

88-49-132

Sadie Brower Neakok

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Barrow, Alaska

Series: Potlatch series

1977

Jeff Kennedy said this is the second of three programs featuring Sadie Brower Neakok. Shortly after statehood she became magistrate for the Barrow area and served until her retirement this past summer. She will talk about the federal government's attempt to enforce western European concepts on the Inupiaq people she served.

Song by Jackson Brown

Sadie Neakok said they started without knowing what rural consists of. They were given promises that they would be an independent group of people if they became a North Slope Borough. They were told that they would be independent people doing the things they wanted to do, but they found that this was not so. They are still doing things by the state even though they were given a land grant. Within it there are certain rules that govern it. There are rules and regulations they have to abide by. They are still working on systems like the school. She talked about the borough making decisions on rules and regulations. She said they are being pushed into a white man's way of living. They don't class themselves as a Native group living apart from the civilized white man. She said there are those that believe they should go back to the traditional way of governing themselves. They are an educated people. They have been educated to the point where they can't speak their own language. They have been taught to change their way of living and they can't go back to their old way of living. They have to push forward and find a way to solve their problems and abide by rules and regulations. They are not a law breaking people. She thinks they are easily led as most ethnic groups have been. They aren't suffering, but they miss the type of living they used to have.

Unidentified song

Sadie Neakok said she disqualified herself last year from hearing certain cases. She was asked why she did that. Neakok said these are her people and it would be unfair for her to take cases that the Game Commission thought were law breakers. She wanted the Game Commission and the higher courts to decide what kind of living they should have. She talked about her people not being allowed to go out and hunt their caribou. She wanted to tell the truth. She wanted to protect the rights of her people. She said the laws sometimes abuse the way of their living. She said it would be easier to make magistrate decisions if she did not know the people brought before her. She knows everyone in her community and she knows what kind of person they are. She can evaluate them. She has been accused of being the most lenient magistrate and of applying social

work to her magistrate work. She said she wants to get to the core of the problem that is causing it. She said if she gives her people a chance to make good and if they don't respect the law then she doesn't feel sorry for those deliberately violating the law. She talks to her people and makes them understand what their rights are. She talked about the issue of fines. She didn't think the fines were doing any punishment. She has used labor to work off offenses and it has cut down on offenses. She discussed intoxication in public.

Song by Charles Kongoneak

Sadie Neakok said in 1972 the state did away with intoxication in public as an offense and disorderly conduct charges. It cut their crime rate way down. She believes the liquor stores opening up in their community are bringing crime rates up. Liquor will make people do things that are not in their nature. It makes different people out of them. It takes away their ambition. That is their main downfall. She is retired now and can talk about the problem in hopes that something can be done about it. She has testified about what needs to be changed. She hopes she has been an example to people that might govern with a feeling that they are one of them. She had the chance to go out for her education and returned. The petroleum industry in the last few years has brought in a large amount of money into her community. Having white man's food to buy is not the same as their traditional foods such as caribou and fish.

Song by Hoyt Axton