

88-49-02 Potlatch Series

Host Jeff Kennedy

Georgiana Lincoln- History and goals of the Fairbanks Native Association

Dancers from Emmonak

Levi Lott and Jennifer Ortiz- Comparison of Eskimo and Latin American cultures

Message: Deadline for Alaskan Natives to select their lands is December 18, 1974. Native Land Claims made the requirement that Native lands be contiguous and compact. In some cases Bureau of Land Management may correct some village selections to make sure they meet regulations.

Georgiana Lincoln: An OAO grant of \$35,000 was given to the Fairbanks Native Association under a Community Action Program (CAP). Prior to this the Fairbanks Native Association didn't have an office or paid personnel. With the grant they had a skeleton administration, consisting of a Director, Secretary, and an Aid. They expanded to have a half-time individual who dealt with employment tasks. Ruby Tanzi, later Ruby John, was on a task force to locate more funding. Throughout the states there was money for Model Urban Indian Centers. Ruby thought the Native Center in Anchorage was going to apply for this grant, however when they said they were not going to apply, the Fairbanks Native Association did. They were the only ones in Alaska to apply. There were 39 other Native associations throughout the US that also applied. Four were chosen: Los Angeles, CA, Gallup, NM, Minneapolis, MN, and Fairbanks, AK. Fairbanks started with a grant of \$193,000, with a budgetary restriction of a youth and family counselor, an employment section, administration, as well as a research and program planning component for getting additional funding. The FNA's goal was to provide the needs and desires of the Native people in Fairbanks. This was limited to Fairbanks because there were 4,726 Natives residing permanently in Fairbanks as of the end of July, 1974. When speaking with the local Natives about what their needs and desires were, to them a need was something they had that day, such as a need for a doctor/better medical attention; and not planning for the future. A desire meant planning for the future. The Fairbanks Native Association expanded their program to meet the desires of the Fairbanks Natives. The FNA worked to find what other resources were available to the Native people, outside of what other organizations were supplying. They wanted to work with, not compete against other organizations who were also trying to help. The purpose of this was also to force the state to recognize Native citizens as part of the general population of Alaska. The hope was that someday, the Fairbanks Native Association would not be needed because the Natives would no longer have to rely on them to find out what resources are available to them.

Dancers from Emmonak: Men and women from Emmonak provide songs and dances for entertainment. Some of these songs and dances were old, and some were new. The Emmonak dancers consisted of 20 singers and 3 drums. The drums are played in the Yukon Style, beaten from the top of the drum. Each male dancer holds a hand mask containing four ptarmigan feathers. The women dancers hold carved

wooden masks with polar bear hair. The singers encourage the dancers to dance until they are satisfied. Well known dancers are often asked for an encore. The first dance is the dance of the seal swimming (Seal Swimming Dance), performed by Alec Bird and Walter Joel. There are two men sitting on the floor, four women standing behind them dressed in Kuspuks. The actions of the dance describe the motion of the seal swimming. Eskimo music, thanks to KNOM, Father Jim Poole, and the Emmonak Dancers.

Levi Lott, from Tuluksak, Alaska and Jennifer Ortiz from Puerto Rico, were asked to compare Latin American culture with Eskimo culture. They discussed how Latin Americans get along with whites, which they call Gringos, and how Alaskan Eskimos get along with whites, which they call Gusuks. Levi speaks first about how when Alaskan Eskimos speak about their family they don't mean just their parents and brother or sister, but rather family has a broader meaning. He says that practically all the people who live in his village of Tuluksak are family. The people are very close-knit, but in white man society family is small and they seem to be afraid of their neighbor. Jennifer expresses her agreement saying that in Puerto Rico family also means more than just father, mother, sister, brother; or even aunt uncle. Family also incorporates your neighbors, and sometimes they take it even further to mean the whole island of Puerto Rico. Jennifer says she agrees about the white man as well, that they are separate, cold; that something is missing. Levi explains that there is a difference in the way white man works versus back home in his village. The white man works 8-5, whereas at home they hunt and fish whenever. Some Eskimos work 8-5, but not the majority. Jennifer says her culture is the same. That time isn't important, but rather the moment. Jennifer explains that now though (1974), people in her culture are starting to work 8-5 as well, that it has to be that way some times; when they work in the cities, in the factories. She explains that there are so many white people in her country that they have even had to adopt their entertainment. Work 8-5, and then 9pm on its all night clubs and that kind of stuff. She expresses that this is something that is not theirs, that it is foreign. Jennifer explains that they have to take it though, because they have nothing else. Levi jumps in to say that Gusuks, white man, also talk too much. They just talk too much. They just keep blabbering. He explains that his people only speak when they need to speak, and they mean what they have to say. They don't talk nonsense like Gusuks. Jennifer says that she would express it the same way. When Puerto Ricans talk to someone they connect, they listen. She says with Gringos, you're talking to them, but for them it's always about the job, the money; there is no warmth or tenderness in the communication. Levi jumps in and says that with his people when someone needs something, than everyone is there. With Gusuks, they don't want to get involved. Jennifer agrees. She says that when people in her culture help their neighbor, that's just what they do. It's not about pride and charity. Levi expresses that when Gusuks come from the lower 49 (48) their facial expressions say, 'Oh, here's another dirty Eskimo.' Levi says this is just the impression he gets from them. Jennifer says that she feels the same way; that there is discrimination against Puerto Ricans. She says that Americans view their (her) island just as a vacation spot. Jennifer shares that she saw an ad in a magazine for Puerto Rico which portrayed it as a floating casino. She was very angry. Levi asks Jennifer what her people think of Eskimos, of Levi's people, when they think of them. She says that they picture them living in igloos, hunting whales, living very free. She said they see Eskimos as very simple people. She says visiting now, that she sees that that is not true. That Eskimos are now a people living amongst another culture that has taken over the Eskimos land. She explains that they are no longer free, they no longer have their simple way of life; that they have to cope with this new environment that has taken

over. Levi says that the Gusuks don't understand Latin Americans or South Americans, or Puerto Ricans either. He says that the Gusuks that come to their villages are always trying "help" them when they see that the Eskimos don't use money. They try to "fix" things, and get them to try and do something the "right way". The Gusuks tell them that they will save money by doing this, but really they are just trying to make money off of the Eskimos. Jennifer says that the word for it is "opportunistic." She says that they have the same issues in her country. Jennifer says that they (Gringos) come in and they want to help, and to teach the Puerto Ricans a better way, but they are just making money off of it; that they make more money than they put in. She expresses that there are also people who come who are trying to "help" for their own personal satisfaction. Jennifer explains that this is something that she will never understand.