

**Project**                      **Women in Alaska Fisheries**

**Interviewee**                Apayu Moore [AM]  
**Interview date**             August 2, 2018  
**Location**                    Dillingham, Alaska  
**Interviewed by**            Kim Sparks [KS] (PSMFC, NOAA Fisheries) and Christopher Maines [CM] (Bristol Bay Native Association)  
**Transcribed by**           Elizabeth Figus  
**Notes**                        (??) indicates the transcriber's best guess for a word or name when not verified by the interviewee. When not provided by the interviewee, spelling and definitions for Yup'ik terms (shown in italics) are sourced from:  
  
                                      Jacobson, S. A. (2012). *Yup'ik Eskimo dictionary* (2nd ed.). Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Language Center.

KS     This is Kim Sparks and I'm here with Apayu. And Apayu, how did you get started fishing?

AM     I think our first fishing as far as using nets was with my dad. So, we started commercial fishing, it is kind of the beginning memories of that whole bit. I thought it was normal that everybody's dad just fished in the summer. And I think it wasn't until college that I realized that commercial fishing wasn't the norm. Oh yeah, my dad fishes. What does your dad do? What, he works in an office? Lawyers? Doctors? What? (laughs) I thought everyone fished in the summer.

KS     And he was a drift net—?

AM     Um-hm.

KS     Okay. So did you learn how to fish from him?

AM     I think the way that it went; so, I was pretty young. But I wanna say that it was either we had the choice of going up the land, which was to my grandma's cabin—we could help her get fish—or we could go on the boat and go fishing. And so, my choice was usually to go out on the boat and go fishing. Or the other option was that I could go to Twin Hills and I could visit my mom's parents, over there. Usually up the land was kind of my last choice. (laughs)

KS     Why was that?

AM     I don't know. You don't get to see your mom's family very often. And it's a different experience being over there. Probably getting spoiled a little bit more. You're not competing for your siblings' attention. Yeah, I don't know.

KS     So you would go to Twin Hills for the summer?

AM Yeah.

KS Okay. And that was with, which relative?

AM I would just get sent over there. My aunts lived over there, my uncles, my grandparents, had a bunch of cousins. And then we had some other cousins and one of my aunts would go there for the summer times and so it was even more, it was just big family time. And what they were doing. I am sure they were fishing and stuff but when you are that young, we were there to play. (laughs)

KS And what is your favorite memory of fishing growing up?

AM As far as just across the board commercial fishing or subsistence?

KS Sure, yeah.

AM For some reason—subsistence stuff doesn't come to me until later. And most of my life, I think the commercial fishing, like my young life that was what the appeal to me is. If there was more subsistence in there, I kind of zoned some of it out. I just remember the adventure of being out on the boat. And I want to say my dad would probably even bring fish in sometimes. But yeah, commercial fishing was just—it was great, because one, my dad would bring me to the store and let me grab any art supplies that I needed: alright, you get your own sketchbook and here, new markers. So that was fun, and then we got to eat whatever we wanted out there. And then you feel like you are just part of the big commotion, all of the work. I think one of the biggest things when I would go out fishing with him is I am very, very empathetic, and compassionate. And so I remember, and it's such a dramatic moment for me. I don't know why it is so imprinted in me but I am like looking into the eyes of these fish and thinking, I just need to save one. Just one. So I am like gonna throw it overboard, and my dad's all, Hey! (laughs) We need those fish! I'm like, can I just save one? And I think that was probably kind of a common theme between him and I because he also raced dogs when we were younger. And that was another thing: can I just have one? There are these mutts that end up coming around or one of his racing dogs gets pregnant; the unwanted dog. And I'm like, can I just have one? So with the fish I'm like, can I just save one? I was pushing boundaries.

KS Did you have a specific job when you were out with him or did you just come along for the ride?

AM He would let us work. A lot of the times whoever is the youngest or whoever is going to be the slowest picker is going to run the reel. So, you just work the hydraulics: pull the net in, stop. Pull the net in, stop. Or if it is slower fishing then we actually had to pick the net. And then I was out there before it got, like the RSW [refrigerated sea water], and all of that stuff so I don't even know what it is like fishing out there with all of those regulations these days, but we were just, you know, throwing the fish in the bins, and—we got to do a bit of everything. We were treated like crew. And I remember being super proud hooking up the brailers to the crane. You know, because they would put it over, I'm like, Yeah. I'm big. I was probably older by then but, I don't know.

KS Very cool. How old were you when he took you out?

