

Call number: 02-00-133-4 PT. 4

Barrow today: Religion in Barrow, Christianity in an Eskimo World; Arctic Slope Eskimo Empire.

Date: 1971

Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

Date of summary's creation: 01/16/2014

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.

[Theme music plays.] Barrow Today: Religion in Barrow, Christianity in an Eskimo World. [Church bells are ringing and hymns are sung.] Samuel Simmonds, pastor of the Utqiagvik Presbyterian Church introduces himself and tells that he was born in Barrow and ordained in 1961. The church was organized before his time, in 1898. Many of the missionaries came from south until a few years ago when Samuel was called to be the pastor of the church. He's been working with his Native people who have not been able to understand much about the English language. They benefit from the continuous Native ministry. [More hymns are sung.]

At 3:36 Darrell Redfearn introduces himself. He's a missionary pastor with the Assemblies of God Church and has been in Alaska for 7 years, working with various ethnic and language groups. He finds the work very interesting. [A sound clip from his sermon.]

The narrator says the two of the Barrow Churches, Utqiagvik Presbyterian and Assembly of God Church count over ½ of the population of the village as members and almost everyone participates in the activities over the year. Older villagers are regular church-goers, but younger villagers do not always attend although many relate to the church's social activities.

When a teenager is asked why he participates in both [churches], he can't tell, but enjoys them both. James Nageak, who's a young Presbyterian lay-worker, explains they are trying to reach young people and Reverend Darrell Redfearn will describe a youth night and the importance of the churches in Barrow.

A teenager, Johnny [Nusunginga], tells that he goes to both churches. He goes to the Assembly of God Church's morning services and to Presbyterian Church for evening services. He says he likes to go to church but can't tell why he goes to both of them. Lots of his friends go to church, too.

James Nageak says he's been to Barrow past 15 years and that during the past 2 years he has been working as a lay-worker at the Presbyterian Church in Barrow. They try to provide activities to young people because the Church feels that they don't have enough activities during the week and the church tries to provide a place for them to meet. They also want to provide leadership that the young people lack in Barrow. Young people are the future who might be running their community and their church in the future. They need to do things with the youth when they are still reachable. Later it's hard to change their ways of thinking and life.

At 7:56 Reverend Redfearn says that the youth of their village are very active kids who have lots of energy. Many of their homes are quite small and they spend lots of time outside of home. Realizing that the youth must get busy, they try to provide activities for them to help them from getting involved with things that are not beneficial for them. Their youth night includes about 30-40 minutes of indoctrination-type of courses, such as bible courses based on their level. Usually they are in a game form. They keep the games active so the kids are jumping around instead of sitting. They have Bible Baseball and Bible Basketball. The church and community –relationships have been very good because in a community of Barrow's size it's impossible to separate those two. The church is a part of the community and a part of most of the community activities. Without the church in general, there would be a void in social activities of the village since much that goes on is sponsored by the church groups.

The narrator says that Christianity takes many forms in the Eskimo world and the differences between the two churches in Barrow create community differences.

Programs and activities are designed to reach the young and old. Community cohesion is split by the presence of the second church and parents must choose between straight morality of the Assembly of God with restrictions in smoking and drinking, or attend to Presbyterian Church which doesn't maintain the prohibitions.

Reverent Simmons says he has seen many changes in his congregation. Villagers are acting out of love and not out of fear. Barrow's increased population has created problems: recently, the Christmas gift giving was discontinued because there was no room for all the gifts. Despite of the divisions that have been brought by the two churches, participation in Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts shows that Barrow people are very much into community gatherings and traditional sharing.

At 10:46 the interviewer [Roger McPherson] says he is talking to Reverend Simmons and he'd like to ask what kind of changes have occurred in the church. He tells there have been quite a few changes. When he was a boy, there used to be restrictions such as no smoking which is hardly mentioned today. Also, Native dancing is now allowed. Simmons thinks the prohibition of dancing was due to a misunderstanding.

The interviewer asks if the villagers have a different idea about what the church can do to them. Simmons says he believes so and that there are quite a lot of people who are interested in church activities and who are trying to help out of love and not because of fear that they'll be damned. [Hymn singing.]

A man says that they go to church every Sunday and Wednesday because they are members of the church and believe what the missionaries are talking about Christ. They have a Native pastor in the Presbyterian Church and they believe what they tell about God's works.

Simmons [?] says that within their church they continue the age-old feasts like Christmas gatherings. In spite of the growth of their community, they manage to have a wonderful time feasting together. They also have a feast on Thanksgiving and Simmons believes this will continue as long as whaling will continue because whalers set aside a part of the whale for such feasts. Thus, as long as they have meat and the majority of people gathering, the tradition of feasts will continue for quite some time.

