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Paul Goodwin, president of Fairbanks Native Association

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Series: Potlatch series

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Paul Goodwin talked about his background. He was a Ph.D. student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He was involved in cross-cultural education for the Native students. He had become more involved in Native activities because he bridged the gap. He started in Kotzebue and ended up in the university. He thought he might be able to help some of the students who were doing the same thing. He could use his education and background in an organization like the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA). When the job became advertised he applied and was selected. Jeff Kennedy asked what the benefits are for having an education background for an administrative position. Goodwin said one of the problems with the Native associations has been the rapid growth. All of the available Native talent in Alaska has been rapidly soaked up by the various corporations. He said FNA and others has a problem with the corporate enterprise. There are problems getting people who are educated enough to run a corporation and understand all of the subtleties. There have been many directors coming into the corporation and learning on the job. The education is very valuable in a position like his. FNA is unique. He has a politically sensitive office. An education counts in terms of being able to express himself well. Kennedy asked education for a Native student. Goodwin said education is there to establish options for anyone. He thinks that would be the same for Native people. He knows a lot of Native people who wanted to be scientists, teachers and artists. He said their role is to establish all the options. Oftentimes in cross-cultural education those options aren't there. Kennedy asked how you avoid imposing one culture over another. Goodwin said in his opinion one culture has already been imposed on the other. There is no avoiding it. He said since there is a cultural interface you have to make the diffusion as easy as possible for both cultures. It has already been done and they have to live with it now.

Springtime in Alaska

Jeff Kennedy asked what kind of activities the Fairbanks Native Association is involved with. Paul Goodwin said the Fairbanks Native Association is primarily providing professional services along the lines that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) used to provide. Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act the operational goal of that Act is to phase out the BIA as a bureau especially in Alaska. It will be replaced with Native owned and operated organizations such as FNA. They provide all the services that BIA used to provide in the Fairbanks area. Kennedy asked for examples of services. Goodwin said they a number of programs. Their largest is their comprehensive alcohol program. It is composed of three separate facilities with another one coming online within a month. They also handle adult basic education for the borough. They handle general assistance and social services. They have an employment recruitment program. They go out to villages and get people to work on the pipeline so the pipeline people can satisfy their quotas. They have a youth center for primarily urban youth. They are

trying to get to youth with drug problems. They have a Johnson-O'Malley program which is designed to get into the existing school structure. They operate the program in conjunction with the school district so Indian education will be intermingled with the school district. All of these activities amount to currently about 1.8 million dollars a year. It is growing. They will be getting into other areas. Kennedy asked about the alcoholism program and adult education. Goodwin said in urban areas like Fairbanks there is a group of people that have problems. Other organizations reach a certain clientele that excludes Natives. The FNA programs reaches the minorities much better. They can operate an adult basic education program and they can be assured of getting a good sample of Natives, Blacks, Whites and others. He said this should be a source of pride for Native Alaskans. He said the Natives have provided for their own needs and they have provided for other community needs. FNA has the community orientation.

Ira Hays

Jeff Kennedy said BIA is often accused of dragging its feet. Paul Goodwin said anytime you deal with a large agency you can come up with the opinion that they are dragging their feet. He said he understands some of the problems they are facing. He thinks that to a certain degree it is built into the bureaucracy system. Kennedy said there are provisions for Native organizations to bring on board former employees of the BIA and he asked if FNA has done this. Goodwin said they haven't recently brought on any BIA people but on the other hand the BIA and Fairbanks has been relatively stable for the last year or two. He said in the future they have plans to take over some of the BIA functions. The jobs will be available for the BIA people who have been displaced. They already know the job and everyone wins.

Native Alaska singers

Jeff Kennedy asked about the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) organization and how they function together. Paul Goodwin said they try to coordinate together. TCC is a non-profit organization and is designed to take over BIA functions in the 43 villages in the Doyon region. Fairbanks is somewhat excluded from that. It is kind of ill defined in the law 638. TCC has functions within Fairbanks, but they try to make them overlap and they try to be cooperative in areas such as social services and general assistance. TCC provides general assistance for their people in Fairbanks. FNA provides services for those people who are not from the Doyon region. There is considerable overlap. They may both provide services for Eskimos or they may provide services for Athabascans. They coordinate the activities so it becomes less expensive and they can reach as many people as possible. In the future he thinks they can coordinate even more. Kennedy asked about future programs. Goodwin said they are currently trying to develop an emergency shelter program for abused women and children in this area. They have a problem in this area with alcoholism. They are currently working on that proposal. They are also trying to provide for the community a long term care facility for the chronic alcoholic who oftentimes has brain damage and other severe physical damage. This will help clear up the very visible problem in downtown Fairbanks. It will be a relatively small facility. If they get this thing on board this will be the first facility in the state of Alaska. Kennedy asked about the emergency shelter program. Goodwin said they will rent a large house and they will have staff at the house who are versed in counseling. They want a place they can place the clients immediately. They want the place to look like a family environment. Kennedy said it

wouldn't provide many spaces. Goodwin said probably not at first. They have to meet the most severe needs. Right now they are shooting for a five-six room facility.