AM He has always taken his kids out. I can't say that it was like, oh when we turned ten or something. I feel like we were out there way before then. He was really into all of the fishing. So he did the herring season. He would start in May. And I think we would catch rides. Since my family live over in that area. Then I remember one boat ride, going over there and they gave me a choice: Do you want to stay out here and fish with us or do you want to go see your grandma? I want to go see my grandma. So there are pictures of probably that trip and I was maybe three. I think I was younger than Bode.

KS So when did you start doing the subsistence?

AM There was, I was a little bit of help, but I think it was never my funnest bit of growing up? It always seemed like more work, which is so funny now that I think of it. I'm like, commercial fishing or subsistence? Why was subsistence so much more work in my head then? Now I'm doing it myself, I think, holy cow.

*break in interview (interruption from child)*

KS And so what made you want to get back into subsistence again? You said you've been doing it for a couple years now?

AM Yea, and then I think going off to college; when you are hearing about what everyone's doing; what the summer activities are—what people miss about being home, and they want some fresh strips. And I always grew up, we always, always had strips. My grandma was the one who would do that for us. She would bring up over all of these jars of three-day smoke. And all the jars of the plain fish. She would even do it during moose season sometimes. She would bring up, she would make stew for everyone, and can it.

*break in interview (interruption from child)*

KS Did she ever teach you how to do all the preparation as well?

AM I was not as close to my dad's mom, so my Grandma Birdie(?). I think I was always a little intimidated by her. She was really tough. She was such a tough woman, I mean, so independent. She would just do whatever she needed to do. And she didn't really have time for a lot of tenderness, and like I said I am really emotional. (laughs) And so I think I was just kind of afraid of her when I was younger. So when I got older and then got into college and our friends are getting strips. And what does this mean? Well what are our parents doing? And people are asking, Where do you come from? What is being Yup'ik? What is subsistence lifestyle? And you start questioning yourself and you realize that you don't quite understand it as much as you feel like you should for these good explanations of where you come from.

*break in interview (interruption from child); interviewer's next question was cut off*

KS —subsistence lifestyle. What would you say to them?

AM It was, it makes you think for a second. And then, you are wondering, Well, how active am I in all of this? This is who our people are, but how much activity, or how much participation have I really had in doing this? And then it comes down to, you know, gosh, I've been around it a lot. So subconsciously I feel like I know what it is. Oh yeah, you jar fish, that's so easy. Oh yeah, it hangs out there for a while and if a bear comes around then you shoot. It got me thinking about what I wanted my active role to finally be. It started making me feel like I was probably missing out on this kind of rite of passage.

And then Pebble Mine came up and that makes you even more passionate about what you are going to do and what you learning. As an artist, as a young artist, wanting to get into making a difference to protect whatever our way of life was. Because, hey, I still had a lot to learn, so, heck, if that is going to be destroyed before I make it out of college and come back. You know, I have another three years left. (laughs) I need the fish to stay at least until, you know, I'm 35, so I could even learn and have a story to maybe tell my kids if it was going to all be destroyed. So, I got into the Pebble Mine activism, working my summer jobs, and I graduated college and came back, and kind of wanted to fit in art to show what we—using the same things you are learning from college. People are asking you, What is your way of life? What is fishing? What is subsistence? Using those same exact questions to answer it through a visual form. And so it's—as I'm coming up with concepts to paint or to draw or to make designs, it is, well, What is life here? What is subsistence? And it always goes back to the absolute happiest moments, the best parts of it. Our Yup'ik people, our Native people, are so humorous. There is so much humor in everything. And so usually even after a big fight—because I mean there's (laughs)—people are really getting tested when you are tired and working together and have different ways of doing things, and are really opinionated, and maybe a little passive and whatever. And so you have some of these arguments that probably get blown out of control because everyone is tired and hungry and whatever, and then you get some rest and eat a little bit, and they're hilarious. You just have to laugh at yourself, how we over-react and how humans behave.

Getting back into all of the, I guess, subsistence rights through Pebble going on and learning about what it was we were going to lose. And because I was working for N\_\_\_\_\_ [?? 11m 13s] I was able to go along on interviews, and elder discussions. And so hearing what their life was and what their stories were. And even how in the, on the level of history, with the cultural trauma; what was taken away from them, and so hearing, and wanting to learn, and actually take shortcuts in your life, when you are wanting to get through life as efficiently as possible, then you have to take advice. Otherwise, it is just silly. You are going to be learning things throughout a period of years if you don't take advice from someone who is telling you, I have lived a lifetime here: here is how you can make it easier. And so they're sharing stories of, our language was taken, I was taken from my family; the epidemic. I don't really even know how to subsist or I didn't get into it until I was in my thirties. I am so proud of you guys for doing what you are doing, and then it came to—and then the ones who weren't, who had probably stronger family. They were just lucky to not be influenced by the epidemics and deaths,

things like that, as much. And so they were able to stay a lot more rooted to our subsistence way of life. And maintaining just kind of this sense of their own activism and their own way to be headstrong and rebellious—which is so funny, because it shouldn't be a rebellious thing to hold onto your culture. (laughs) Like this is who we are, now I'm a rebel. (laughs) This is so weird. But finding strength in that to see how they held on and were able to continue a really pure subsistence lifestyle in a lot of ways, and we are still pushing our people and their extended families to get into it.

