

Dùts'ūm Edhó Ts'ètsi Yū Dän K'í



How to Tan Hides in the Native Way

By GERTIE TOM

Whitehorse, Yukon: 1981

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Text in English and Northern Tutchone Athapaskan

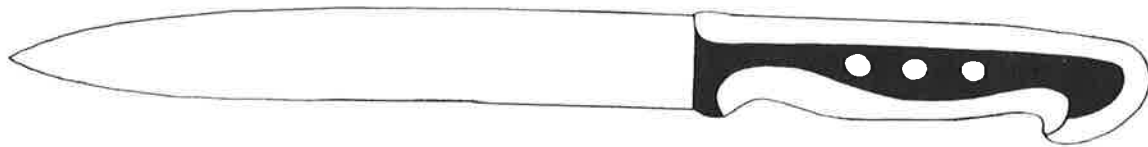
By GERTIE TOM

Drawings by SUSAN McCALLUM

Whitehorse, Yukon: 1981

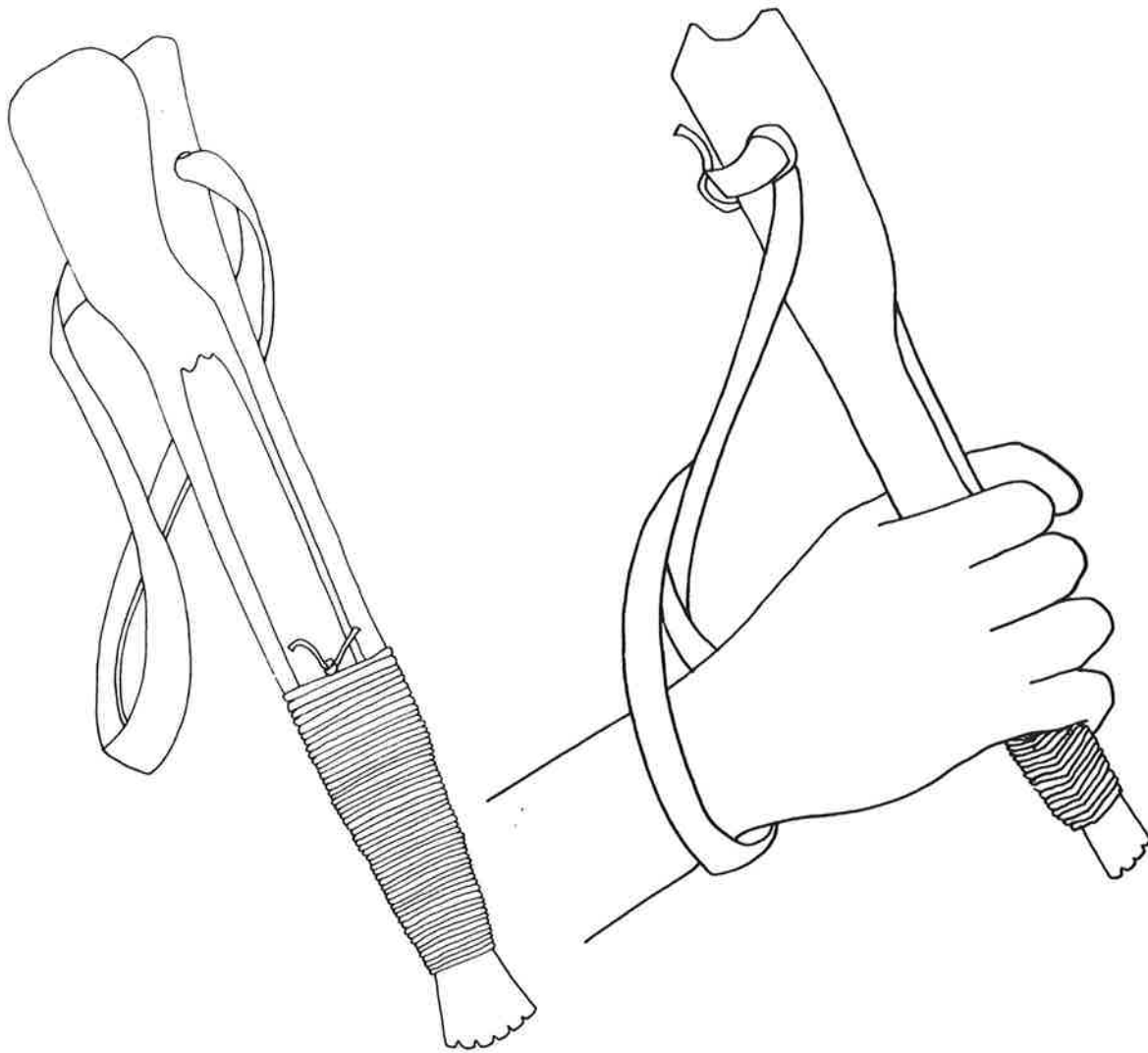


Hátthi edhó hande néts'et'á eyet yich'ō ts'è'in dechän udo lek'ets'enèkhel hék'i eyet dechän lek'ets'enèkhel eyet ka, uyé ts'än dats'echu. HéK'i mbra dét'ó eyet yí uyé háchō ch'ō háts'et'á. Lúmch'ō uka hùmtl'ro huts'ín háts'et'á.



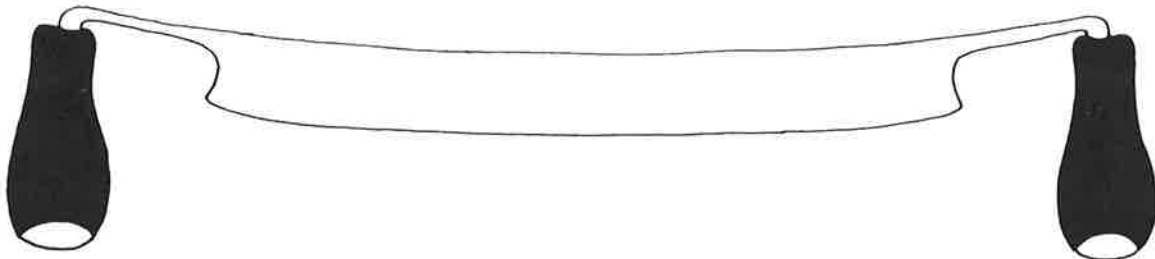
