The illustration is a vibrant, stylized scene. At the top right, a bright yellow sun with a smiling face and dark sunglasses is surrounded by several pointed rays. To its left, a red fish with a green head and tail is swimming upwards. Above the fish are four light blue bubbles of varying sizes. In the lower half of the image, a large brown walrus is shown in profile, swimming towards the left. To the right of the walrus, a smaller brown bear is standing on a green patch of ground, looking towards the walrus. A brown tree trunk is visible on the far right edge of the frame. The background is a deep blue, suggesting water or sky, with a dark green border at the top and bottom.

The Wisdom
of Our Elders
Subsistence in Chenega

The Wisdom of Our Elders Subsistence in Chenega

by Don S. Kompkoff
With illustrations by Gordon Kvasnikoff

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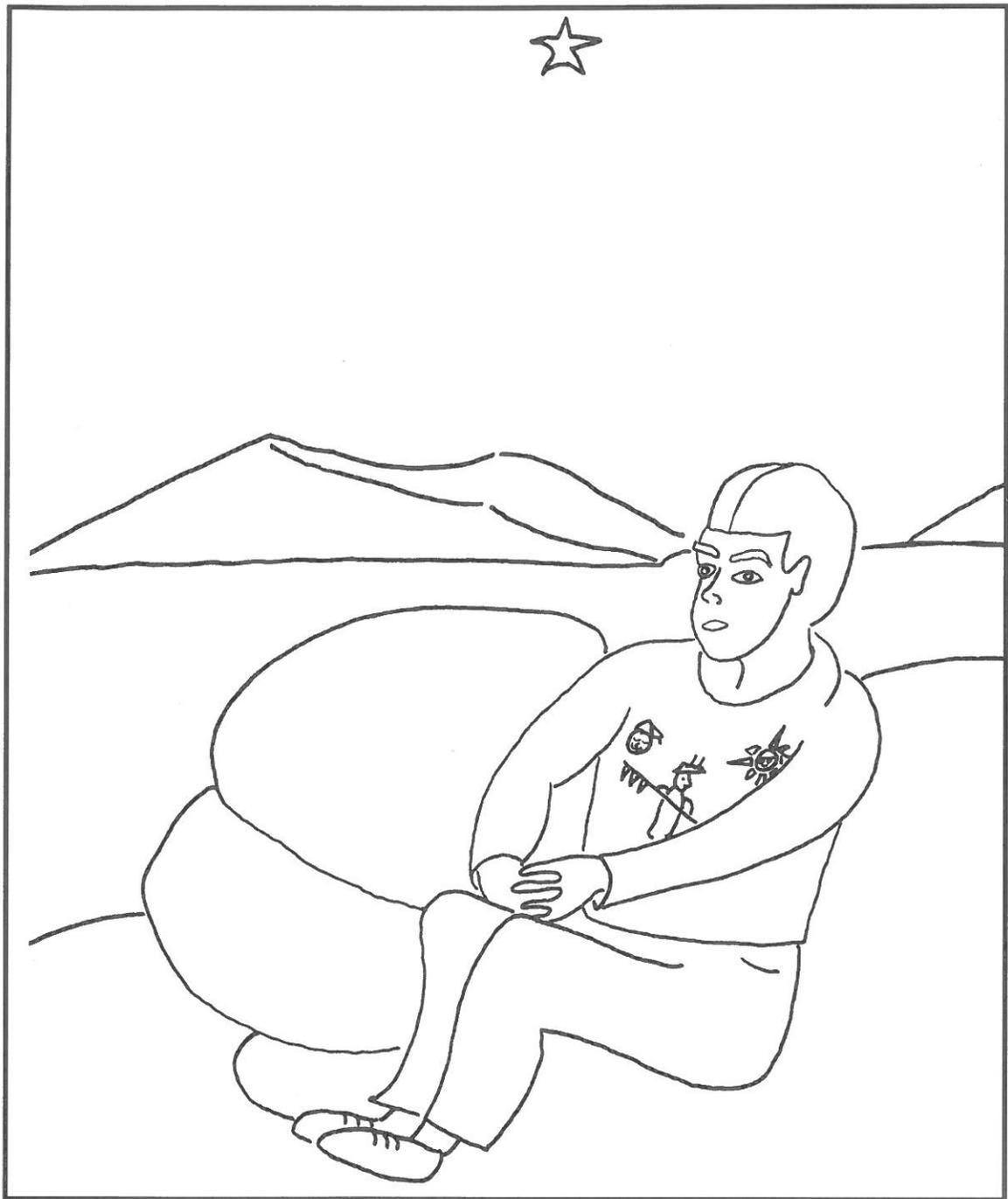
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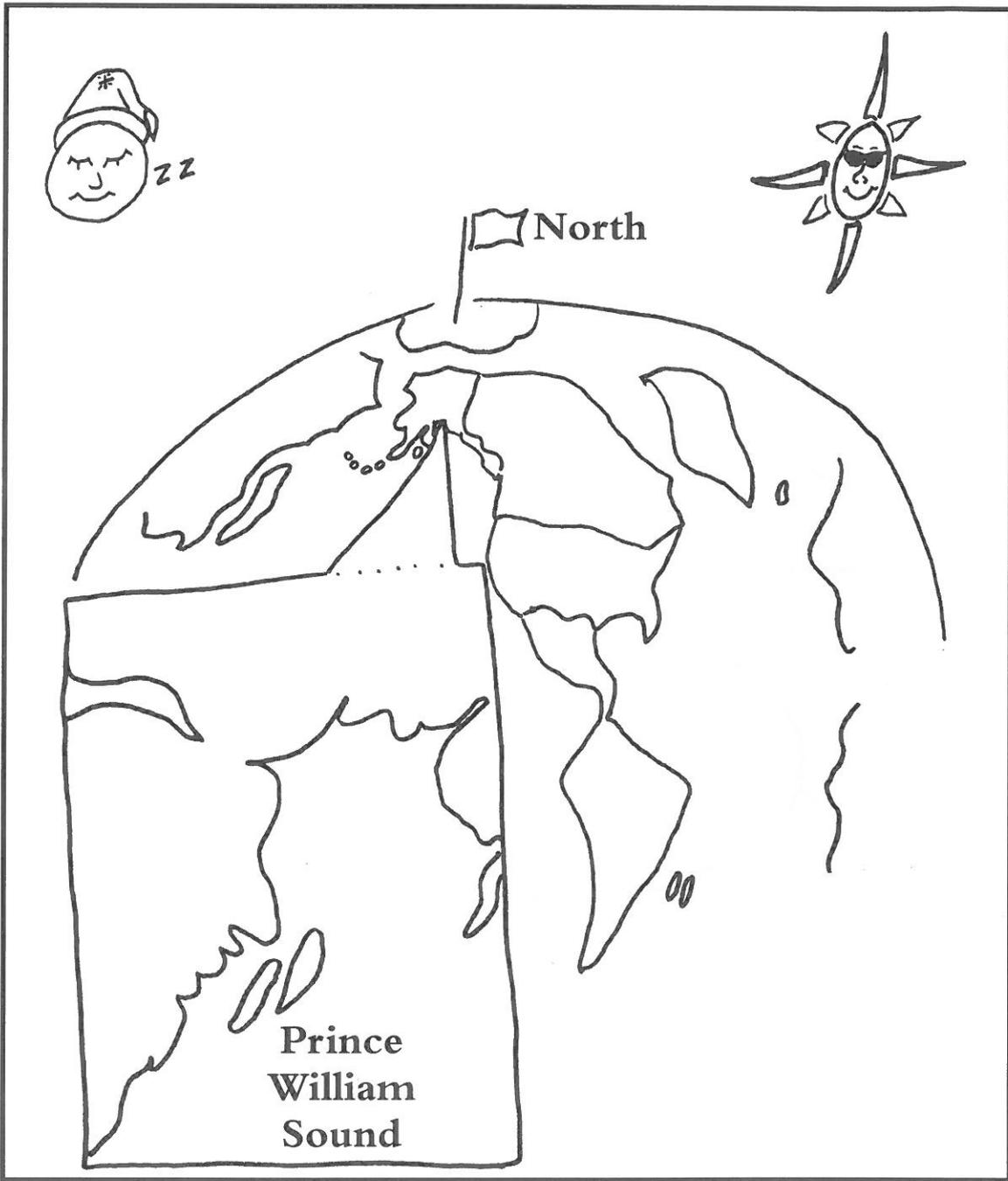
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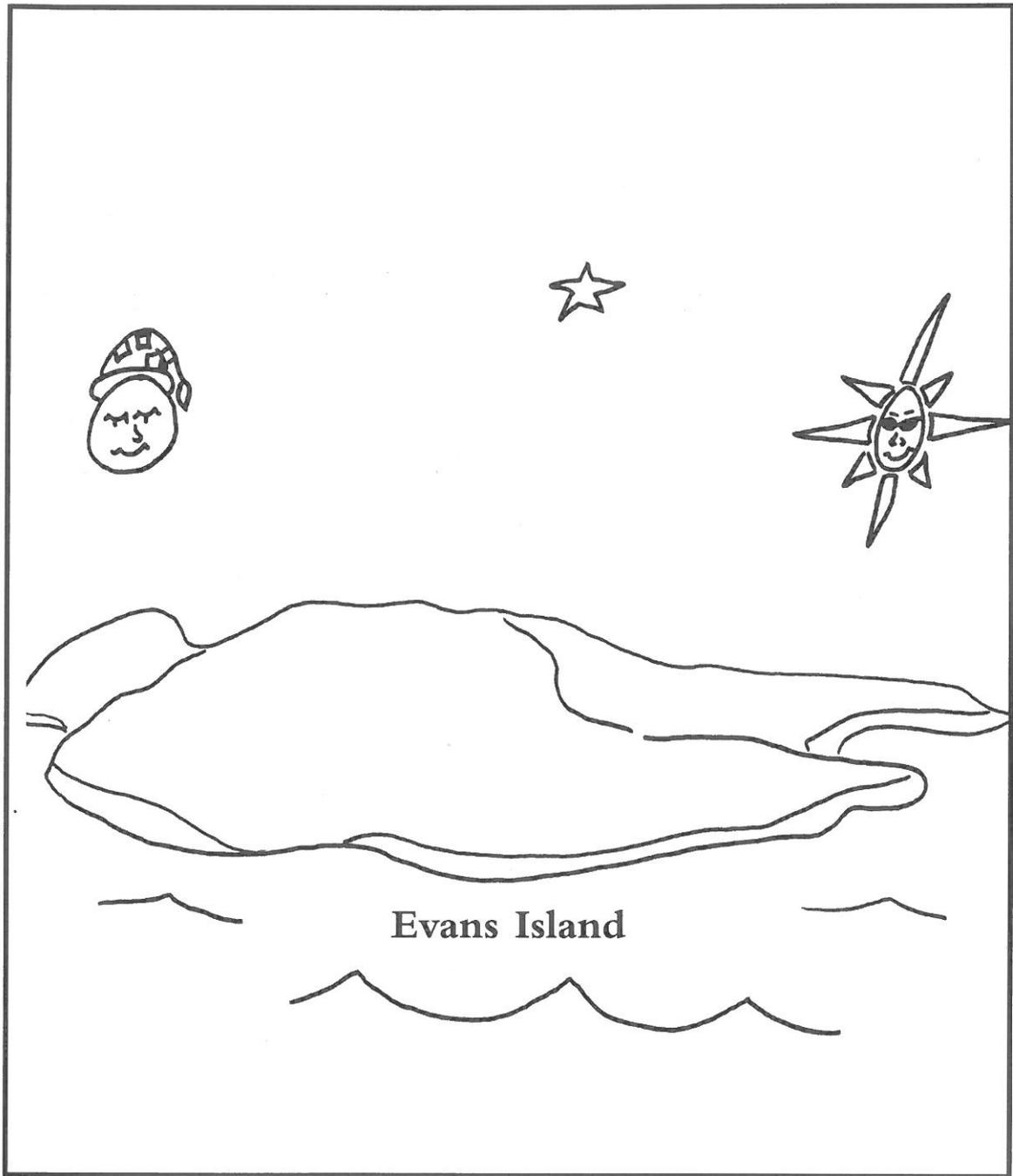
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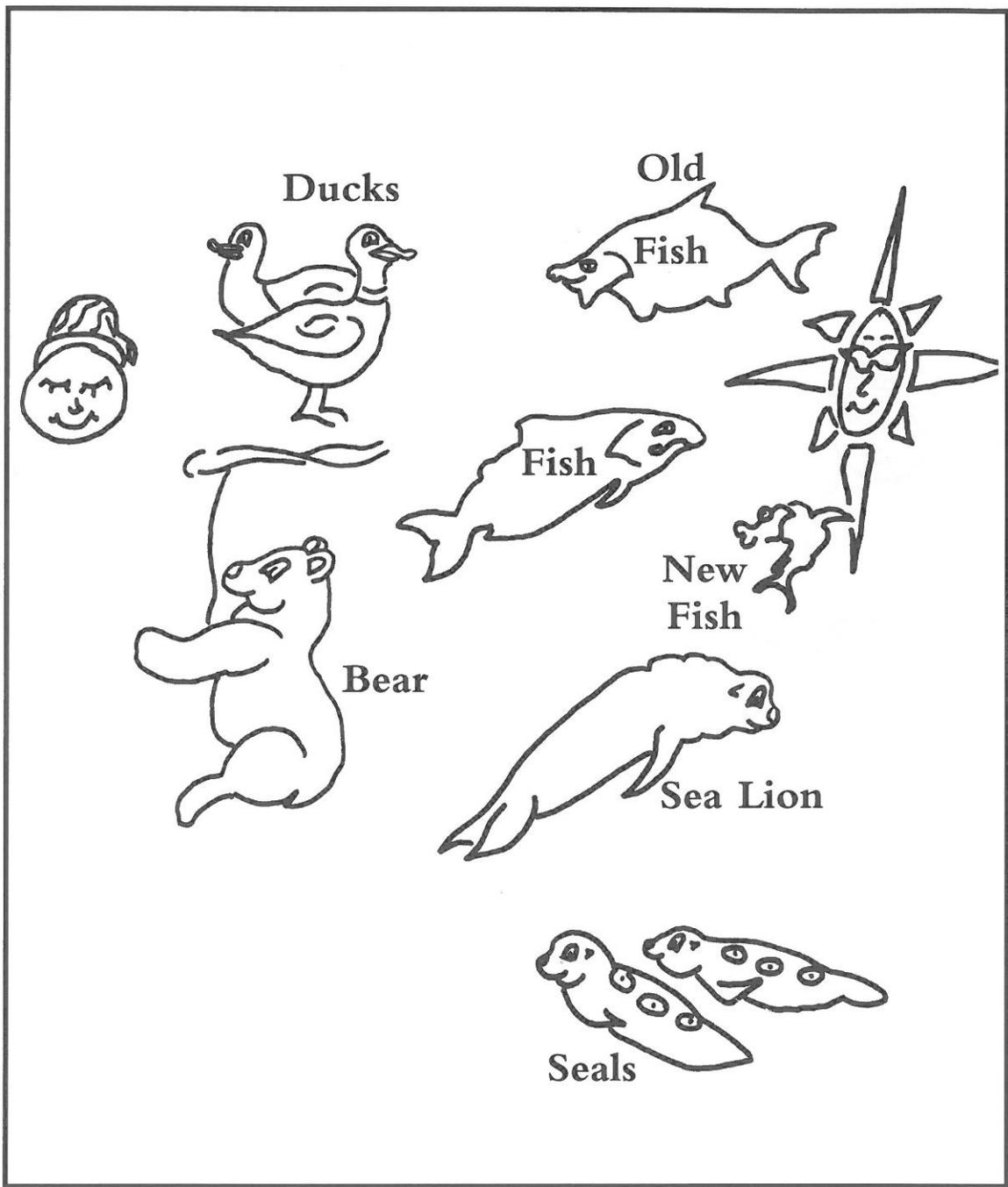
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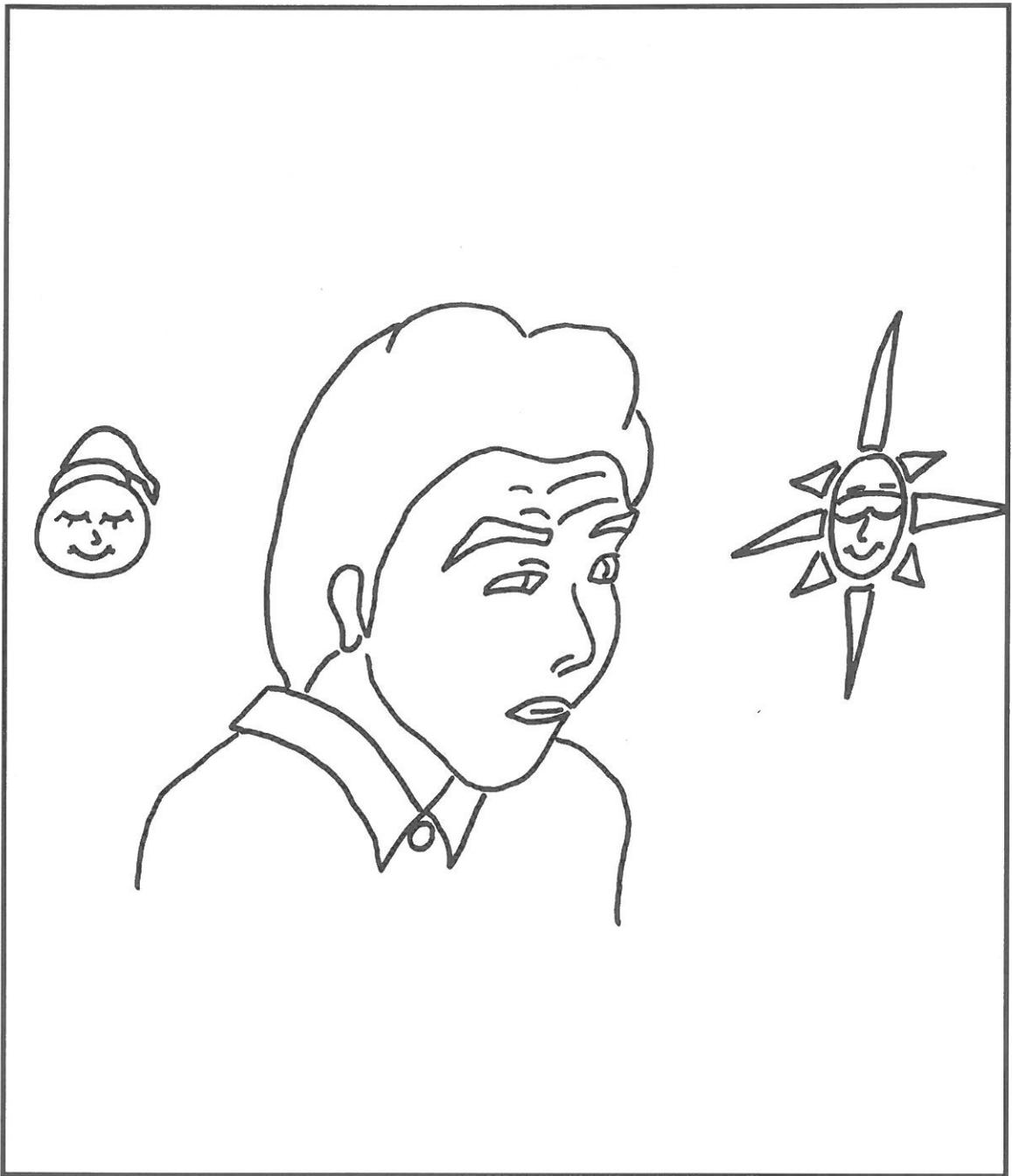
Our village is located in southwestern Prince William Sound, where subsistence is a way of life.