So all of that was really, really inspiring to say, all right, I need to pull up my big boots here and start getting in the water and doing stuff. And you hear so much about it, you know, at this point it is kind of this intimidating thing. Like, can you fillet a fish without wasting anything? And you are thinking, all right, if you are from this culture, we are so literal. There are so many literal things. Because you can't tell someone that the ice is good to walk on—Oh yeah, it is good enough—and then they walk on it, they are going to frickin fall through. So you have to be really descriptive and honest about, Oh yeah, I saw some cracks in that, it might mean, So be a little careful before you step out onto that.

And then you get the whole fillet—like, well if you are going to fillet a fish, you don't want to waste anything. We are going to judge you, kind of, if you are wasting things. Or you will hear them talk about, oh yeah, I saw that person filleting; man, they waste a lot of meat. They are not really saying anything bad, but the context, you are thinking, oh man, they're—so I need to try to not waste anymore. So it took me a really long time to actually fillet a fish because I was afraid wasting. And then what got me kind of moving and over my fear was watching people who were just moving into town from anywhere, Lower 48, and they are just filleting fish, getting strips up, and I'm thinking, how are you guys doing this, and I am so afraid to be judged on how much I'm wasting? I'm like, I couldn't be doing any worse than you guys here.

So getting my mom—you know, I started a family and that really me pushed even further into wanting to get going on this. Like, all right, the kids are here; I need to be feeding them. I am advocating for a subsistence way of life and yet, I am not in charge of my own smokehouse yet. I am still depending, you know, on my mom to actually do it. I'll do the hard work; I will go and fish; I will pick the net, I'll carry the net, I'll get things ready, but as far as the actual fish processing itself, I didn't really want to dabble in that, because I was too intimidated.

And so I had the kids, my mom finally came. She got us going. Just, she kind of did most of the stuff, and again, I was carrying the fish and I was doing a lot of watching. Tons of watching. She is not really good about being vocal about how she is doing things. She just is like, Just watch, (laughs) just watch. Which could be kind of frustrating for someone who is kind of adapted to the Western—you just got through college, you have to communicate. And so, maybe first, getting into college it was harder to have these conversations to describe things. And I still catch myself, being like, all right, well, here just watch me do this or here is how it looks, I'll just draw it for you; here is the

mechanism after I draw it, but I can't just communicate it so clearly, just with words offhand. And so, my mom is a lot like that; where she's just, she would prefer you to just watch how she is doing it; see how she is doing the cuts; and then, even tying a knot, she is not going to describe; she will say, you know you do it that way. I'm like, what is that way? Yeah, that way. Kind of like that. (laughs) Which, kind of like that? (laughs) So, those little cultural things.

And she is a fluent Yup'ik speaker and so she, a lot of that carries through the Yup'ik language, where you work so closely with people that they just understand where you are coming from. And when you are describing it in certain words, they know how to allude onto the right track. And so I haven't—I am not a fluent Yup'ik speaker so I miss out on a little bit of that communication. It causes kind of a conflict for us. When we are working together we definitely have a lot of moments where we are like, (sighs, laughs) Why are you like this? (laughs) Kind of walking away from the moment. Mom is going to go smoke a cigarette; I am going to go chug a glass of water.

Yeah, so that was our first year. And we got through it. She did most of it and I was able to watch. And then by year two, she called, or I called her, How do I do this? And more of the miscommunication stuff. But it was still, I never had my own site. The first year, Christopher—the kids' dad—he went and got, I think him and his dad brought fish in from the commercial fishing boat. And then, I had hoodies, so I traded some of my art for someone to bring me kings. So some guys from Nushagak Point—my friends from over there, the **Wysockis**(??)—they brought me a bunch of kings, and that was how we got our kings that year.