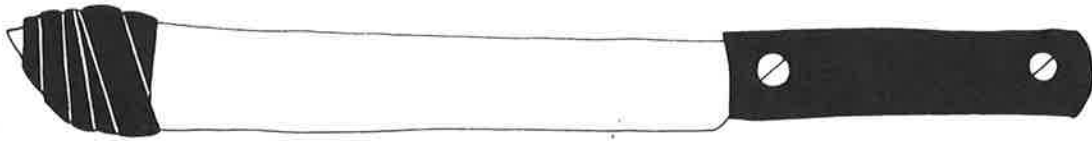
The first thing you do is cut off the moose skin. Then you cut a small tree (about five feet from the ground, like a stump) and you sharpen the end. Hang the skin on that, hair side up (so you can cut off the hair). You need to have a really sharp knife to do this. Shave the hair off with a knife until the whole skin is smooth on the hair side.

Eyet t'ák'ē t'áaľäts'edèchu hék'i, utangəl ts'an t'áaľäts'edèchu k'ē eyet tāngwät yéts'enin uyí edhó táts'edeget yéts'enin, tāngwät yéts'enin, eyet yí táts'edeget háts'è'in táts'edeget ch'ō ľáki dzenú inľatāte uyí húmlin, eyet edhó táts'edeget ch'ō, dech'át né k'ē.