Chenega was destroyed by the 1964 earthquake and twenty-three lives were lost, but we re-established our village on Evans Island through efforts lead by Nick Kompkoff, Sr., Gail Evanoff, Paul Kompkoff, Sr., Charlie Selanoff, Sr., Phil Totemoff, Sr., and other Chenega residents.



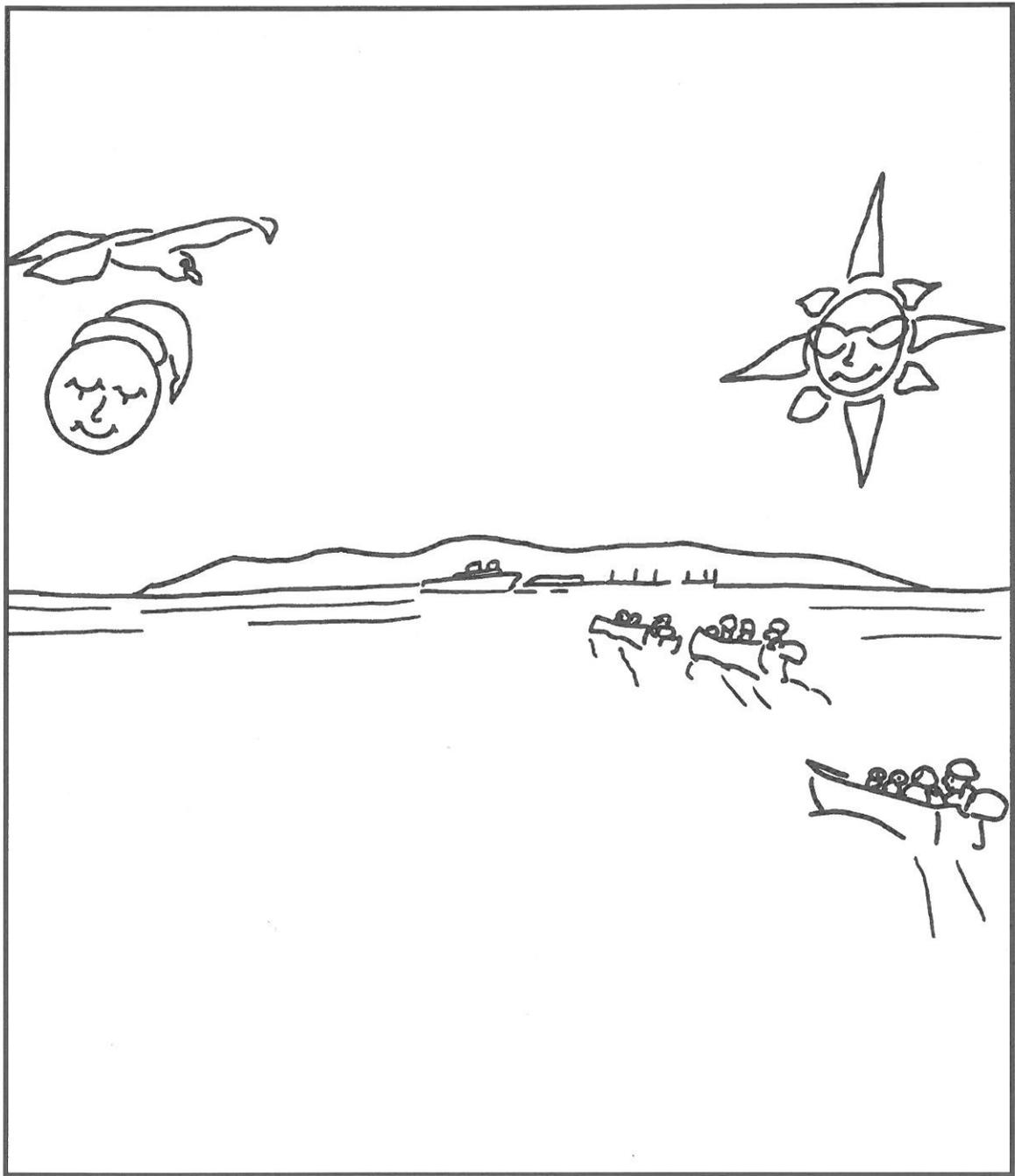
We grew up on all of the fish and game that are in Prince William Sound.



