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Barrow today: Introduction

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Series: ATS-1 Educational Satellite Project Tapes

Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

[Barrow Today begins with music by Pete Sovalik's dance group]. The announcer [Jeff Kennedy] says Barrow Today is a series of programs that examines subjects of importance concerning the Eskimo residents of Barrow. This series will examine the coexistence of subsistence and wage economies, the role of education and the development of Native leadership, community health and problems with water and sanitation, changes in dental health, the place of Christianity and the importance of the North Slope region to the residents of that area. The programs will consider the changes in social culture that are the result of white people coming in and the effect of acculturation in times of change in the traditional Eskimo world.

At 1:52 the interviewer [Roger McPherson] asks what somebody thinks of Barrow and lady's voice says it's good. When asked what she would say if somebody asked her to describe Barrow, she says she'd say it's kinda dirty. Another person would describe Barrow as a big village. [Music is playing in the background.] A woman says she likes the Hut and the Polar Bears' because they are the only places to go to. In the Hut there are [unclear]. Other place she likes in town is ML's where there is pool, candy [?], like the Hut.

A man's voice [Jack Chenoweth?] says that Barrow is a community that is governed by a city council that grew out of a traditional notion of a city council. Barrow is a 4th class city with a population of about 2200. The community is scattered over 3 square miles along the Arctic Ocean. It's divided by a lagoon into

two main areas: There's the downtown area and a residential subdivision called Browerville.

3:58 A woman's voice says they have seasonal population of 2500 this time of the year when the students have come in. In winter they have 2200 people, not counting "the people at the base." She is asked how many non-Natives live in Barrow and she says there's 200-300 because the base, which is mostly manned by whites, is close by. [Note: The base is most likely the U.S. Naval Arctic Research Station]. They have teachers in Barrow, some 30-32 teachers a year. There is the hospital: doctors and nurses. They have quite a group of white people in addition to Native population.

5:08 A man's voice says that Barrow's location at the Chukchi Sea and easy access to inland waters and tundra has made it possible for Utkiavimuit to live in the area for 4000 years. Recently, residents of smaller villages such as Point Lay, Point Kuktovik and Anaktuvuk Pass have found the large village of Barrow to be a more favorable place to move their families into. There is a school, a hospital, churches, stores, a local government through City Council and daily airplane visits by tourists during the summer and during the polar bear hunting season.

Another man's voice says they are trying to use modern concepts of merchandise. Alaska is changing and the trading system where one brings their goods to the traders once a year is gone.

Another man says they don't use dogs anymore, but they have skidoos that are good with hauling ice.

Yet another man says that his dad used to go out with dogs to Meat River and all over. When he got to school age, about 4 or 5 years old, his family moved back to the village. His family had their camp near Prudhoe Bay and his dad's and two brother's houses were there. They are down to the ground now.

At 7:40 the narrator says that the rapid population growth contributes to Barrow's health problems, as does the lack of sanitation facilities or central village water supply. Barrow people live in large families that comprise of several generations who live in 1 or 2 room dwellings which increases the possibility of contagion.

Osamu Matsutani says that a main reason for why they have so many infectious diseases is the crowded conditions in the houses. It's not unusual to have 15 people living in one house, in a one-bedroom place. If one person caught cold, everybody else gets it too. That's the way how tuberculosis spread and only due to outside influence, it was controlled.

9:02A woman's voice asks another lady how many children she has and she says she has 5 boys and 3 girls.

Another woman's voice says that a typical household in Barrow usually consists of several basic family units who are living in the same house. There might be grandparents and their grown children with and without their own families.

A man's voice says that the role of education in the development of Native leadership is critical. Native leaders and school administrators are developing priorities to the Eskimo youth. The traditional three R's are important [Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic? There's a little rhyme called "School Days" that goes along with it: School days, school days/Dear old Golden Rule days/Reading and writing and 'rithmetic/Taught to the tune of a hickory stick] in dealing with the white world. Pride in language, culture and self are now equally important.

Another man's voice says that the three R's are still very important, especially [unclear] expression of a child, [meaning spoken language?]. Then there is reading and other subjects their teachers do: health, music, physical education. Those are the things they've been working for and they also emphasize the culture of all people, trying to fit that in into their curricula.

11:12 A young man mentions the study of Eskimo languages. He speaks Inupiat already, but he says he doesn't know all the Eskimo words. In the class, they learn to spell and write. The interviewer [Roger McPherson] asks if the young 7 or 8-graders should have the same class and the speaker says he thinks so [this refers to a pilot program on Inupiat literacy that was taught to the 9th graders].

A man's voice [Joseph Upicksoun?] says that many see the future of the North Slope Eskimo and their land claims legislation. Land and sea have been their main sources of livelihood and they claim the land north from the Brook's Range where they have hunted for thousands of year.

Another man's voice asks who wants to live "up here?" His people have lived there from times immemorial and still today maintain a complete dominion over the lands. One can come from the urban areas like Fairbanks where the Caucasian is in control, but when one leaves the urban areas and "comes up here" one finds that there is a different atmosphere because the Eskimo is the dominant person north of the Brook's Range.

At 13:15 the theme music plays. The announcer says that this has been the first in Barrow Today –series that is produced by Roger and Karen McPherson with the support of Alaska Rural School Project, Department of Education and KUAC of University of Alaska. The voices heard were the ones of teenagers; Jack Chenowith, the City Manager; Magistrate Sadie Neakok; Al Shanse [sp?], the store owner; dance leader Willie Silas; Dr. Osamu Matsutani and Mrs. Catherine [Unclear]; Primary School Supervisor Harold Kavelook and Arctic Slope Native Association President Joe Upicksoun. The music was performed by Pete Sovalik's Dance Group.

Announcer is Jeff Kennedy.

[End of the recording.]