often tell me in Indian not to pick any ush-wy-ni. Tasting the red-stemmed ush-wy-ni often resulted in a bitter taste experience. Caution! Do not drink soda pop when eat this stem. The result will be severe body convulsions, and maybe even death.

The camas (Camasia quamash) Indian name (waq'amu) bulb must come to a full bloom before harvesting, because there are two kinds, one has a blue blossom and the other has a white top. Beware of the white blossom, it is a deadly poison! Poison extracted from the white-blossomed plant may have been used in small streams in earlier years to poison a small area, so it may be harvest for an immediate meal. This plant could possibly be used by applying the poison to the tips of arrows to immobilize deer and other animals. The bulb of the blue camas is delicious when barbecued Indian style. Waq'amu has a high energy value, fat carbohydrate, fiber, calcium, iron and riboflavin. The destruction of this plant by Euro-American settlers was the cause for most of the Indian Wars that took place in the Willamette Valley during the mid-1850s.

Biscuit Root (Iomatium couis) Indian name (x'aush) was harvested on the plateau between Wolford Canyon and Mum-yet-tut canyon. It is also found on Miller Flat. This root is usually harvested in very rocky areas. It

has a yellow flower, resembling the xamsi. In the early times a hunter carried only five each of this root. Five is the magic number for the Kiksht (Wasco). When a drying method is used, it is peeled of its skin and sundried on tule mats. It has the highest energy value (kilo calories) carbohydrate and calcium is very high.

Canby's desert parsley (Iomatium canbyi) Indian name (luksh) was often peeled and eaten raw. In the earlier times this root was smashed with a mortar and pestle. In the early 1930s it was my duty as a child to grind these roots with a hand-turned meat grinder. A small amount was grasped and smashed in the palm and fingers to form a small cake. It was then laid out in the sun to dry on a canvas or tule mats. When dried it was stored in large sally bags. The place of harvest is nearly all over the arid part of this reservation. When dried it is very good, especially eaten while hunting on foot. It has a very high carbohydrate and calcium content.

Bitter-root (lewisia rediviva) Indian name (piaxi) can be found on the reservation at Webster Flat, and off reservation near Paulina and Shaniko. This root grows in nearly all of the western states. It usually can be found in arid and rocky areas. In the earlier times the old-timers said this was sort of a medicine (antibiotic) for tuberculosis. However, I believe the very high content of calcium was the cause for suppressing the tuberculosis. When a high calcium diet is imposed the TB germs are isolated by build-up of calcium (bone) of the infected portion of the diseased area. When cooked with salmon

this provided a very balanced diet of high energy value. Carbohydrate, calcium, thiamin and ascorbic acid. All these nutritive values are very high in content in the root. The salmon provides additional carbohydrate, calcium, protein and the highest thiamin of all Indian flesh foods.

Nuts (acorn) Indian name (wa-wa-chi) was the fruit of the oak tree, consisting of a thick walled nut usually set in a woody, cuplike base. Lewis and Clark saw this nut used at the John Day Shahapin Village on the mouth of the John Day River, October 21, 1805. This was one of the Wascopum's chief foods. Gabriel Franchere journals of 1810-14 state the nuts of acorns and hazel nuts were eaten by the natives to prevent scurvy and proved to be very effective. This is also a principal food for California Indians.

The nuts of acorns were found in the backyards of the Wascopum peoples at The Dalles. Reverend Henry Perkins referred to the oak trees in this area as orchards. On the Warm Springs Reservation on the W150 logging road the hazel nut is found at elevations from 3,500 to 3,700 feet. The nuts are harvested in early fall. An abundance of the wild hazel nut is found in the Willamette Valley. This nut was used as a trade item by the mid-Chinookan peoples.

Indian carrot (perideridia) Indian name (sawtik) is a root that grows in most meadows near the ponderosa pine timberline. It is very good when eaten raw and it can be stored in containers of dry dirt for about two to three months. Drying is in the same manner as luksh. It has the highest calcium content of Indian roots, and it also has iron, magnesium, zinc, thiamin and riboflavin. This root grows in most western states. Caution - it can produce intestinal gas, so don't drink soda pop when eating this root raw, as it will result in body convulsions.

The Indian names for the roots were submitted by Dallas Winishut Jr of the tribal Culture and Heritage Department. The botanical technical name was provided by Miss Ivy Hilty who had the root foods and other Indian foods analyzed for nutritive value. Ivy Hilty will long be remembered for work as an extension agent for OSU at Warm Springs.



Children's learning on display

How many helpers does it take to organize a Family Indian Language Assembly for Warm Springs Elementary, in the gym, on May 4, 2001 from 9 to 11 a.m.? Lots is the answer!

First the Kiksht-Ichishkiin-Numu Teachers decided to have the kids, tell their families the words and sayings in Indian that they learned at school. Next the Language Coordinator Jeanne Thomas and Myra Shawaway, the Culture Heritage Director, started calling people to help with organizing an assembly.

Dawn Smith, the WSE Principal, said to call 509-J School District to arrange to use the gym. Jim Quaid and Sheila Wahnetah, from Prevention Services provided supplies and incentives for this family-student-school gathering. Ham Greeley called Olivia Wallulatum at Govt. Affairs and they got the videos to tape the students. The help got the Language Assembly started.