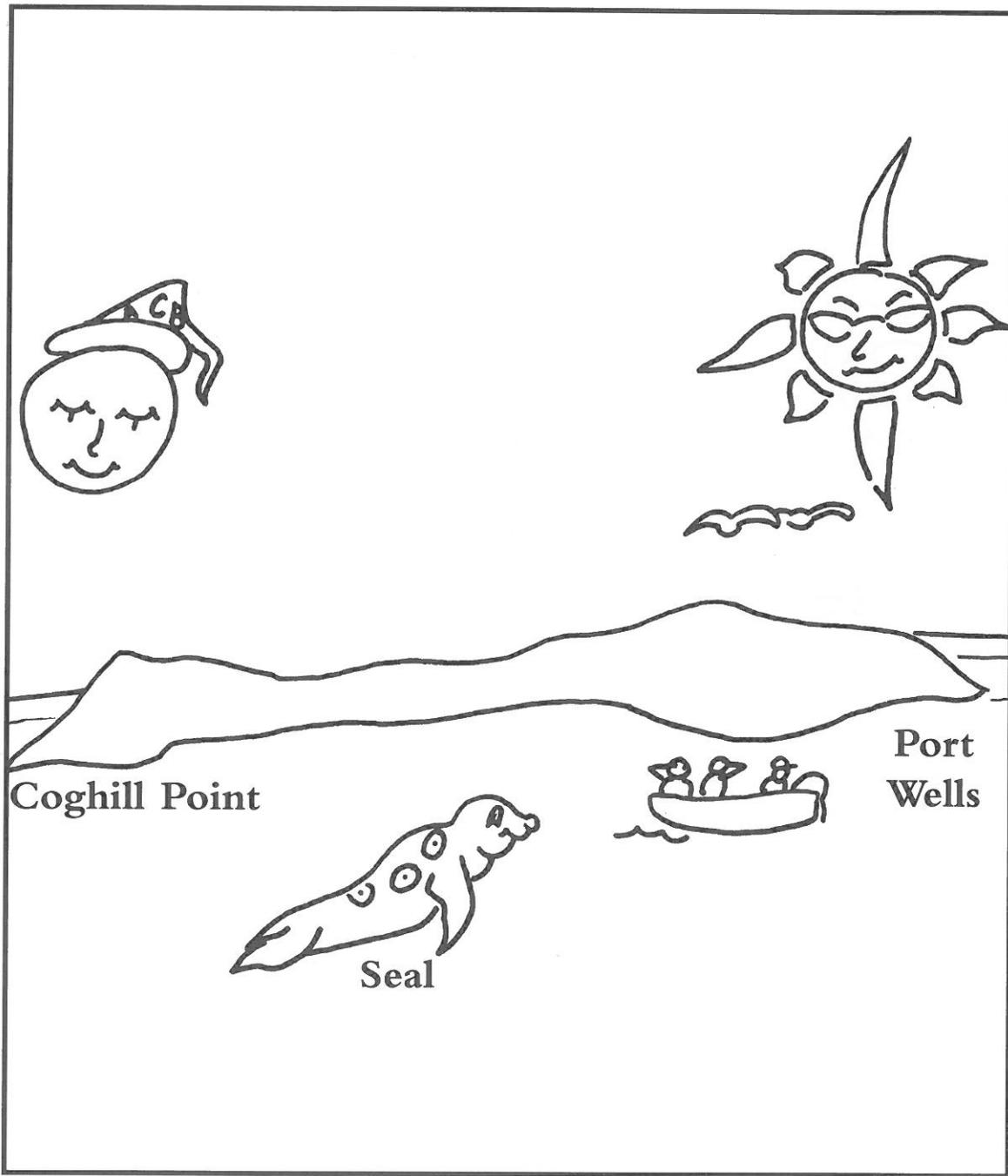
Born and raised in Chenega, Alaska, I have a saying that was repeated by my dad, Pete A. Kompkoff, Sr., “*katuktuqtauluden*”, which in Aleut means, “*always have patience*”.



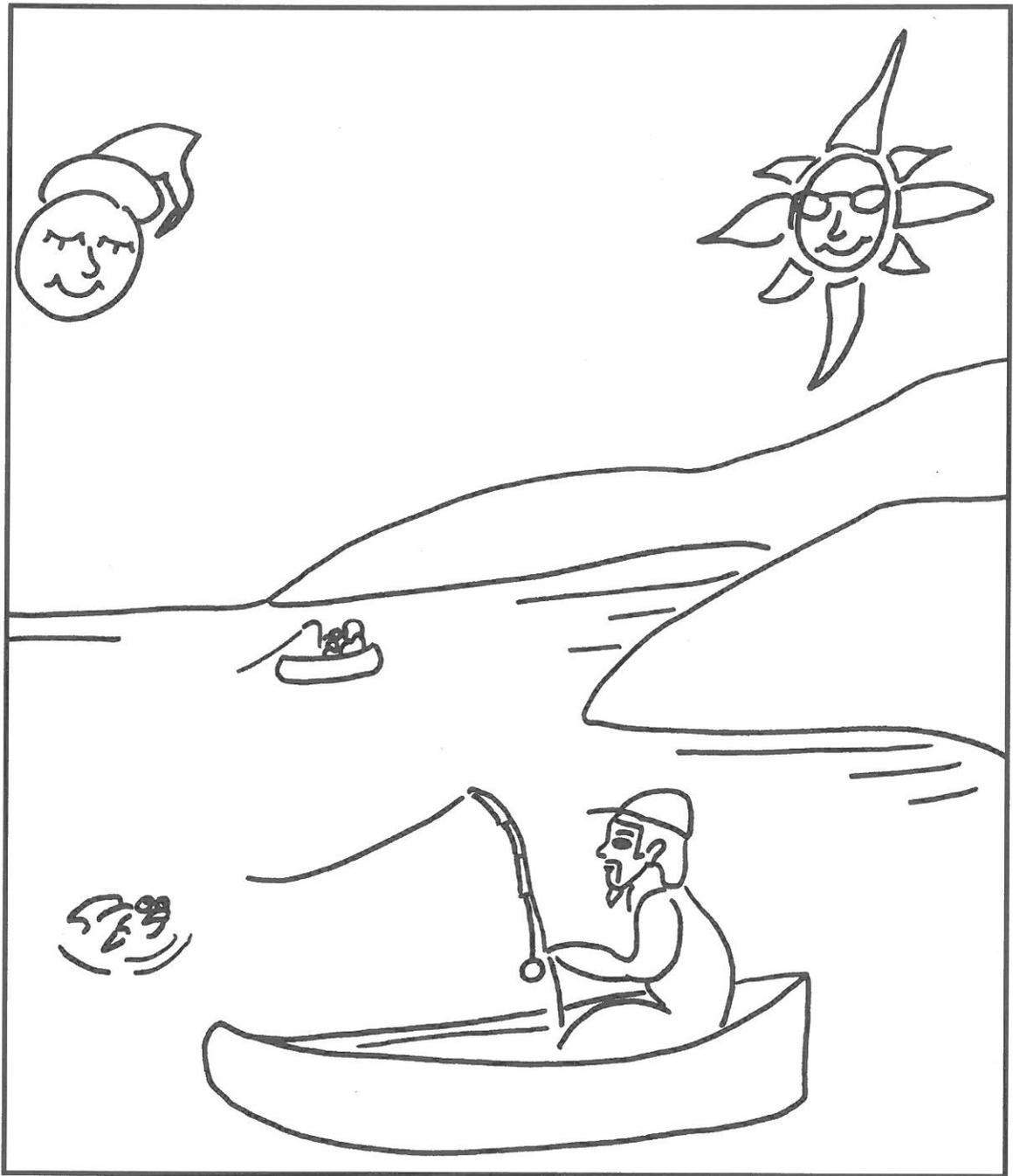
And also a saying from my mother, “*agayuqtolaqi*”, which in Aleut means, “*always try to go to church*”.