Then the next year, I want to say Chris and I went out across the Wood River and tried that because, when you are—I live in Aleknagik, and so if I am going to have to drive 20 miles to town for a 2AM tide, and I have two little kids, it just, it's a lot of work. And then do I—and is it worth it at that point to have to deal with some really whiny kids when you are going to be tired and needing to do fish and try not to waste any of it, and, so we didn't want to do it that way. And going across to the Wood River would offer an opportunity to just get all of the fish at once. You could pull your net whenever you want, so if you see that you are getting too many, then. And this is all hearing the best-of from the people who have been fishing around here for years. So you could hear, you know, there are all those stories where, oh no, we put our net out on Kanakanak [Beach] and came back and there was just hundreds of fish. Like, what are we going to do with these all? (laughs) Like, does anyone else need any fish? But guess what, everyone on the beach, they've all gotten like 100, 200, you know, 250 fish. So how many people can you share with? And then the sad stories, where maybe someone who wasn't from here didn't understand that you could get quantities of fish like that, and then fish end up going to waste. And then what is the risk for that? Do I want that to be on my conscience? I was the one who wanted to throw one fish back off the boat. If I end up wasting fifty fish, I am going to be, I mean, it is going to haunt me until I am probably an elder. I will still be

sharing that story. They are going to be like, there is that lady. She killed fifty fish, wasted them, fifty years ago. And she is still stuck on it. (laughs) That will be me.

And so, we went across the Wood River. And then this year, we did a little bit of it, then my sister, Gayla, when she is not fishing, she would let Chris—since he is living here in town—we would kind of do the co-parenting, where he would take care of the net, he would get them in the morning, or for those late tides, and then keep them at his house and then drive up and then we would split them together and start doing that.

And then, with my mom, since she didn't come that next year, she was just describing how to do everything. Like, how much fish do you—how much salt do you put in the water for the brine? She is like, Oh yeah, about, three of those—I have that coffee cup, I left it in the salt. About three cups of that in the bucket. And I'm like, All right, and so I salt my water, and get it all good. The brine's going, the fish are hanging, I'm feeling so good. Wow, all she had to do was tell me, I remembered enough from last year. We are doing so awesome, our fillets are getting better. And then it is time to taste the fish and it doesn't have very much salt on it; and I'm thinking, these are the low sodium version, I guess. And so I call up my mom, are you sure it was only three cups? And she goes, Yeah, three cups, three of those cups in half a bucket. And I'm like, Mom! You did not tell me half a bucket. I filled that whole bucket. And so, I bring some fish to my sister's, and they are doing their pro—they are like pro status at their smokehouse. So I go down there and they lit the *maqi*<sup>1</sup> and we are waiting around and like, here is some fish. This is the low sodium version, and Sister 1: Oh, well, you didn't float the potato? And I'm like, What do you mean? What potato? Like, no. And so, she is like, Oh my gosh, yeah, Grandma says, (laughs)—but this is the grandma I never did fish with. And so they are like, All right, you put the potato in the water and you add salt until the potato floats and that is when your brine is ready to go. I'm like, no, I didn't float the potato. And so there was only a couple sisters. One of the sisters who doesn't do fish, but she was visiting. And then the next, her next sister comes in—I have five older sisters—and so the next one comes in. I'm like, here is your fish. It is low sodium; I didn't add enough salt. She was like, You didn't float the potato? I'm like, Oh my gosh. (laughs) I didn't know about the potato, but now I know. Next sister, same thing. She was like, You didn't float the potato? I'm like, I just learned about the potato today. And then we all get in the *maqi* and then that was when Gayla shows up, and then I'm like, I put the fish in your car. It is the low sodium version. She was like, Oh you didn't float the potato? (laughs) I now know about the potato. So, it was kind of a funny thing now, because I will now never forget the potato. I still don't float the potato, but now I definitely do half a bucket, just because I try not to over-salt my fish and the potato, I like the salt of that but then I definitely overeat when I'm eating strips. And so I end up with just swollen fingers when it is a little too salty.

*break in interview (interruption from child)*

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<sup>1</sup> Steambath

AM This year, I still don't want to do a beach site, because I don't want to run all the way down. I don't have a truck. I have a big van and I have a Subaru; and I just don't want to get the interiors completely slimed out and rotten. And so this year I kind of got a little bit of my own woman power, I am going to do this. I live right on Aleknagik, why am I not fishing just right here at the lake instead of going all the way down. And so I went downriver a little bit. But I also get sciatica, and so that was kind of a problem, because I am thinking, Crap, is this going to flare up, or what? I am pretty strong. Without sciatica I have no doubt that it is just going to be an easy job for me. But I have it, and so I am thinking, alright, well I will just work through it. I will still be able to do it. I won't put out, you know, it is a small net, hopefully I won't get that much fish—

