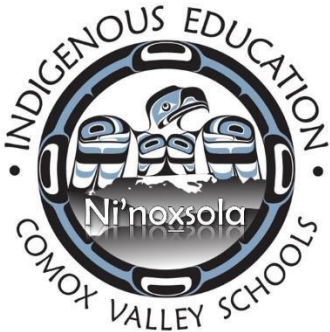


NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Sheila Buchanan
Grandma



My grandmother was a unique lady. She had many talents but was not one to flaunt or boast about what she could do.

She was always side by side with my grandfather on the trapline and did her share of the trapping and skinning of the animals and preparing them for food and to dry, stretch and get them ready to sell.

If a moose was killed for its meat and hide, she did all the slicing of the meat and hung it out and smoked it the hard way. She would build a teepee like structure and place poles across lengthwise and the make several rows to accommodate several pounds of meat. She had to cover the teepee with leaves so the birds would not be able to pick at the meat. She would then build a fire in the teepee but would put wet leaves on it so it would create a smoke rather than a fire. It would smolder and the smoke would enhance the taste of the meat. It was so delicious when it was done.

She also worked on the moose hide to make it ready for tanning so she could have it to make moccasins, jackets, mitts and mukluks.

Grandma was also a medicine woman. She knew which herbs were used for certain illnesses. She would dig them up in the forest and brew them into a tea. Some herbs were crushed and used as salves for cuts, bruises and rashes.

She was also a midwife and delivered several babies. She has never lost a baby. Every baby she delivered grew up healthy. She delivered all of us and there were fourteen children in my family alone. Grandma had seven daughters and they all had big families. She delivered most of their children.

Grandma live to be the ripe of age of 103. She worked hard and remained healthy throughout most of her life. She never complained about the hardships of having no running water or electricity. She went out and found wood in the forest and would saw it, chop it, and haul into the house. She would also haul water from the lake in the summertime.

In the winter, the waterman delivered the water for .50 a barrel. She washed clothes by hand with a washboard and tub and went about her chores but never moaned or groaned about having to do any of it.

She used to tell me that women today were very fragile when they are pregnant. She had to endure harsh winters and sometimes gave birth in a cold tent. The day after her baby was born, she would have to get up and do all her chores without any help. Staying in bed after a birth was not an option in those days.

I believe the reason my grandmother lived for so long, is because she always ate well. She boiled most of her food and rarely ever fried it. She ate off the land where no preservatives ever touched it.

She also got a lot of exercise from walking all the time. She had no car to drive, walked everywhere and was always busy with chores. No sitting idle at anytime except when sewing and making moccasins. That was her relaxation time, mostly in the evenings. That was her way of life.

She told us kids many stories. There are plenty more. I was very proud of her many talents and I often wished I could be like her.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)