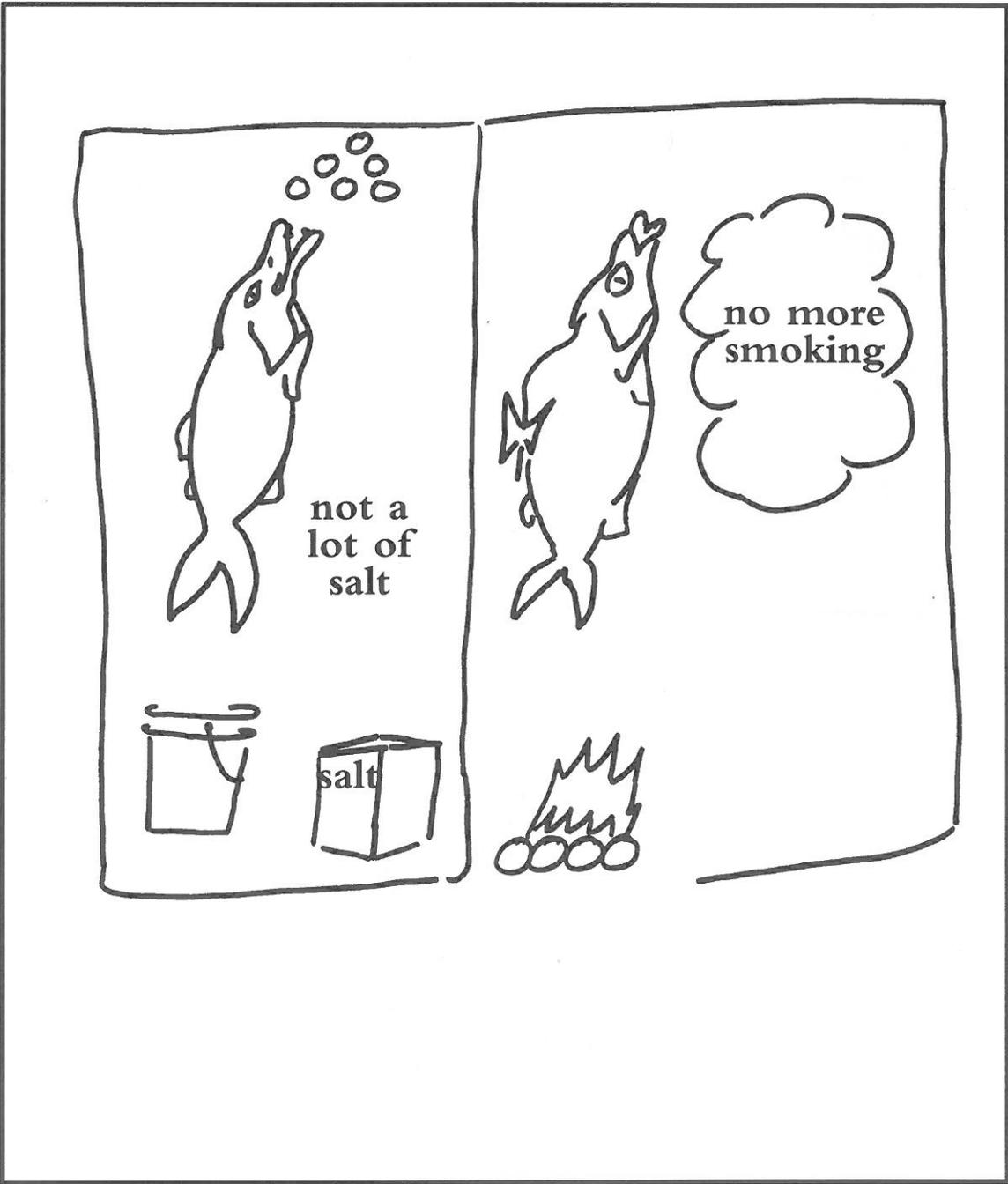
This reminds me of our subsistence way of life, how the whole village would move to Shipyard, about twenty miles north of the old village of Chenega, which also was destroyed by the 1964 earthquake, with the exception of my summer home.



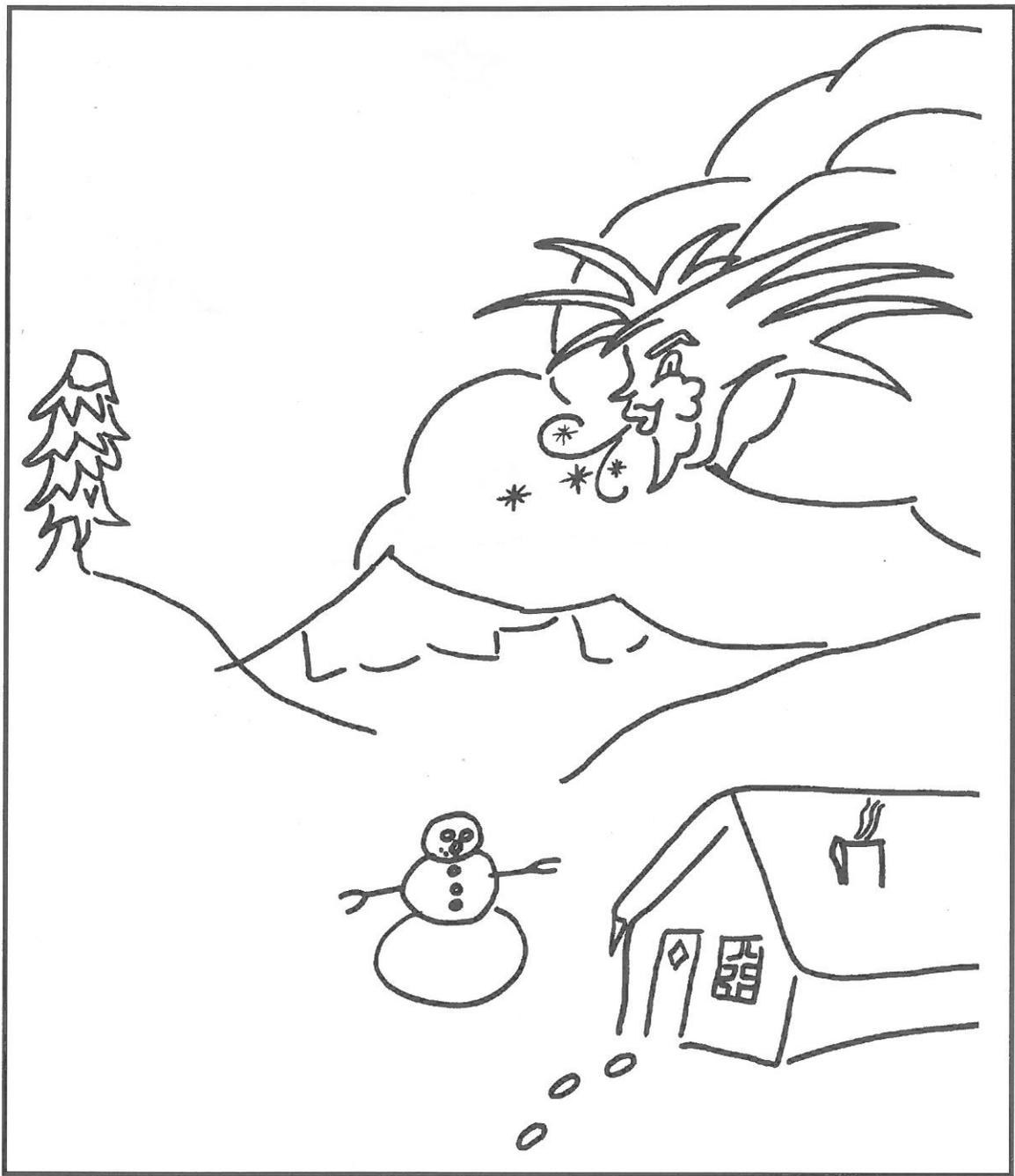
And every year we would go to Coghill Point in Port Wells, College
Fiord, for two months hunting seal,....



