

K'OOOLTSAAH

TS'IN'

KOYUKON RIDDLES

Told by

CHIEF HENRY

Huslia, Alaska

Transcribed and Translated by

ELIZA JONES

A Production of the
Alaska Native Language Center
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

July 1976

The right to reproduce all or part of the contents of this
publication is reserved by the Alaska Native Language Center.

K'OOLTSAAH TS'IN'

Go k'adaa gisak yoo yaan' k'aa k'agheedaak ts'uh
gin huyil todiniy ts'in'.

Ts'a hal koon yuh zeeyuh huyineetisleet ts'uh
doogh yaga donla' k'ilodok'oodineedaal ts'in'
yeenslin. Go k'adaa gisak yooyaan' k'aak'agheedaak
ts'uh gin huyil todiniy ts'in' k'adaa.

Go yoogh don hohaa haghodoh haghadineeghaltok ts'a
hal k'ooltsaah hahadnee ts'a hal koon go dzaan
kuh yee hal neelts'a k'ahooghaltsaah.

KOYUKON RIDDLES

Because everybody is taking after the white man's way of life, nobody probably will remember this. But I just want to record it because I get lonesome. I'm hoping that someday someone will learn them. This is the way they used to entertain each other a long time ago by riddling each other.

They used to riddle each other around New Year's.

Chief Henry
Huslia, Alaska
1976

?

"Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa k'its'a sodiyiytł
ts'idnee dahugh dits'inolyo," hadnee. Dibaa
hoozozeel ts'in'. Go ahdin zo huyil hadniy
ts'a hoko nahayoodilzee'. Huts'uhu hūhoozee
ta koon "Hakhu" hadnee.

1

dilodzoy

Ts'uhu k'udaa koon dahadnee.

?

"Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa yahoohaa yahoohaa,"
hadnee.

2

tʰ'eeltʰ'oot doyeega'

Go haɬ go k'odeet dibaa zokuɬ
huyiɬ eediniyaa ts'in'. Ts'uh yuk
hadnee koonoo.

?

"Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa yoo-oo
k'its'a-otsin nilaatlaagha neelti'ool
k'a dik'eet'aa," hadnee.

3

k'idzonul k'uł

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa yoo-oo
k'its'a-ots'in sakaay ghun
dodilniy k'a dik'idnee.

4

hulin doyeega'

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa yoo-oo
k'its'a-ots'in tso k'inokaal
k'a dik'eet'aa.

5

kotł

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa hutl'o
taadikin dinaaneekaan k'a
dik'eet'aa.

6

gaaga doghodla'

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa hutl'o
nitsaabaay kugheelin k'a dik'eet'aa.

7

tlaghalbaaya ts'ida'

Nidaats'a zokul k'its'its'a
dahadilnee-aa. Go huts'uh
hoozeeyin koon "hakh" ahadnee.
Go huts'uh hadnee ta gheelhee.
Ts'a hal yoogh don hakaaga
tl'eegho ahooltsol. Doogh eesee
eey nooyoogh gisaku yoo hanonl
kanaak hahadnee ts'a gheelhee.

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aana yoo-oo
k'its'a-ots'in neeldidaak'eelyo
k'a dik'eet'aa.

8

k'uydliy diloyula'

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa ada
hodinaaghasikin da hodinaaghasikin.

9

k'ikin bahɬtɬdaadaalee

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa leek
tolił ałtl'aah k'a dik'it'aan.

10

kun' tloola'

Yaga hadiltlik da dodaga
gheel eey kun' yineek'idee.

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa k'eey
diloyul k'a dik'eet'aa.

11

teekon kaa'

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
tsaabakoł k'a dik'eet'aa.

12

gh dots'in tleek'a

Nooyoogh gh dots'in gheel-eyy

iron kk'a k'a dahoot'aa hee.

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa tlıdon
yints'eelgaats.

13

gaabee†

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa tlıdon
yooyeentł'ots'itł-o.

14

dołoghaaltona

(dołohaaaghaaltona)

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa neelk'aa
taayo eelghaan k'a dik'eet'a.

15

nttt kin k'a

?

Doghon yooyeeskghazoldi.

(Yoogh don lo yoozagheelyeesk.)

16

k'eey tolusga'

(K'eeytolusga gheel eey
bideets'iy ta yoodilyeesk
k'aadneehee.)

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa yobaagh
nok'idzeedaadliyo k'a dik'eet'aa.

17

k'inooł baagha

?

Tłaaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
yaats'in nots'ah dok'ahagha
dineeghusagudza yaats'in
nots'ah dok'ahagha dineeghasinaał.

