



# Evelyn Temoke-Roché

*Great Basin Indian Archive*

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**Oral History Interview by**

**Norm Cavanaugh  
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Elko, NV**



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Interviewee: Evelyn Temoke Roche

Interviewer: Norm Cavanaugh

Date: March 27, 2012

T: *Ne pii, ne ape ma ne pii*, Frank and Theresa Temoke. *Ape* [**Shoshone at 1:07**]. *Ne* [**Shoshone at 1:09**] Evelyn Temoke-Roché. [**Shoshone at 1:13**] *newe natsuan* [**Shoshone at 1:15**]. I'm going to explain about the native herbs. So, we'll proceed to mullein. [**Shoshone at 1:27**]. This is mullein .It grows near flowing water or still water, or in your yard if you want to transplant it there. The seeds will grow anywhere. Mullein is used for making tea. The flowers can be steeped in water, hot water, and used as a yellow dye. And I believe it's good for cleansing the system, if you want to drink it. The roots are edible, if you boil it and cook it well. Okay, Solomon's seal. This is Solomon's seal. It grows along running streams, in the shade. And its roots can be cooked and eaten. I wouldn't try to eat it raw, because it may not be good for you. It tastes similar to asparagus, and can be dried and used during the winters. That's—oh, I forgot! But, Solomon's seal is also used for stomachaches, indigestion, you can use the fresh roots for poultices for—if you ache, you soak your leg in it, or lay the soaked leaves onto your legs, or arms, wherever you're hurting. And it can also fade bruises, the leaves.

C: When is the best time to pick this plant?

T: Solomon's seal is a spring plant. And I believe when it's fresh like that, it's best to pick, in the early spring. And you can also use the leaves, say, if you cut yourself. Just lay the leaves across the cut, and will begin to heal your cut. It takes time, of course.

C: Where's the best place to pick this plant? Where does it grow here in Nevada?

T: The only place I know of is in Ruby Valley, because that's where I'm used to picking these things. They're always along the running stream, in a very shady area. It—I've never seen it grown in sunlight. It's always in the shade, very shady area. Like a dense

forest? And it likes nice, soft soil to grow in. And if you dry the leaves, then steep them in hot, boiling water, it can be used as a laxative. So, if you need laxative, use Solomon's seal.

C: Is there a Shoshone name for it? *Newe nanihate*?

T: I don't know that. My mom used to tell me what it was, but it's, forgotten memory.

Watercress is, grows in running water, usually from springs. It's found in spring. When the watercress starts to blossom, it is not a good time to pick it, because it is very, very bitter, and sharp to the tongue. The new growth tastes good. Watercress can be used for—I'm going to say just as a vegetable. I've never known it to be a medicinal quality. It can be boiled with your soups, fried, eaten raw in salad, or just eaten raw in a piece of bread. It's delicious. But, make sure that you're picking the right thing in the water! Really pick it. It likes quiet running water, it doesn't like strong streams. Okay? Let's go on to the next one. Evening primrose. Shoshone name for this one is *puupu'i*. Because it blossoms all day, and goes to sleep at night. Evening primrose is normally found in dry areas. It doesn't seem to like moisture. The plants get tall. Of the plants, the entirety of the plant is edible. The leaves are eaten as greens; the roots are sweet and delicious, we boil it like potatoes; the flowers can be used in salads, or as garnish for other foods. The fatty acids found in this plant are used to prevent heart disease, cirrhosis of the liver, rheumatoid arthritis, premenstrual conditions, and to control high blood pressure. And that is after it's been steeped in water. And it's good—it actually tastes good. I've tried that. Okay. Next. *Totsa. Isen* [**Shoshone at 7:49**] *totsa*. I have never eaten the leaves of a *totsa*, or the flowers. It is what grows underground that you can—steep the roots in hot water, drink the juice. Many people just grind the roots, and soak in water, and then drink to get rid of

colds, sore throats, or any condition that's making you ill. It's one of the most important—*totsa* is one of the most important medicines of the Shoshone people.

C: Is it sometimes smoked as well?

T: Oh, yes—it can be smoked. I use it as a—when I get up in the morning, I mix it with cedar, and I bless myself with the *totsa* and the cedar, to keep myself well. I know many people who use it to bless others. Okay, we can go on. **Making bunch of mistakes—**  
***Paikos***. Wild onion. This is the sweet wild onion that grows under trees. It's picked in early spring, and it's found along streams which has nice soil content. What is it called? You can either boil the leaves and eat them, fry the leaves; the stems can be, the blossoms, too, can be eaten in salads. But as the flowers age, the stem gets very, very tough. So cut them off, and just use the blossoms to eat. I like to eat them in my salads, as many people I think now are doing. Because they're getting away from the old customs, where you just steeped them in water to get them soft and then eat them. I *love* them raw. But there's really no medicinal qualities in *paitose* that I know of. Okay? Next.

Gumweed. Gumweed is a very common weed that is found in dry areas. It is a very sticky plant. When boiled, can be used to cure diarrhea, and to cleanse the skin of blemishes. I have have some growing in my yard, which is used for—maybe we'll let it sit here a little bit. I like it in ice tea with some sugar. Next one is the monument plant. The roots can be eaten raw, boiled, or roasted. No medicinal quality is known to me.

Norman, you know about this plant?