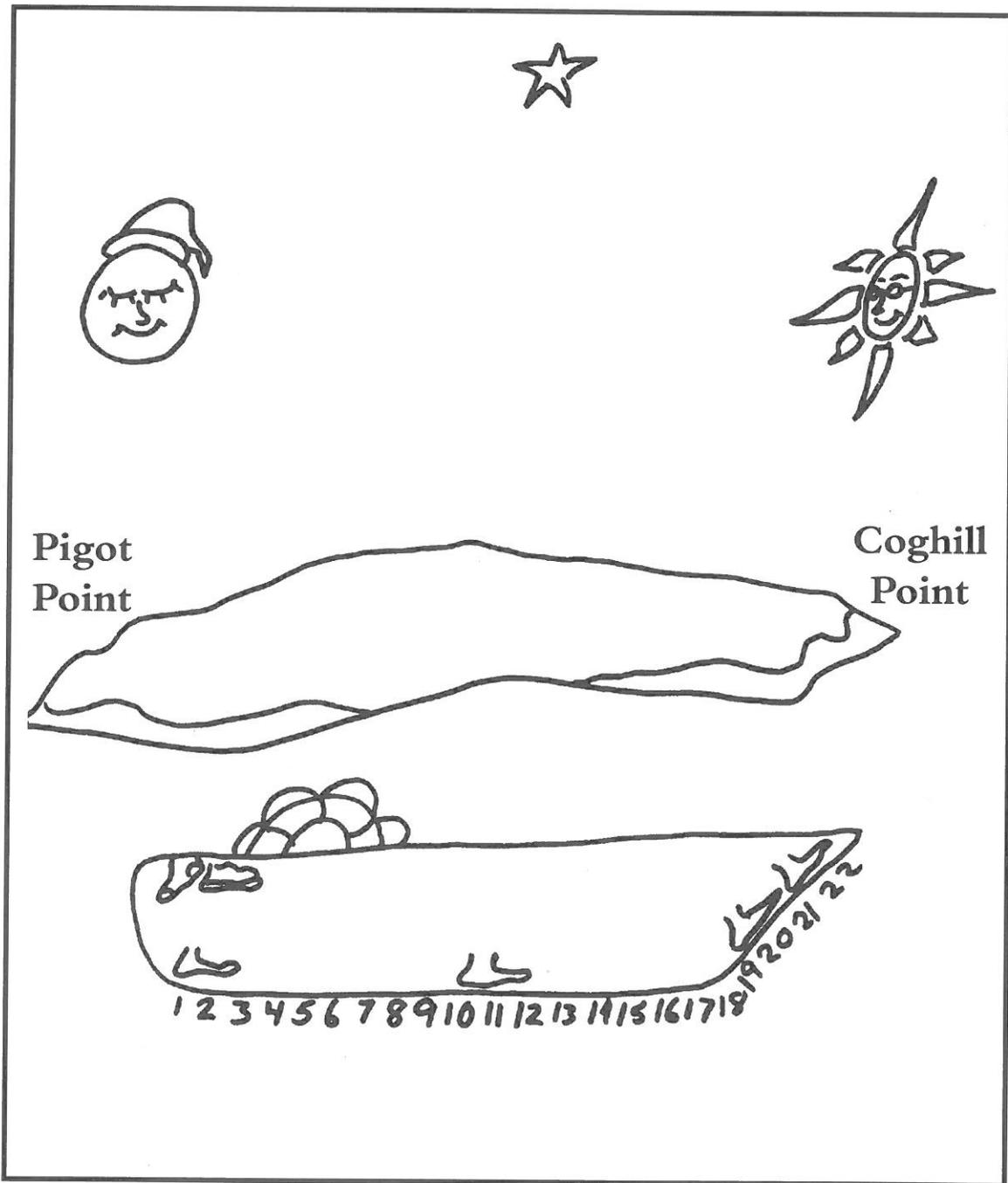
...fishing



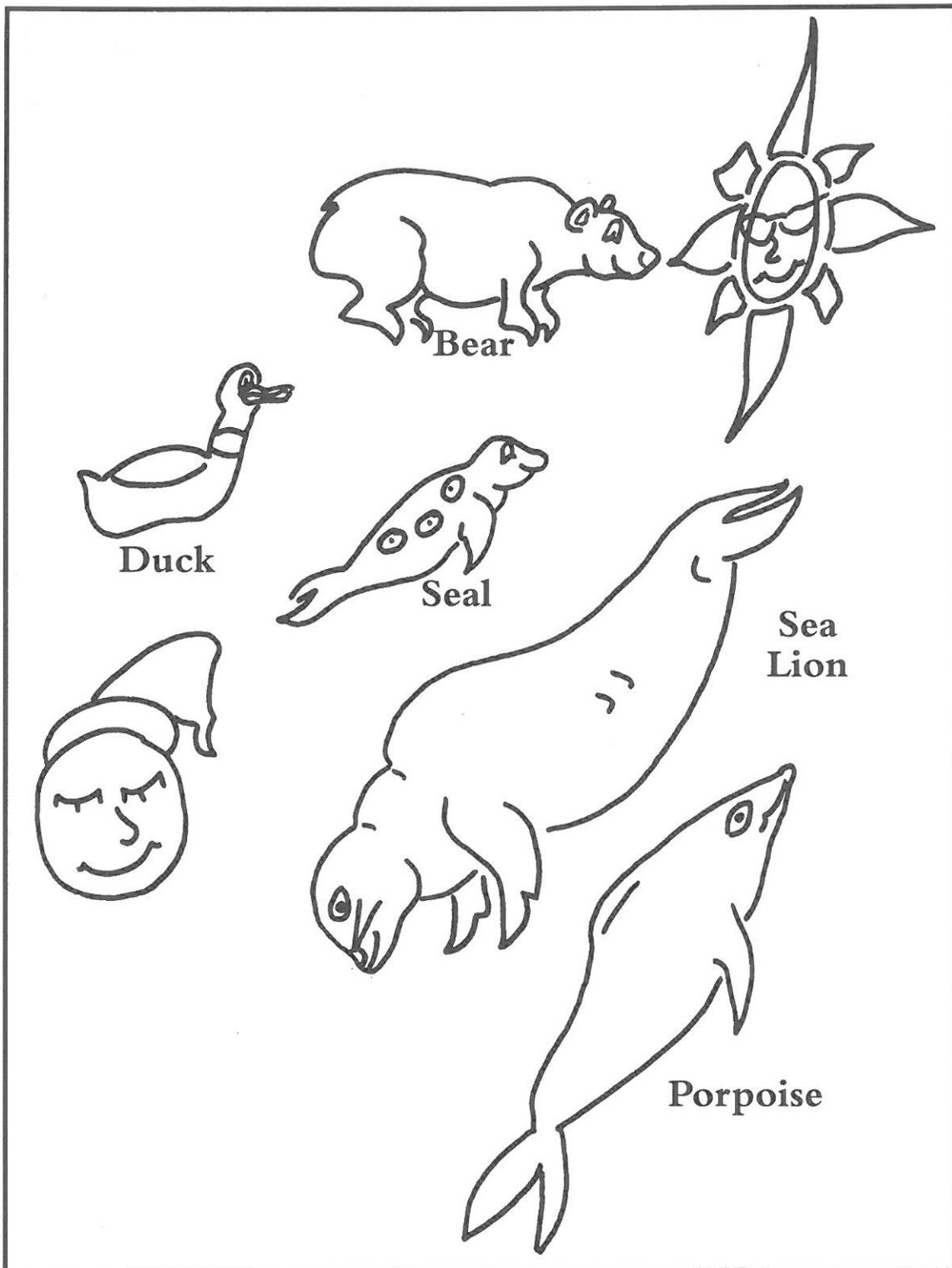
salting and smoking the fish and game,.....



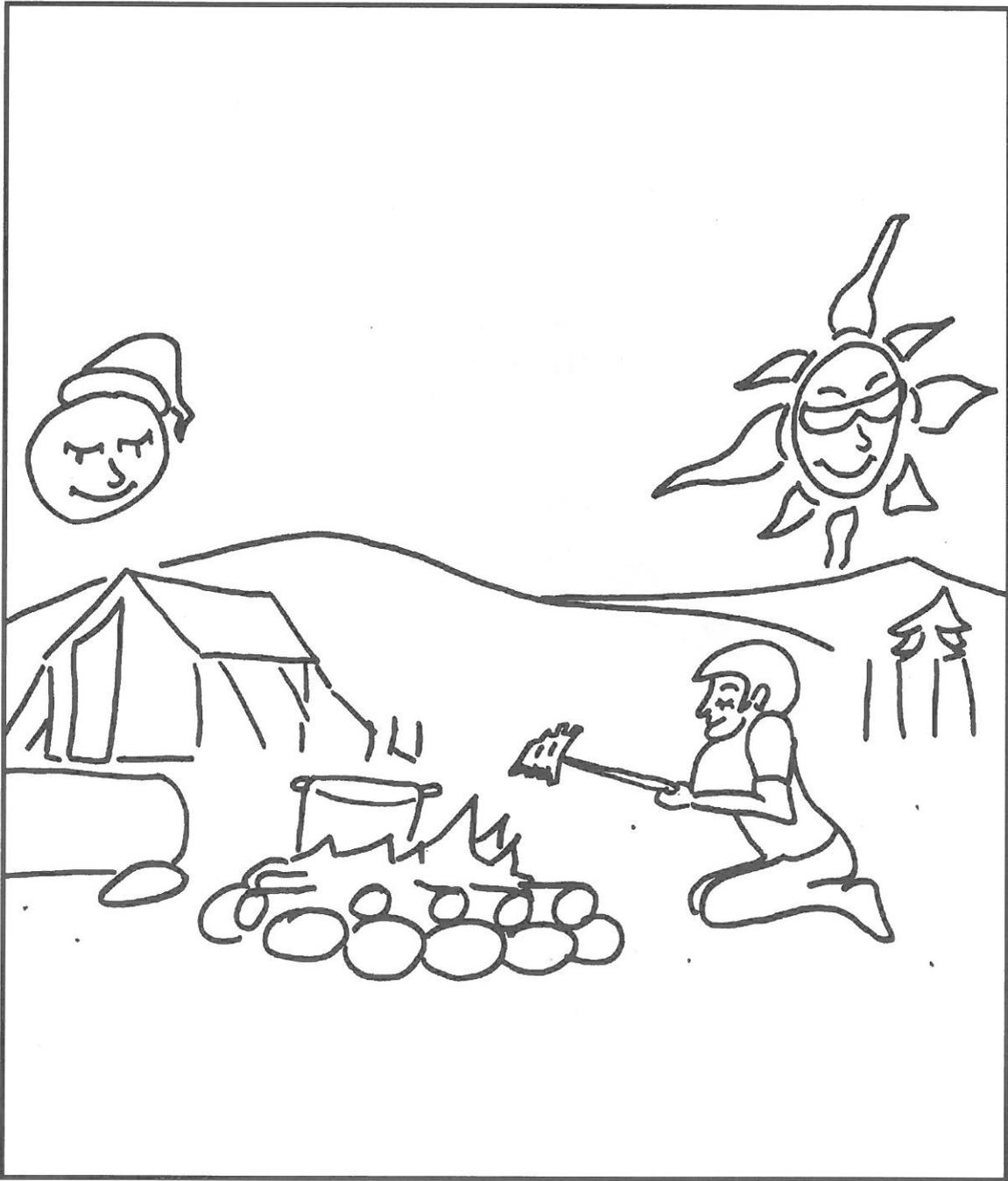
...and preparing it for the winter months.