*break in interview (interruption from child)*

AM So this year the fish were really small. And the net that we, I had king gear the first time I went out and so they were just going right through it. And I was thinking, Man, this is crazy because I went up when the fish first started running, so there's thousands of fish going by. The first time my cousin came out with me. So that was when the fish are going right through it and we are just thinking, Oh my gosh, this is so frustrating. So we end up, we got seven fish, I think because we were also trying to get them to funnel in and our set was kind of diagonal like this and they were like going right straight into our little trap here and then they are just going through the net and there was a couple holes and they were going through that. So then I borrow a net and it ends up being small king gear; I thought it was a red net. But the lead line, this is round two and I get my cousin to come back out with me, and we set it. And we are like, All right, this time, look at all these fish. This is going to be a half hour and we are going to be done! So we get our set out and we are like, Woo! They are going right towards it. And we get a couple little splashes. And then, we drive up, because the water is clear, so we get the boat up and we are looking, and the lead line was too light and it was going up with the current and just masses were going under the net and we are thinking, no! And then there was a couple really big holes. It was like the fish were going up to the mesh and (makes turning noise) they were like, go out and go through the hole.

So then we pulled that net and then I put a post on, something happened to our red net so I don't have subsistence red net right now. So I put a post on the Trading Post, like I am looking to buy a red net. I need a red net. And then a friend ends up saying, Hey, well I have one if you don't find one to buy. Just go ahead and grab it from my house. And so I get her net. And this is when I end up going out alone, I'm just like I am just going to get it done. We are going to do this. So I go down and I set. And the sciatica ended up not being that bad. And I got about thirty fish that time but being that far up on the lake, I learned this year that the local residents, if they are going to be setting nets at the lake they don't do it past a certain time because the fresh water starts decomposing on their skin so they get sores and stuff, or by then their sores start developing. So of the thirty fish I was able to hang about twenty of them. And then with the whole waste part, there



were some big sores on some of them, and so we were just needing to chop them in half and then salvage the meat for canning on the rest of it. And that was really hard for me, you know, I'm watching half of a fish going in.

This is one of those stories I'm going to be 50, in 50 years, (laughs) I am going to be telling it still, like, I had to cut half off that fish in half, ugh, we didn't get to use that part of it! So then after that, that was when I found out, All right, after a certain date then they are not going this far up river, and then we went downriver a little ways on a sunny day anyway, and then got another thirty fish, and then finally wanted to stop messing around so we borrowed a site, down in town, off the beach, and got 100 fish that night. And then that was awesome, because then that's when the filleting starts getting better, but the first fillet that I had this year, when my mom was here she goes, we are stripping and so she got to that fillet that was just kind of mangled and she goes, this must have been Apayu's first fillet. (laughs) And it was. It was the very first fillet of the season, so it was, I was trying to find which knife was going to work. Do I use the *uluqaq*<sup>2</sup>? Do I use the fillet knife? Do I use this other big knife? Yeah, I still haven't found my happy knife for getting it done. Maybe when I'm 40. I am 34 now.

KS Sounds like there is a lot to learn, just little details that you pick up every year, new stuff.

AM Yeah. And I feel like it's really important to be open to what other people have to say. I think in this day and age, Western society wants us to be very independent. They want us to come up with our own ideas, and those are things to be prideful of: that was my idea, that was my idea. But then when you are from a culture where you are trying to teach things from generations back, if you are trying to take those as your idea, then you are kind of a fraud, and also if you are not going to open your heart to people who are generously sharing those thoughts, then you end up losing out on the efficiency. You end up losing out on the, there is spiritual, emotional, mental well-being type things, where you are being a humble person by just shutting your mouth and listening. We don't always know what is best. It is not always best to have your own ideas. Maybe try doing what people have been doing for a little while, and if you can improve something, go ahead and share that. But even then, are you the very first person to ever really do that? And how special is it that we come from generations of people who were just masters of invention and are those ideas really just from us? I feel like since we are being brought up and subconsciously we are just taking in all this different stuff, and that is formulating these wires and connections in our minds of how ideas are going to come up. So if you are doing something and you get an idea, isn't that more a product of what your entire life upbringing has been? And so that idea probably comes from way back somewhere else to help you adapt and it is part of our human DNA to adapt to be as efficient as possible. I don't know.

KS So are you going to take your kids out soon? Are they going to participate at some point?

