

88-49-154

Andrew Isaac

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Tok, Alaska

1978

Series: Potlatch series

Jeff Kennedy said in the next few years Northwest Pipeline Company plans to build a pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to along the Alaska Highway through Canada and to the central United States. On April 8-9 Chief Andrew Isaac attended a meeting in Tok about the effects of the pipeline along the Alaska Highway. While in Tok Chief Isaac told Mo Wassillie why the Athabascan people who live along the Alaska Highway are expressing concerns about the pipeline. He also explains why the Athabascans were silent when the Alaska Highway was built in 1942.

Chief Isaac introduced himself. He said he was the traditional chief. He has been chief since 1972. He talked at the meetings in Tok. He said he hadn't seen so many people coming into Tok to talk about a pipeline. He was the only Athabascan Indian. He said they have five - seven villages along the highway. One person in the meetings asked why they never said a word in 1942 when the four inch pipe was put in. Chief Isaac said at that time the war was getting bad. Walter Isaac was the chief at that time. They were told in the village not to stop it. He is chief at Tanacross and Lake Mansfield and is eighth place in the chiefs. He thanked his young people.

Song by Red, White and Bluegrass

Jeff Kennedy said Andrew Isaac expresses the concerns of Alaska Natives who find their lives changing because of decisions made in Juneau and Washington, D.C. He also comments about the delay of the implementation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Andrew Isaac said the pipeline bothers him because it is going to come through by the village. They buried the little one down in the ground, but the big one he worries about. He worries about the five mile [restricted?] area around the pipeline. He said the Native people in Alaska have not had this kind of trouble before. Native people have lived here long before white folks came into Alaska. The first time he met white folks was in 1904. He is now seventy-nine years old. He is still active. He said his young people appreciate when he talks. He said the pipeline would lie in areas used by the Natives. He said people from Juneau and Washington pass through this area. He wants the young people to understand what the problems are. Ever since 1972 when land was set aside for their township they have been waiting for the title to the land. Fish and Game have set aside land for wildlife and parks. They do not want the land used. That is their way, too.

Emmonak dances recorded by KNOM in Nome and narrated by Father Jim Poole

Jeff Kennedy said Andrew Isaac talked about problems affecting Alaska Natives: the decline of hunting and fishing and the high cost of food needed to replace the once plentiful fish and game.

Andrew Isaac said last week he was in the TCC office and he saw a map showing the d2 lands which is in their way. Hunters are going to hunt. He wonders how they are going to take care of their families. How will they will make a living if the season is open. He doesn't understand the state's way. He was raised on wild game until he was fourteen years old. He mentioned the effect of the Alaska Highway. He said the pipeline will cross their country and intrude in their village. Everything is sky high. He said they don't have any money, but they will do the best they can to buy some food. He is concerned when the pipeline comes across Alaska everything will be sky high. He worries about his people making a living. He talked about jobs available with the pipeline.

Song by Gamble Rogers.

Jeff Kennedy said Andrew Isaac looks at the uncertain future as Alaska Native people find more people coming to Alaska are crowding out the original peoples.

Andrew Isaac said he hopes the government will change things for the Native people to stay on the job. Native people have no way to make a living. There are many people coming up to Alaska and having trap lines. There's hardly any game in Alaska. The game is moving away. He said he used to hunt moose and now he can't. People come in with airplanes to hunt and bring in horses for hunting. He would like someone explain to him how his Native folks are going to make a living. He is worried about his Native people.