The Language Teachers Arlita Rhoan, Suzie Slockish, Dallas Winishut, Anna Clements, Pat Miller, Shirley Tufti, Deanie Johnson, Val Switzler, Madeline McInturff and Gladys Thompson listed what the kids know in Paiute, Wasco and Sahapin. They wanted families to see and share what their students understand and what the students can do by listening to learn tribal languages.

At the assembly the students answered attendance calls, named animals, played counting games, pointed to body parts, recited a tribal alphabet, sang pretty, danced together and lived. The kids, families and language workers smiled as they



Students at Warm Springs Elementary gathered May 4.

enjoyed the speaking in all three Warm Springs Tribal languages. Tribal Council Member Bernice Mitchell was happy to see her grandchildren with their classes. KWSO had Dana Smith "kickin' the recorder" and aired the soundtrack by noon that day.

People visited about their ancestors that talked many languages. In history, the Warm Springs Confederation is famous for understanding other Tribes as they traded for goods and helped each other survive. In 1887, the U. S. Boarding Schools didn't want Indians to talk their language. Now, 114 years later, this all changed and the school's teachers and the tribe's language teachers help our students to talk Indian language.

The Warm Springs Language Program appreciates everyone that helped and attended. Thank you to: Lois Squiemphen Smith, Lucinda Heath, Mary Emhoolah, Liz Smith, Mr. Brown, Ms. Adams, Mrs. Fuentes, Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Rodin, Mrs. Paye, Judy, Mrs. Graybael, Mrs.

Miller, Mrs. LaPage, Mrs. David, Ms. Linquist, Ms. Bennett, Ms. Varela, Mrs. White, Mrs. Ohman, Ms. Calica, Gorky & Laurie Mitchell, Larson Kalama, James & Paula Halliday, Frances Allen, Neda Wesley, Freda Wallulatum, Pamela Yaw, Debbie Stacona, Gaylene Adams, Alicia Adams, Earlene Tufti, Bernadette Hoyer, Jocelyn Moses, Luann Tufti, Rebecca Main, Millie Frazier, Sharice Johnson, Maxine Switzler, Julie Quaid, Annette Polk, Lori Switzler, Ada Billy, Jamie Bailey, Phillip Johns, Dixon Polk, Sr., Tony Suppah, Mark Johnson, Keith Moody, Nadine Maraz, Lucy Suppah, Robert Medina, Hobo Patt, Creston Smith, Irene Towe, Priscilla Yazzie, June Smith, Lillian Galinda, Raydine Spino, Amelia Spino, Sandra Green Sampson, Rhonda Clements, Jacoba Smith, Marcia Minthorn, Roger Minthorn, Marlen LaClaire, Nikki Charley, Billie Smith, Sharon Smith, Michael Collins, Cecelia Collins, Mackie Begay, and Carol Lawrence.

Fourth-graders attend orientation

Eighty four fourth graders were invited to the Jefferson County Middle School Wednesday, May 9, 2001 to an orientation of becoming part of the JCMS fifth grade class next school year. Three groups were assembled and sent to a different class room to hear from various teachers, the principal and other staff members of JCMS.

Many parents had questions regarding the purchase of P.E. clothes, band, choir and other activities among school classes, attendance and the changes that will go along



with attending JCMS.

One major change was only the fourth graders from the Warm Springs Elementary will be attend-

ing JCMS. If any parent or guardian has concerns and/or questions, don't hesitate to call Foster Kalama or Butch David at 475-7253.

Women of Warm Springs: WOW

By Lillian January

The Women of Warm Springs (WOW) started as a multidisciplinary team who wanted to reach out to the women in the community with health information in a relaxed setting. The results have far exceeded our expectations in the short time we have been meeting.

The team makeup is: Judy Charley, Community Health Education; Bernadette Hoyer, OSU Extension on the Reservation; Joy Harvey, Women's Health Practitioner; Montell Elliott, Medical Secretary; Ann McKenzie, Assistant to Women's Health and Nutrition; and Lillian January, Nutrition Supervisor. One great thing about having such a diverse team to plan it and carry it through, is that if one or two people have other commitments the rest of the team picks up the slack. No one has ever been left wondering "how do we pull it off this

month?"

The WOW "get-together" is held on the second Thursday of each month, at noon, in the Atrium of the Health and Wellness Center. We always serve a light lunch to start things off. During the time the participants are eating, one of the team members, or, occasionally, a guest will present a health lesson. Following the lesson, one of the team members will present a craft lesson. We have purchased or donated supplies for the participants to use in making whatever we have decided is the Craft of the Month. This all takes place in one hour so the participants are able to return to work on time.

Since we began the WOW sessions, in September 2000, our attendance has been pretty consistent at over 30 women participating in our group. Our high was 42, just before Christmas. Most of the women are employed in Warm Springs, but we

have had some participants who are homemakers. An occasional man will attend with his significant other, or some brave male who works in the clinic and thinks what we doing looks interesting will wander in, but we have designed the group for women.

Our lessons have included sessions on simple exercises you can do at your desk, cooking a turkey safely, cancer awareness, and, in May, our topic is to be talking to your kids about sex.

Our crafts have been varied, but we try to tie them in with the season. In December, we made graham cracker houses and villages. In April, we made baskets.

We are very pleased with the success of this group and plan to continue it for as long as we continue to have excellent participation.

We hope to see you at the next meeting! (Next date June 14.)