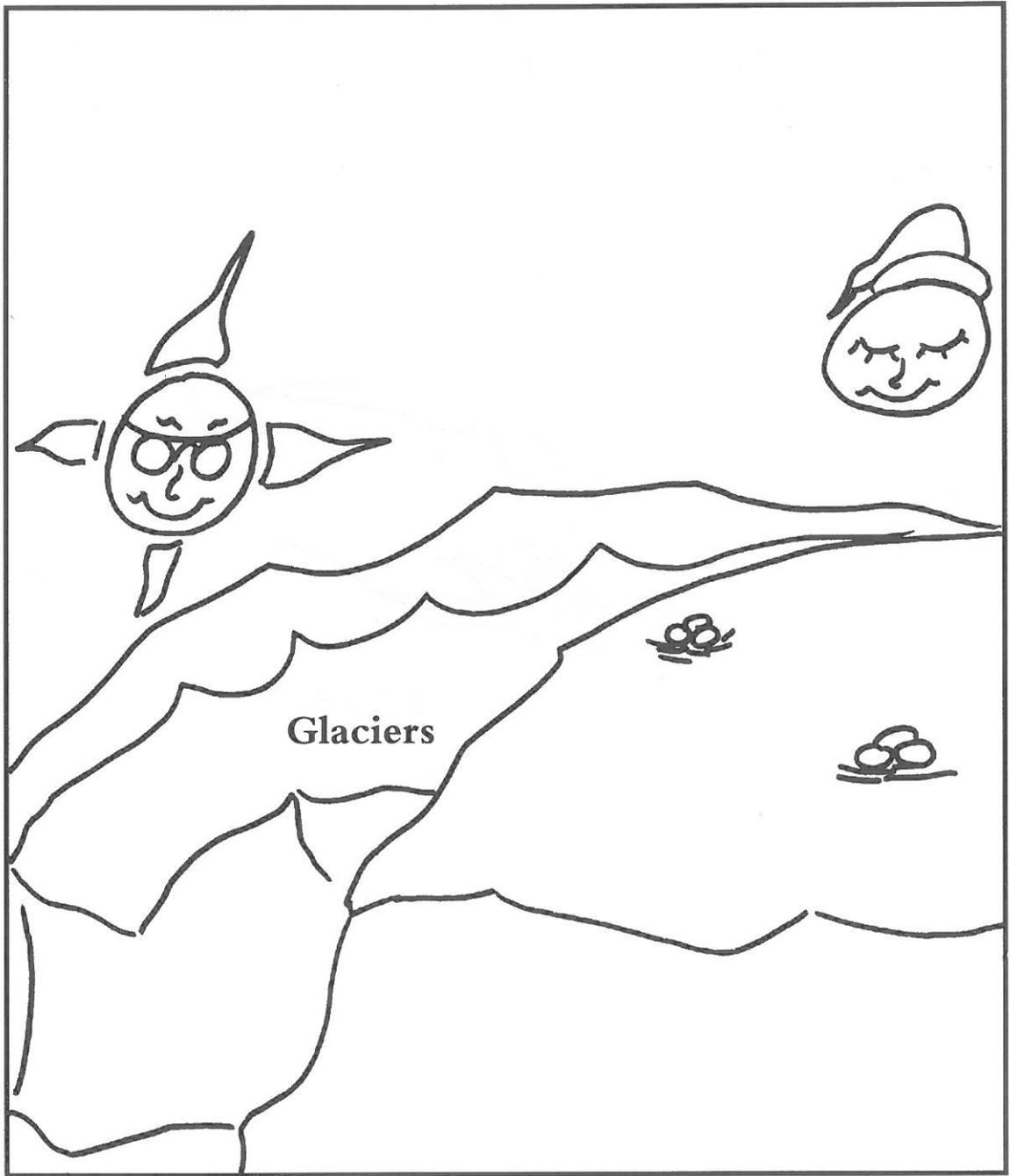
I could remember rowing in a twenty-two foot open skiff from Pigot Point to Coghill Point, a two-day trip,...



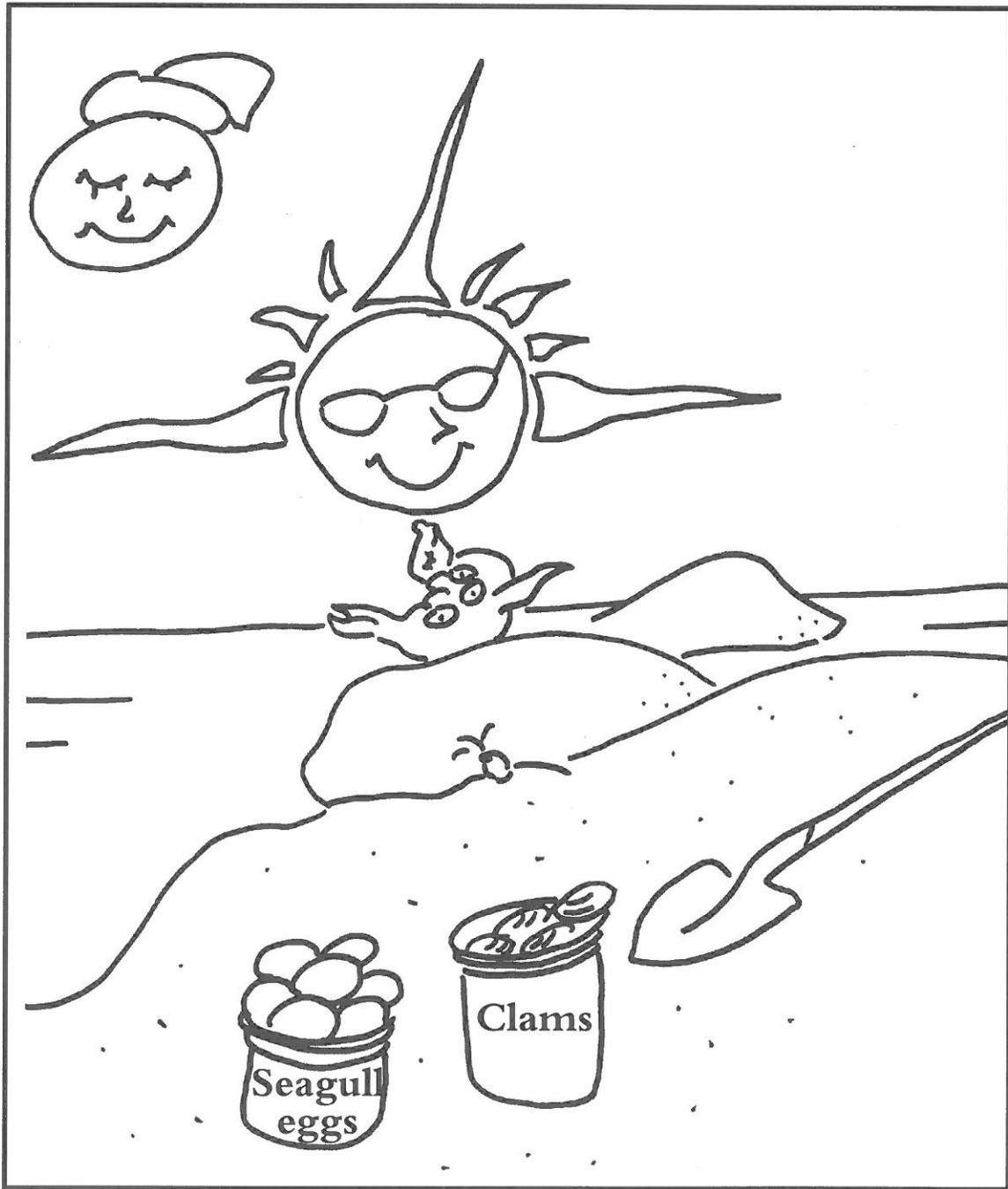
...hunting bear, ducks, seal, sea lion, and porpoise with Paul Kompkoff, Sr. and his family