[Theme music is playing.] The announcer says this was one in the series of programs on Barrow Today, which is written and produced by Roger and Karen McPherson with the support of Alaska Rural School Project, Department of Education and KUAC of the University of Alaska. The voices heard were the ones of the Presbyterian congregation, Reverend Samuel Simmons, Reverend Darrell Redfern, Johnny Nusunginga, James Nageak and Willie Silas. The music was performed by Pete Sovalik's Dance Group. Announcer is Jeff Kennedy.

[Break in the recording.]

At 15:45 the theme music begins again. The announcer says this day's program is about the Arctic Slope Eskimo Empire. Northern Eskimo people have always depended on the food resources of the Arctic Slope. Many Barrow people were born along the rivers of the North Slope region and have not lost contact with the land even after settling into permanent homes in the village. During the summer, people make temporary camps along the lakes and rivers or along the coast. Land use by Eskimo people may extend backward in time for over 4,000 years. Ironically, recent archaeological discoveries along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline document the Eskimo claim to land ownership through land use.

Joseph Upicksoun discusses the importance of land to his people: He says they are setting priorities in getting legislation and a fair, just, and equitable settlement. They have the President of the United States who has spoken about self-determination. Joseph's people interpret self-determination as land that is rightfully theirs.

At 18:22 another man says they always get their food off the tundra: fish, caribou, and geese. [Music is playing in the background.] They don't need much money. They are going to have the best pipeline. The interviewer [Roger McPherson] asks if the pipeline will help Barrow and he says it will bring "a lot of dough" and increase building and businesses.

Another man tells that for the period he was working for ARCO, ARCO took extra pains to make sure they didn't damage the tundra. When they first started, nobody knew anything about tundra or permafrost. They found out about it and tried to do

a good job, being as concerned as anybody. They want to get their money out of the deal, too. The speaker feels that if they can get the oil out without hurting anything, it's good. It would take hours and hours to cover topics of Native views on it and ecological issues. The speaker says he's not against it. If the land claims were settled so that the oil companies couldn't use the area, it would be a waste. It's not helping anything if the land is not developed, but just sitting there.

21:08 Upicksoun says the press will place lots of emphasis on the 800-mile pipeline, but when one gets up to the Arctic Slope Region, one never hears about the 10,000 miles of pipeline that's going to be "up here." He says they will need sand and gravel to build the pipelines, there will be pollution and the rivers will be all ruined because of the quest for oil. They know that eventually oil drilling will begin, but they would like to see it set up so that the environmental statements will include what will happen if there is a spillage and the tundra is contaminated with oil. They'd like to see the Federal Government to allow the oil companies and those who build the pipeline to have a stipulation that says the Alaska Natives are the people who are affected by spillage and they are to be paid so many dollars per spilled gallon.

The narrator continues: As new construction follows the oil discoveries, changes the land, the Eskimo people adapt to new conditions. Some men from Barrow are flown to jobs at Prudhoe Bay and others consider the prospects in pipeline construction. However, for the majority of the North Slope Native, the land is more valuable than the jobs. To gain control over the development, the Arctic Slope Native Association[ASNA] has asked that the North Slope be declared a borough.

At 23:39 another man says that the ASNA has urged its executive director and president to investigate a possibility for setting up a borough for all the areas north of the Brook's Range watershed. The idea behind the borough would be to have more control over the North Slope by the people who live there. People could, through their elected representatives, have a say in land use and development of the area for oil exploration although areas could be kept for traditional subsistence activities. At present time, Arctic Slope and the people who live on the Slope have no real means to affect the use of the land whose custodians are the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Navy who control the Naval Petroleum Reserve.

Upicksoun continues: They feel that, within the Alaska State Government, the rural villages don't have representation within Caucasian government. Alaska Native doesn't have any representation in "this government" and the laws are unfair because they require places like Arctic Slope and similar regions to comply with laws that don't have anything to do with them. They are, for example, forced to comply with commercial fishing laws although they don't have commercial fishing up there yet.

26:28 Another man says that the laws of the State of Alaska provide that a borough has a power to develop and regulate land use. By setting up a borough, the people would have an additional device to protect their interest in the land and to promote the development of the area for their own future benefit.

Within the AFN, they were primarily concerned about "our land" and as they went along in drafting legislation that represents policies of the board, they found out that there are about 7 different ethnic groups in Alaska and that each of them live in a certain geographic location. As far as the Arctic Slope Native Association is concerned, they cover the entire area of the Arctic Slope Region and they have a natural border in Brook's Range. These lands north of the Brook's Range are what the Eskimos of the Arctic Slope Region know are theirs. Before the discovery of oil, Caucasian thought that North Slope was a god-forsaken land.

He 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 or Anchorage 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.

30:16 The theme music plays. The announcer says that this has been Arctic Slope, an Eskimo Empire, and the last program 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 those of Joseph Upicksoun, Bart Asogeak, Edward Itta, and Jack Chenowith. The music was performed by Pete Sovalik's Dance group and the announcer was Jeff Kennedy.

[End of the recording.]