

88-49-11

Larry Peterson, Laura Berg

Jeff Kennedy, interviewer

Series: Potlatch series

Gwich'in fiddle music is played.

Larry Peterson represented the Interior villages for two years in the Alaska legislature. He said that he believes that the Natives within the state of Alaska have a lot of political input. If it is used right it can be an enormous power. Rural areas have carried through the vote if it has been split in the larger populated areas. He said this has happened several times before in elections. Natives exert their political power by having conventions and getting people to understand more fully how government works, how committees are set up, and how to get things done by resolution. They have had political figures come to conventions to explain what they have done, what they are doing and answer questions about supporting rural Alaska. He thinks satellite communication and other forms of communication has a lot of input to allow people to understand what is going on. Even in larger cities the news is not current and some villages don't have phones or means of communication. He realizes since he had been in politics that sometimes it takes a long time to get things done. He covered a third of the state when he was serving in the legislature. He wants people to sit down and understand what politicians. He said people in the villages don't have the means to travel to Juneau and testify before the legislature about their needs. He would like to see people in Juneau travel out to the villages and get testimony that way. He said people can learn about the political process by being involved in the process. A politician can do only what the people want. The needs of the people have to be met.

Gwich'in fiddle music is played.

Laura Berg is interviewed by Levi Lott. She said she has been working on the Alaska Native Land Claims since 1965-66. She testified about land claims. She talked about taking trips to Washington, D.C. to talk to Congress about the land claims. The first hearing she testified with Willie Hensley, Charlie Edwardson and Emil Notti and a few others. It was her first trip to the east. Their testimony was based on Native needs. She said they had poor housing and lived off the land and other issues. Just before she got up to testify Aspinall announced that he didn't want to hear about conditions anymore. She got up and told Mr. Aspinall it may not be important to him but it is very important to the Alaska Natives. She was able to give her testimony. Mr. Aspinall ended up talking to her about Abraham Lincoln, a well known person in Kotzebue. Levi asked her if she thought the Alaska Native Land Claims was fair to the people. Laura said they would have liked to receive more land. Before the bill was drawn up they were talking about 80 million acres. She wishes there were more acreage. She thinks the deadlines are unrealistic considering all the years the government has made them wait. Levi Lott asked her what information is needed in the villages. Laura Berg said communication in Alaska leaves a lot to be desired. She said the

Native Land Claims Act should be explained to the people that they could understand. There are translators, but it needs to be stated so people understand. Communication is difficult to the villages and the radio plays a big part in this. She talked about being on a whale hunt at Pt. Hope and depending on the radio. She believes a lot of information about the land claims could be spread by the use of the radio.

Gwich'in fiddle music is played.

The moderator said Potlatch is produced in the KUAC studios in College in cooperation with KTOO Juneau, KOTC Kotzebue and KYUK Bethel under Title One of the Higher Education Act.