C: I don't. No, I don't recall.

T: I really don't know that much about this plant. Okay, pigweed. Pigweed is a very *delicious* plant. It grows in soft soil. It has kind of thick leaves. And it, early in the spring,

it has little reddish veins. And it can be picked and used as a vegetable. Usually boiled, or fried, or eaten raw in a salad. And I know of no medicinal value, other than it can be eaten. It can be dried and revitalized in soups and things. It's very tasty! Mule's ear. Now. Mule's ear is very abundant in this area. It is found in open meadows, and it grows very freely in spring—in sagebrush, along hillsides. The root and seeds can be saved and later used as food, usually baked and ground into flour. I have tried mule's ear leaves to eat. I believe you may have to steep them in water several times, because it's not very tasty. It's... You'd have to be very hungry to eat mule's ear leaves.

C: Hm. What's the difference between a mule's ear and, like, a sunflower?

T: They both have a name. Mule's ear is named because of its leaves, and the other one is, it has a name too—what is it? Oh, gosh! I should have looked in my herb book before I came down! I can't really remember.

C: *Akka*.

T: *Akka*. Yeah, *akka*.

C: Yeah, that's sunflower.

T: Mule's ear—sunflower **usually about so**.

C: Yeah, mmhm.

T: This grows along the ground.

C: Oh, okay.

T: Okay, let's move on, **it's confusing today**. *Sipa*. Rabbitbrush. There are two types of rabbitbrush: the one that grows near—in moist areas is called *pasipa*, because it's growing near the water. And the *sipa* that grows all over is this one, I believe. They both look similar. But, prior to their blossoms coming out, when they're still green—like, their

clusters? That can be picked and eaten, and cooked the same as you do broccoli. It's tasty. It's good. You have to like that flavor. Tea can be made by steeping the yellow flowers in boiling water, and it can be used as a poultice to lessen chest pain or other pains. Soak it in water, and just put it on wherever you're hurting. Okay. *Pohopin*.

Sagebrush. It is the Nevada state flower. Has many, many healing properties. Young plant stems can be used in bathwater to heal back ache and other ailments. Steep leaves in boiling water and drink as a tea to heal coughs and other body infections. A poultice can be made to help with any pain, and to heal open injuries to the skin. The stems have been used to clean phlegm from very sore throats. From experience I know this, because my mother saved a young girl's life by just picking it, bunching it up, and sticking it down the little girl's throat, and pulling out, pulling all the phlegm out. And she's still alive this day. So it's, our medicines are very important. We use them because they have been successful. Okay.

C: Before we go on to sagebrush, there's a—one of our employees who works with the Great Basin College, she was bitten by a wasp, I believe. And she used sagebrush. So she's here with us in this room. I'm going to have her tell us a little story about it.

U1: Oh, just—had attended one of the showings, and I had heard that sagebrush was good for bee stings. And so I was out on the golf course, and got stung by a bee, and I rubbed that sagebrush on there, and it took the sting out. So, it was good! [Laughter]

T: Sagebrush is very handy.

U1: It is! It was very handy that day.

C: Thank you, Jenny.

T: I actually take sagebrush to my son in California, sneak it in. And he uses it for many things. Now, wild celery. It's found in mountain springs, near mountain springs. And wild celery actually tastes like the regular celery you buy in stores. I don't know its medicinal qualities. All I know is it's very good. Okay. The sego lily can be found growing with sagebrush, and also under chokecherry trees. A great delicacy among Shoshone when boiled in a stew or alone—also very crunchy and tasty when eaten raw. I'm talking about the roots, the bulbs that it grows from. It's very good. Okay? *Yampa*. Wild carrot, also known as Queen Anne's lace. It prefers a sunny position and well-grained soil. The wild carrot is edible and medicinal. The root can be eaten raw or cooked. It can be used in stews and soups. The plant can be used for digestive disorders, kidney and bladder diseases, and as a cleansing herb for the body. A tea can be made by pouring boiling water over the dry leaves. *Yampa* is one of the first plants that come up in the spring, and you can pick the roots by early, I want to say, by end of June they can be picked—dug out of the ground. They got, they're like *totsa*, they like rocky places. Okay. Wild garlic. *Keela*. Can be found growing among sagebrush. Can be boiled and used as a seasoning in stews or soups. Very good fried with bacon or other fatty meats. It's the leaves that you cook, not the roots. You can include the roots with the cooking, all at the same time—the whole plant, I guess. I love this one, too. They're *very* good! [Laughter] Wishing for some—thank you. Oh, I'm sorry! Next one. Oh, we forgot about Indian tea. Indian tea is a plant which grows, I'm going to say, at about 5,000 feet. Its stems look like a cupped hand. And you can pick this, and steep it in hot water. Then drink it, and it is good for healing most ailments among the people. Basically, to clear bladder problems, and just to cleanse the system. [**Shoshone at 20:51**]

[Image reads: “Evelyn finishes the presentation by explaining that Native Americans perform a blessing when picking herbs”; **Shoshone from 20:52-21:21**] They bless themselves again. Then, they—before they start picking, they bless the plant, and offer a gift to the plant. So each time that you pick a plant, such as chokecherries, celery—anything that you’re going to pick—*bless the plant*. Give it a gift before you pick it. And always, always leave some of the plant for next year’s growth.

[End of recording]