18

neełk'aa hanodzan

doditeeł ts'in'

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa dibee
da-aakyee neek'ots'a dots'idlinuts.

19

duhnooy

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa go
neek'aahunaanga-o'.

20

tseetł dodeelnin k'a

Yoogh tseetł dodeelnin k'a
hoolaan k'aant'aa da huloy la-on.

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa gaagheeghik,
gaagheeghik.

21

deeguy

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa neelot
da haak'itl-aytl.

22

dinaa noghaa

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa hats'ibaa
dingheelyon k'a dik'eet'aa.

Doogh buhugheeldlaa-aayee.

23

taaʔeebaay doghooʻ

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
nik'idzooghootna nonok'itiszah.

24

diy neeyo hu

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa taahay
dinaadak'ay yee hats'eedaaf.

25

toonts'oda

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
nitlnaatlk'idee ts'eey
yee hats'eedaał.

26

nool aagha

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
go koonu go koonu go koonu.

27

oy bittt

?

Tlaatsaa k'aaghas-aanaa
nontotl naangiditl.

28

oy nitok'a

TRANSLATIONS

1. They would say, "Wait, I see something! Because we don't want to choke on smoke we're hiding our faces." Who is going to figure this out? At least at that time it was their own environment that they used as the basis for their riddles. They would name different things and try to figure them out. If they came close, the one who was riddling them would say, "Hakhu."

ANSWER: A clump of spruce cones curled under.

2. RIDDLE: And then they'd say, "Wait, I see something: twang, twang."

ANSWER: The noise of a bowstring. Of course, nobody knows what a bowstring noise is nowadays. If no one could guess the answer, they'd say "yuk."

3. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: In the other world it looks like their heads are braided together.

ANSWER: The neck of an American Widgeon duck.

4. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It sounds like a lullaby is being sung to children in the other world.

ANSWER: The noise of a fast-moving current.

5. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It looks like a cache that's leaning over in the other world.

ANSWER: Salmonberries.

6. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: At the headwaters it looks like a cache of sticks sticking in the water.

ANSWER: Beaver feed pile.

7. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: Up at the headwaters it looks like water running over small white fish.

ANSWER: Grayling's coat. They never make mistakes in their answers. And they say "Hakhu" to the one who comes closest to the right answer. I guess it means 'almost'. The old language is hard to understand. I guess that's what the white people call high words.

8. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It looks like some animals got their antlers tangled in the other world.

ANSWER: A clump of dry willow branches.

9. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: I stuboornly stick up in the same stubborn place.

ANSWER: A stump the sled is always bumping.

10. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: Something is acting like a dog that's lapping up broth.

ANSWER: Fire flaring up and down. You know how when the fire flares up you see flames go way up.

11. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: Something looks like a birch tree branching.

ANSWER: Wolf tail.

12. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: Something looks like a spoon.

ANSWER: The marking down the center of a rabbit's back. You know how down the center of a rabbit's back his fur looks metallic.

13. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're all staring out from the edge of the bank.

ANSWER: Snares set along the bank.

14. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're all sticking our butts up in the air along the bank.

ANSWER: Spring-pole snares.

15. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It looks like oil on water in both directions.

ANSWER: Sleigh runner track.

16. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're whistling along the edge of the bank. (But we never used to whistle a long time ago.)

ANSWER: The wind blowing on a half-detached piece of birchbark. You know how a half-detached piece of birchbark whistles when the wind is blowing against it.

17. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It looks like cumulus clouds around the sky.

ANSWER: The fat around the edge of the fourth stomach of a caribou.

18. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: My hat is short on one side and long on the other.

ANSWER: The solstice.

19. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're sitting all puffed up, across from each other, in a sheepskin coat.

ANSWER: Snow on tree branches.

20. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: My track ends here.

ANSWER: The track of a snowball that rolled down a hill.

21. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: shining silver, shining silver.

ANSWER: Gray hair.

22. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: I make something touch far away.

ANSWER: Our eyesight.

23. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: It looks like a stand of spruce trees. It's something we don't have around here.

ANSWER: Whale's whiskers.

24. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: I'm scratching back and forth across Silver Creek.

ANSWER: Spruce hen tracks.

25. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're all going up river
in reddish colored boats.

ANSWER: Suckers going up river.

26. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: We're all going up river
in many-colored boats.

ANSWER: Dog salmon going up river.

27. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something here and there, here and there.

ANSWER: Snowshoe filler filling snowshoes.

28. RIDDLE: Wait, I see something: I'm all wound up across my
forehead.

ANSWER: Binding across the tip of snowshoes.