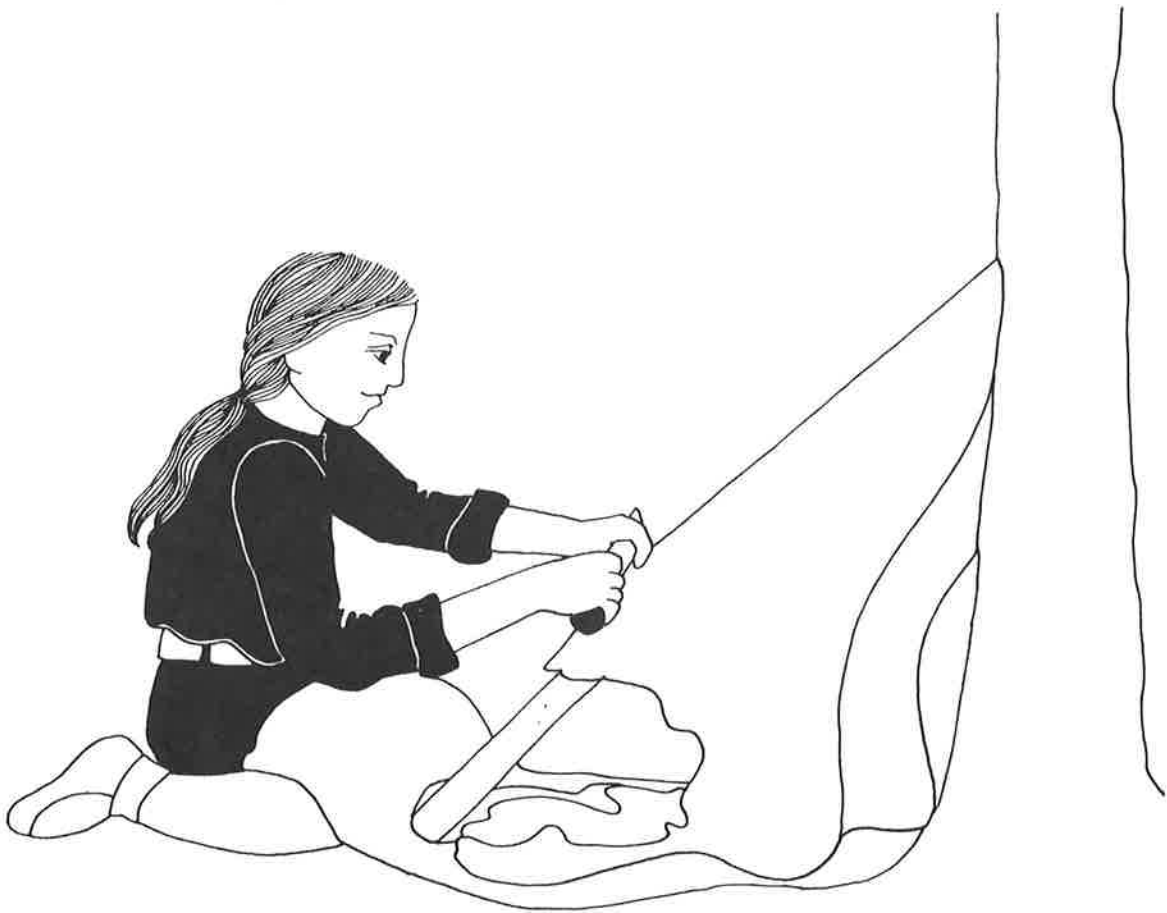


Then after you do that, you turn it over so that the meat is up. Now you need tools to scrape the flesh off. You use a *tāngwät* (a tool to scrape off the flesh) to scrape the meat. It takes about two days to clean the meat off if the skin is tough.

Tl'ákú háchō ch'ō táts'edeget, eyet tl'ák'ē dechän et'ándhât yéts'enin, dechän uka hùmtl'ro héech'i yéts'enin, et'ándhât yéts'enin, edhó uka ts'edeghá héech'i yéts'enin et'ándhât yéts'enin. Eyet ka hunētats'edechù k'e ts'edeghá, ts'edeghá sóothan mbra ts'intán k'ē ts'edeghá ech'i.



After it is completely fleshed, you take a smooth flat board used for thinning down the skin. The board is call an *et'ándhât*. (It has to be really smooth; if it is rough you might make holes in the skin.) You hang your skin over that *et'ándhât* and you thin it down. You have to hold your knife really carefully as you're thinning it down.



Eyet eju sóothän mbra intán ch'é k'ē mbra ninyę yū denùtth'et ch'é k'ē edhó yumt'á ch'é sóothän ch'ō mbra ts'intán k'ē, łumch'ō tth'uhudé'e k'ē ts'edeghá hék'i sóothän degá ech'i. Eyet tl'ą tl'ákú ts'edeghá k'ē eyet nats'edeghá eyet tl'ák'ē edhó ugé ts'edenji, łeládedékát ke dūm jedekát yū héedluma uka ts'edeghá háts'è'in ch'ō ech'in edhó háchō ch'ō ts'edeghá.

Hūdän nindhän ch'é k'ē, edhó eyet héech'i edhó dútséla eyet ka hudinghá háninch'in ch'ō hūmdän hę hùts'ūm ijé hídän. Ène hùts'ūm ts'ech'in edhó ts'edeghá sénin, eyet edhó yaátsi k'ē ts'étláw ch'ō uyákhe hìde k'ē uk'ānìte, eyet ghá ìch'i edhó ìtsi yînjí.