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional woman's knife with arc-shaped edge

AM Yeah. They are around and we will let them touch fish. They get to grab anything. When we got the hundred fish they were down there, and we are pulling the net in but their hands are at least on it, and so they are helping. And then we went down the beach and I actually had my nephew and Bode with me, so the two boys. So Kaya sometimes can be a little bit more, you know, I am not into being outside; when are we going back home? And so having two little boys was really fun, because they are all, Yeah! We are like, here, throw the heads back into the water. They are all, Yeah! And then we get the net set out again and then they are like, Yeah! We got a fish! We got a fish! (laughs) They are so excited about it, and then they are getting to touch guts, so they are so excited about it. There is nothing dirty, they are just like, if they could they would just rub it all over their heads, I am sure. (laughs)

So that was really fun, and then Kaya likes being a helper, though, and so she will do some really tender things and come up and like, hey, do you need something? I will go get this for you. Or, hey, what are you doing? And then afterwards, just really, really encouraging: Good job. Wow. You guys did a really good job doing that. So she is there for moral support right now.

But that is one of the things, so, I am divorced but I definitely try to co-parent, because I feel like it is important that the kids don't—one, they don't feel like they are choosing between either parent ever; and, two, they could remember us still as a family, working together, and, like, oh yeah, mom and dad would put fish up together. And that is a healthy family activity. Like whether you are together or not, we created humans together and so they should then see still even if people could not work it out as romantic partners, we could still work it out just within life, what our values are. Where our goals are headed.

KS That's amazing. That's great. Switching gears a little bit, I am wondering if you have noticed any environmental changes in the last couple years: anything with the weather or with the fish or anything at all?

AM I can't really say. I worked for [Alaska Department of] Fish and Game for a number of years. And so I was a tower counter; so I think some of the years when I was in college, that was a big part of why I was not partaking in the subsistence activities. Because I am out counting the fish for the escapement for the commercial fishery. So I was able to see in Togiak how there is just a smaller amount of fish that go up. You can actually count each individual fish on your counts. And then maybe for a little bit if you are going to be challenged, there just might be a school of a hundred going by or something like that, but there is not, the counts there are not that high within the matter of ten minutes that you have to count on each side of the river. But then I also came to the Wood River, and that is a challenge because maybe during the early season you could count every fish, but then they start coming up in masses of just thousands and thousands, and how do you count a thousand in one click? How do you calculate that mass? Where that grouping is going to be about a thousand, and so you are strategizing, how do I do this? So seeing it from that perspective and being out—

There have been rainy years. It seems like all of the years that I did that and then now this year it was wet and rainy and so some of my, the very last bar of fish—I knew I was testing it. But I wanted just a few more bags of strips. And so it was either a choice, I could either three-day smoke them now or I could wait a couple days and see if they would dry a little bit. And so I waited, and then the day that I went out to go get them, you have to keep checking them to make sure the flies are not getting on them. And I went out there and they started building a little bit of mold. So then, they were not as dry as I wanted them to be, but I just brought them in, wiped them all off, cut them up, vacuum-packed them, and then, what. So, after telling my cousin about this—this is why it is so important to share what our trials are and our triumphs with our family. Because I would not have thought about it. They make \_\_\_\_\_ [?? 35m 28s]. So you could do that with strips also. It is just like partially dried fish, and then you boil it, and you can eat it that way since they didn't dry enough. I don't know.

The other year we worked—a few years ago we were at the Mission Lodge and there was a really high water spring year, but I guess I have not gotten into the habit of really taking note of what changes are going on. And I don't feel like I am in a lifespan enough to—even as a scientist, how long do these scientific studies go on? Ten years? So, what, I have been maybe doing my own fish for three? I still have a few more years to go before I could make those calculated hypotheses. (laughs)

KS Do you want to tell us a little bit about your art? How did you get started with that?

AM A lot of it was just being encouraged as a young girl. And, again, when I would go on the boat, my dad would just let me get whatever I wanted for drawing because I was an artist. But they noticed it before then, you know, when I was going into kindergarten, that my drawing skills were a little advanced for my age, and then the teachers noticed that, and then it goes to the community members noticing it, and then every gr—we have such a unique way of growing up here. You are going to school with a group of twenty kids from kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade, our senior year. And so you get to know what everyone's strengths and weaknesses are. At least by the time you are in fifth grade you have a pretty good idea of who does what and likes what, and it is like our own little mini-kid community maybe. And so the designated role that I got was Artist. And there was another girl who was in my class who was also very, very talented and she, like if my stuff was advanced, she was beyond advanced. Like, she could have gone on to Disney and made some awesome cartoons with them I feel like, because in fifth grade she was doing stuff that adults could do. And my stuff was like kind of nice, but she was definitely an inspiration to always strive to be better. And so that was a really interesting, awesome, lucky way for me to grow up. To have somebody at my age be better than I was—to show me that even if I was good there was always something to strive for, to advance myself with that.

