

Elmer Goodwin – Kotzebue

I'm from Kotzebue, Qikiqta ruk in Iñupiaq, that's where I'm from. I was born and raised there. I grew up with my grandparents up in Kotzebue. They brought me up speaking all Iñupiaq and English language came later.

Growing up in older times especially when we had cold-

He said, "I like to dog team travel at night. The dogs are comfortable, I'm comfortable and when it's cold-cold out we have the northern lights. You can see things that you don't when there's no northern lights. You can notice things better at night than you do in the daytime because in the daytime everything just goes white. You don't really stop to think about it. In the nighttime you have to notice. You have to look at things. You hear things that you don't normally hear during the day."

He explained to me that northern lights helped him a lot when he was younger because his parents and grandparents had taught him the same thing that I'm teaching you.



Helen Allen – Kotzebue

When he died, it was the beginning of August. I think it was like August 11th and we had his funeral August 14th. In that time what brought me about the northern lights- my dad had always told us that the northern lights are a reminder that our ancestors are still here and they're a reminder that our ancestors are still watching us.

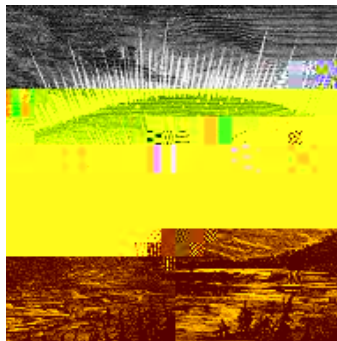
And so the night of August 14th there's still daylight and it doesn't get really dark-dark you know? The darkness is just starting to come. But that night, the day of his funeral, his house is just across over here by the Chukchi College, but it finally got dark like around midnight and the northern lights were out and you never see the northern lights in August!

But that night it looked – we went outside and the northern lights themselves looked like a person standing – you could see the head, you could see the hands, you could see the legs. Both of the legs were right above my brother's house.

And then it was really cool because we started whistling and hollering and it started dancing and it looked like someone Eskimo dancing and that's what made me think of my brother.

And it was a few months before that where my other brother disappeared in Iliamna Lake – his name was Tony- but he was an Eskimo dancer and him and his buddies were the ones who started the Northern Lights Dancers and they got the name “Northern Lights” because when you dance it kind of looks like northern lights – I mean you know the movement when you look at the northern lights in the sky.

But that’s what helped me understand when I saw the northern lights that night: that he’s still there and he’s with all our relatives in heaven and they were having a big celebration. So when I saw the legs and the body and the movement I knew that they were celebrating both of my brothers coming to meet all their relatives before us. And so that’s why I had the story.



Write or Draw Your Own Northern Lights Story!