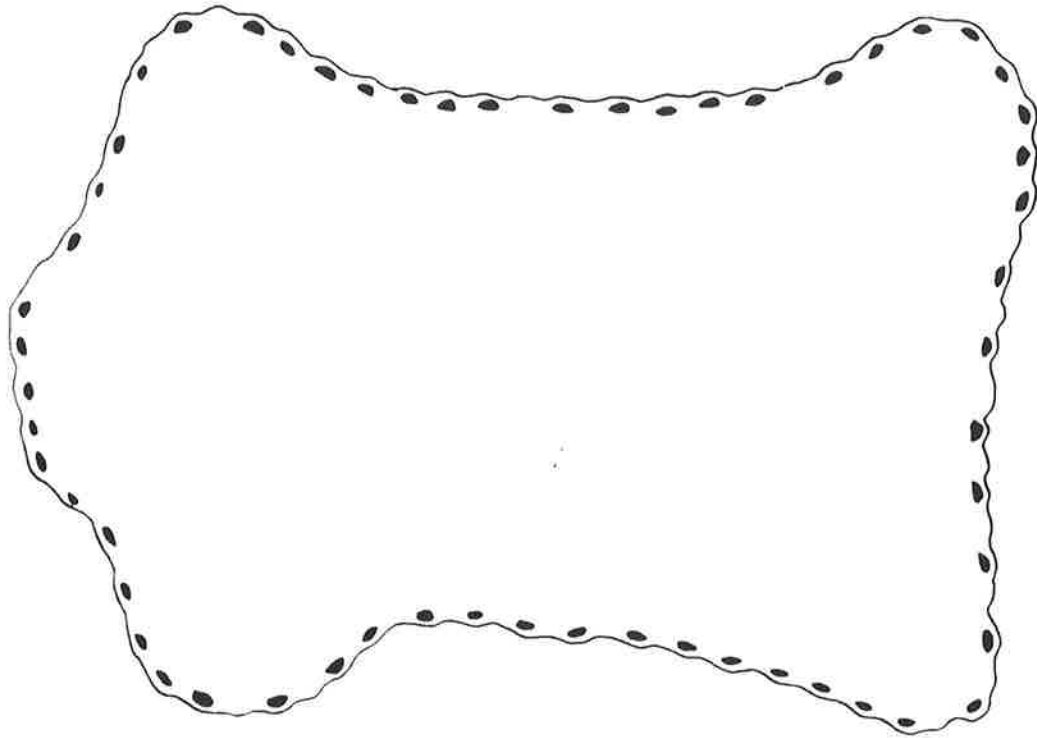
If you don't hold your knife really well it could turn toward you and cut through the skin. You have to hold it really straight (with two hands) and bring it down really straight. You bring your knife down time after time. Then, you feel the skin with your hand to get it all down to the same thickness. If there is a little bump anywhere, smooth it down. Make it all even. (You mustn't do it too hard, just a little bit at a time until it's all the same thickness; otherwise you will make it too thin.)

If you want to learn, you have to practise on a small skin. You need lots of practice to learn to make a skin. If you keep practising, you will learn how to do it. That's how I learned. I used to watch my mother when she made a skin. I sat right close to her and watched her. That's how I learned myself, just from watching her.

Tl'ákú háchō edhó ts'edeghá eyet tl'ák'ē leládedekát hék'i eyet tl'ák'ē umbé uyáts'et'á háchō ch'ō umbé, háchō ch'ō eyet umbé uyáts'et'á eyet yí ts'è'in nats'enégó eyet ke ts'è'in umbé uyáts'et'á.



Now, when you're finished, the skin should be the same thickness all over. (You should feel it all over, checking it over carefully.) That's when you make holes all around the edge (not too big — maybe two inches). You do that to help wring it out.



When you have made the holes, put the skin in water. (Work it like the old timers did when they washed their clothes by hand.) You do that so all the blood will come out of the skin. Keep changing the water. When the water is clear, then you can take it out. Then you have to wring it out. After you wring it out, then stretch it right open to take all the folds and wrinkles out. Pull it apart really hard with your hands. (If you can, have two people, one pulling on each side.) Then you can really straighten out that skin. After that, hang it over a pole until the skin is dry.

(Next you need a smokehouse for the skin.)