And then getting into sports, doing posters, things like that, and then by the time we got to our senior year we had to do senior projects and I think a lot of youth want to find the easy way out, so what was I good at? I could make some art. I am going to do an art

show. (laughs) And so that was kind of my first dabble in, alright, am I going to pursue this any—beyond just schoolwork and funny sketches and whatever? And then that summer, I don't know, just the community was really supportive and the school was really supportive. That summer the Principal asked if I wanted to- or the summer of my junior year, when I was going to be a senior, he asked if I wanted to paint a mural in the High School wing. And so I did a Wolverine pride mural along the hallway, and that was my first kind of large scale thing, and it was easy! It was really easy to just—you draw it up there, fill in the lines, to get going from there, and then I went to animal portraits and just using your skill super literally, like, here will you draw this? Oh yeah, I will just draw that. But then by the time I got into college to be able to use my own inspirations to create work that—to create ideas that weren't necessarily something that could be a literal trans—you know. Yeah. Art is so funny.

And even then I have a hard time explaining art. Like, when I am talking about my art, I am like, I don't know, do you want to just see? This is what I do. It was a lot easier to be inspired, though, as someone with responsibility, someone who had emotional connections to cultural trauma, to wondering who my people were, to wondering who I was. The color of my skin and, you know, those—stereotyping with, well if this person is lighter are they really Native? And then, also not knowing my biological father, so then that brings—who gave me this light complexion—and growing up in a Native community. And all of those different sorts of things tying in to well, what is it that makes me me? And then finding out that through my artwork—I think that brought me even closer and brought it to be more accepted by our Native community. Almost like a way of proving, like, wow! She knows a lot of what we are! Hello, she has grown up here! She was raised in these same communities and I guess, oh wow. You have never met your biological dad? Who was obviously white, and whatever. And so it has been interesting over the years seeing people or hearing people say, wow! Your heart is really tied to our Yup'ik people and hearing others say, oh well I think you are an old soul. Or things like that. And just like, wow, you really capture what our way of life is. Those are special things to me that help validate, like all right, yes, this is where I am from. Regardless of like whatever historical moment and cultural revitalization that we are at.

KS Very cool. Do you ever do art based on your own experiences fishing as well as explaining and talk about your culture?

AM Yeah. A lot of my work there—it is easier for me to get going on a concept by having a question. And usually my questions lie within the whole happiness realm, which is: What about this moment makes you be happiest? Where is the action? What has been a moment that brought awe to you? Just, so when I started, commercial fishing was definitely one of my first loves. It was the most adventurous time that we had; you feel rich when you are out there; you are in the heat of just—I am a big believer in energy, and so when other people are having great energy, you are just, you are feeling it in the Bay, it is just floating all over the water and hitting each boat and each person out there. There is something going on that just kind of brings this different life to us. And a lot of

that, and where is that fueling from, from the fish in the water to the waves hitting the boat, and the splashes that these fish are making in your net, and when people see the fish hitting the nets then they are, Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! And if you ever, I mean, compare that to a No. So like if you are out there and you are like, Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! And then try talking. Like, how does it feel when you are saying yeah, versus No! No! You know? Like, so if you are getting so much Yes-s out there, your emotions are just thriving on this joyous, absolute purity of being—having gratitude for being out there on the water. And so I painted some fish. Like, I will do scenes where there is tails and heads kind of in a net and then you can see water splash marks. That is supposed to just kind of invoke some of that. Like, oh yeah, that's what happens. And if you were to pause a moment, then those fishing splashing make me feel really good, because we are getting somewhere in life.

And then when it comes to subsistence, since I am not, you know, not 20 years into it, I am definitely, probably a little idealistic about where I am at, but I was able to commercial fish in Ekuk as a setnetter for a couple of seasons and seeing the different family dynamics that are there, and so I have like this: What is the best fish camp ever? Like there is a little bit of community; you have a four-wheeler; you have your grandparents there; there's kids there; it's a bright sunny day; there's birds in the sky; and then, if you are ever crammed, like the Ekuk fishing everyone lives in these little shacks; and there's, you know five to eight, ten people living in these little tiny places, and it gives you a whole different perspective on—because when you think back on it, those are some of your happiest days and then we come back and we are like, what do we want out of life? I want a big, five bedroom house, and, you know, you end up living in something like that and you are not as happy as you were back in that shack and there's something to actually compare it to. I don't know. When I start painting, it's like those idealistic moments of where people are sort of forced into rawness and realness and finding love in the most difficult places. And finding happiness when you don't look very good. (laughs) Might be a week out of a shower and you are still feeling like, you know, you are pretty hard core and awesome.