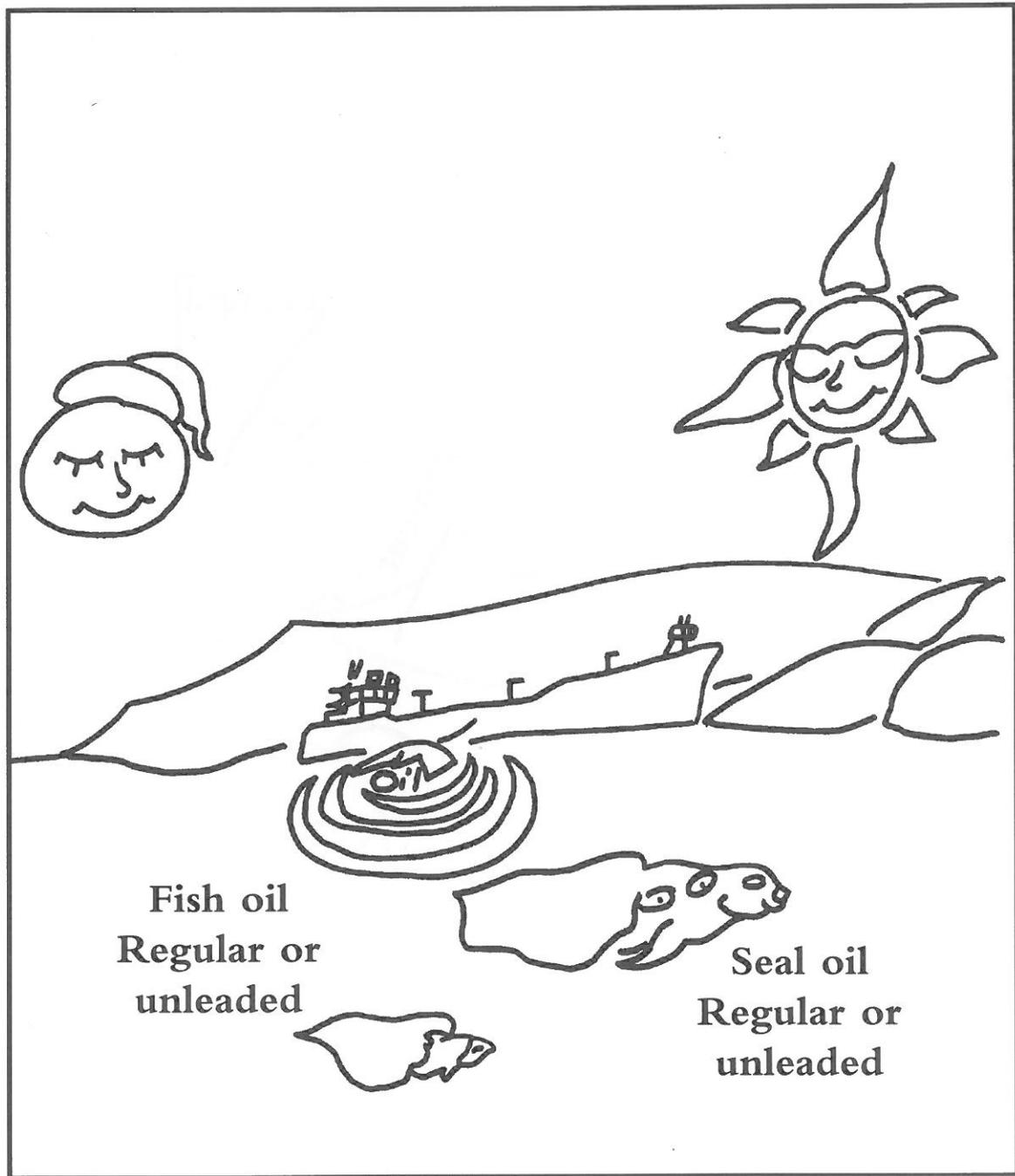
At Coghill, our fires would burn all day with a pot of seal, or we would *munyuk*, or barbecue seal on sticks over the fire.



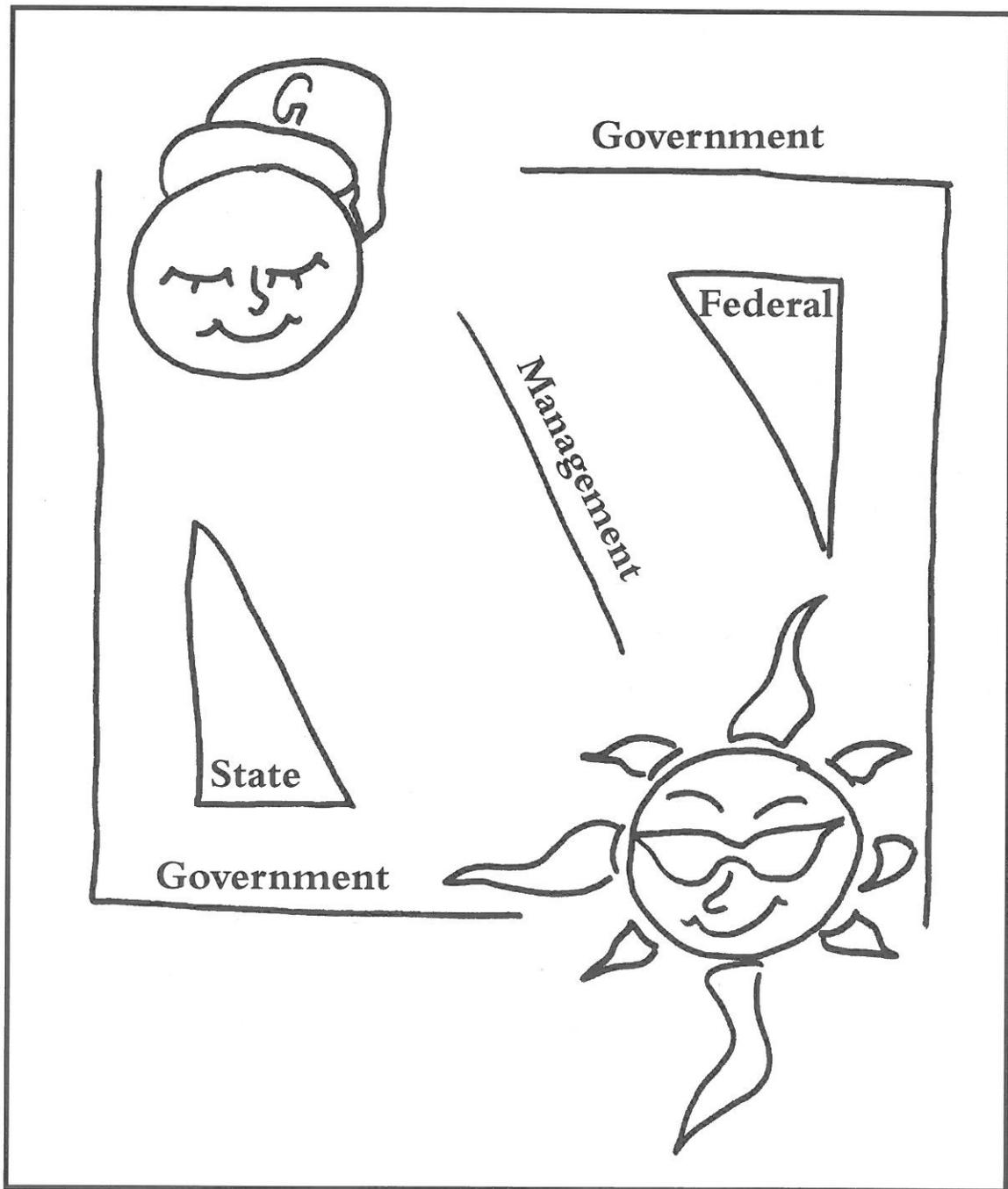
The men would row into the glaciers, hunting
and picking up kittiwake eggs.



We rowed the skiff to save on gas for the ride back to Chenega or Nellie Juan, stopping on the beaches to dig clams, barbecue seal along the way, and also to pick up seagull eggs.



Even while writing about our subsistence, it makes me feel better. Thinking of how the Exxon-Valdez oil spill destroyed a lot of our subsistence, and now reading about how our subsistence is in jeopardy again, I can't keep silent any longer.



As I write, this story brings tears to my eyes, since we have so few days until the federal government will take over management of fish and game and tell us what, when, where, and how we can hunt and fish for our subsistence foods.



One must “have patience” to certain extent when it comes to our subsistence way of life, and “pray to God in church”, that if the subsistence issue comes to a vote, our leadership and the public will make the right decision. Thank you.



Donald P. Kompkoff, Sr.
May 4, 1998

