

88-49-05 Potlatch Series

Martha Teeluk and Eliza Jones on Education

Roger Lang on Cross-cultural cooperation, with input from Levi Lott

Music by Buffy St. Marie

Song by Buffy St. Marie, *My Country Tis of Thy People You're Dying*

Martha Teeluk and Eliza Jones are both Alaskan Native educators. Host Jeff Kennedy previously interviewed the both women regarding Alaska education. He asked if teachers should train students for life in western civilization or in native civilization. First it was asked that he clarify whether he means rural schools in the villages, or in urban schools, such as in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Martha Teeluk explains that in urban school children are being taught skills that can be used in urban areas, but not skills which are useful in the villages. In the villages you need a mixture of both native traditional skills as well as skills which are useful in urban areas, such as office skills, running a business, etc. With the introduction of the Indian Education Act, education in urban areas has begun to include native culture in teaching. Kennedy then asked if a native who has been living in an urban area needs training to readapt themselves to native culture. Teeluk explains that if a person has confidence in themselves, and retains his respect, then they will not have issues reentering the native culture, but if he has assimilated into western culture and no longer knows himself as native, no longer respects and values his native ways, than this is when he may have issues rejoining village life. Kennedy then asked: Should schools train people for jobs or for coping with psychological problems of modern life? Teeluk explains that you can really train someone to think psychologically well about himself, this is something taught early on by parents. If a person has a nice childhood, and his parents respect themselves, than that strength will continue all throughout his life. Kennedy then asked if high school kids should attend school in the villages or in larger cities where they may enjoy better facilities. Eliza Jones, of Huslia, comments that it's good for them to have higher education close to home because then the children can learn to live in the Bush, but if they attend school in the villages than they may not learn skills to work in a city. Sometimes it's good for them to attend school in the cities, so that they have the opportunity to live around other people. Some students really struggle though, and often deal with depression, and it is very hard on them to be away from home. Martha Teeluk explains that it kind of restricts the student's education for them to attend high school in the villages; if they attend school in the city allows them to be exposed to other cultures; but at the same time it's good for them to attend school in the villages because they have the support of their parents. Teeluk suggested an exchange program where students from villages spend time in the city, and students from the city spend time in the village; an intercultural exchange can be beneficial for all students. Kennedy then asked each of them to comment on the Jay Hammond Plan for financing education. Hammond suggested that the state pay 100% of the cost of education, with each community sharing in the funds with the amount given accordingly for the number of students, then each community; would decide how to spend its share of the funds. Eliza Jones explains that more information is needed, but the plan to have local people have input sounds good. Martha

Teeluk explains that it sounds good because then the natives can add their own input and make sure that native culture is incorporated into the education. It is also important though to keep in mind the importance of having quality teachers. She says that the quality of education cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

John Sackett, president of Doyon, explains the purpose and importance of the Potlatch radio show. He requests that villagers express their interests to KUAC so that they may be included in the show.

Song by Buffy St. Marie, *Going Up Cripple Creek*

Jeff Kennedy explains that when Buffy St. Marie performed at the Tundra Times Banquet, Roger Lang president of the Alaska Federation of Natives was in the audience. Lang explained in a recent interview with KUAC why Alaskan Natives who receive money from the Land Claims Act are eligible to receive food stamps. He explains that the funds are for a settlement for the land they gave up, and their incorporation into society. Because this was the purpose of those funds, they should not detract from the person's eligibility for other federal programs. Congress specifically exempted the income from IRS, Family Assistance Program, Aid to the Blind, and Aid to Dependent Children. Next he justified preferential treatment in social service programs offered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Public Health Service. Lang says that generally the question is "why should I pay taxes so that the natives can have schools?" He explains that this is justified because the Native people have paid their taxes in the land they gave up; he says they've paid property taxes far in excess to any value of land. Lang also explains that the only reason there's a BIA school in the state of Alaska is because the state has not met its constitutional requirement of providing educational facilities and services to all of its citizens. Lang explains that because of geography, location and size we don't have state operated schools. Jeff Kennedy then asked him "when do non-natives cooperate well with natives?" Lang explains that they probably cooperate best in the world of finance. This is because it's beneficial to everyone. Jeff Kennedy then asked him "when do they cooperate poorly?" Lang explains that it's when there's a system or bureaucracy to protect. For instance, when federal or state agencies are going to have to give up land rather than leasing it. Lang goes on to explain another area where they seem to have an inability to change is in the education system. Kennedy asked Lang "does poor non-native cooperation result from attitude, prejudice, or personal interest?" Lang explains it's probably a combination of all three. A fear of change in Alaska, with development of resources leading to an influx of new citizens, and deeding of 40 million acres to Alaskan Natives, access to those resources, finances, etc., that the old systems they've relied on may not be able to guide them much longer. These areas are probably where the lack of cooperation hits the hardest. Lang discussed with Levi Lott what natives have to offer non-natives. One thing is survival, the other is SE Alaska native culture which had song, art, history, no jails, no welfare, no orphans, and no widows- everyone in the culture was taken care of. Lott explains that he thinks that the best thing they can contribute to western culture is lack of degrees of crime. "If someone killed a man there [was] no first, second, or third degree murder, it's just something else that results in a dead man-- and you learned things like how to live together, live on the land, and in connection to the land."

Song by Buffy St. Marie