KS And then finally, I would love to know in your own words—you have talked a lot about this already but what does the subsistence way of life mean to you?

AM It is so dynamic. You know, I mean, you talk about subsistence way of life and think, oh, that is just harvesting fish. And it is easy for people who haven't harvested their own food and processed it to just kind of think: ew, gross. Blood, stinky, guts, gross, I don't know why anyone would want to do that. But it encompasses an entire process and timeline of events that make it a special thing. Because definitely by the time you get to the blood and guts, it is—there are moments where you are like, ugh, this is gross and kind of stinks. But what brought you here? You were out on a beautiful day. And what was that like, being out on the water on a boat? And you are having good times.

Like this year, it was being out laughing about how our lead line was too light, and the fish were going under, and the irony of thousands of fish going by. And what those

emotions are, like going from super peak: Wow! There is so much fish! This is going to be so easy! To kind of that let down and like: Oh man. To seeing the irony and laughing about it and being like: That is hilarious! Like look at all these fish! At least it is warm out. (laughs) Let's take some selfies, and you know, and then we are gonna—that trip it was the first time I had brought the boat out for like a good ride and we had water in the gas. And so the motor kept dying. And we are kind of floating downriver and by this point, my oar is no longer an oar. It is a long stick and it does not actually have the paddle part on it. So the boat is dead. The red light is coming on. We are trying to get to the beach. And we are thinking, all right, if we float down I guess there is a dragnet if we—worst case scenario. But there's people and we are like, all right, it is going to be embarrassing to have to wave. These two women on the boat, just waving like, oh, damsels in distress. We have water in our gas. So we end up—we had the subsistence sign in the boat and my subsistence sign is a—like, it is actually my—it is Christopher's. And so it is a cut out fish and a stick that is screwed onto it. So we were using that as a paddle, trying to get to the beach. And we get to the beach and then I'm like: Who can I call? Well, the old VPSO [Village Public Safety Officer] in Aleknagik. I'm like: Hey, so this is happening. I need some troubleshooting help.

And those kinds of moments are what make the subsistence lifestyle so fun. Because you are forcing yourself into adventures. On top of this, you are finding ways to feed yourself. You are working with people that you might not typically work with. You are having these interactions that make you think about what life is and how it wasn't so bad to look kind of like an idiot. It was actually a little funny, and you won't make that mistake again. And I learned how to get rid of the water from the filter and to keep it clean, to keep—so we could make it back home that day. And then the next time then I actually filtered out all of my water that was in my gas tank and then put it through the filter. You know, to put it back in there. And then we had a super smooth boat; had no problems—or the motor had no problems at all.

And then actually getting the fish. Like how many days you are going out there and you are needing to—you know, you wake up the first thing in the morning you don't necessarily want to work. But then you also have that guilt on you: If I don't go out there and take care of this fish, I am going to waste it. And I don't want anyone to be talking about how I waste fish. And so you get yourself out of the house, and you need to light your smokehouse, you know, you have the wood that you had to get from it. So, you know, it's such a complex process of events that bring you to the subsistence way of life. It is not just harvesting your own food. It is actually making sure that you are mentally healthy; that you are dependable; that you are going to keep your—these positive attributes about our Native people going, so people see us and they say: Wow! They are virtuous people; they are the real people; they are genuine people; they are—you know, we share everything. Everyone wants to share their fish. By the time you have done all of this: going out into the boat; cutting all of the fish up; babying your smokehouse so the fish don't get mold and *paraluqs(??)* and everything else. Then you package it all, and you are like: These are beautiful and actually no matter what they taste like, they are

going to actually be delicious, because it took, you know, a whole week, two weeks, to get all of this from out in the water to into this freezer bag, to into my freezer. So the subsistence way of life is definitely in no way just like a one sentence thing. And even saying that, like, and how do you explain it to people who don't understand the depth of—you know, you have to kind of be an artful soul to really understand that sort of depth. Or at least someone who is going to conceptualize with you. Like: What is that phrase? The Native way of life. Oh, what? Being Native? Okay. Well, no, there is just like this spiritual depth of feeling and, you know, like, just craziness.

KS Well thank you so much. Is there anything else you want to share as we wrap up? Any kind of message or, I don't know.

AM (laughs) I feel like I probably said a lot.

KS Okay.

AM Yeah. It is a complex way of life, but it keeps us on our toes.

KS Awesome. Well, thank you so much. You are so articulate. You really are.