

88-49-155

Andrew Isaac

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Tok, Alaska

April 8-9, 1978

Series: Potlatch series

Jeff Kennedy said Tanana Chief Conference traditional Chief Andrew Isaac speaks about Native language and Native culture. Chief Isaac attended the April 8-9 Gas pipeline impact conference in Tok and spoke with Mo Wassillie about education and race relations.

Chief Andrew Isaac said they had principal in Tok. He was in a school meeting in Tanacross. The parents and the children were talking with the principal in Tanacross. They would like to build their own school in Tanacross. He thinks that is a better way if they build their own school. He hopes the government people have found some way to help to build the school. He believes that the children need to be educated. A lot of the boys will need to go into the army. He said there were people from their village who were in the military during WWII. There are still people from the village in the military. He said he is not educated but he has a lot of knowledge about Indian history.

Song by Tom Rush

Chief Andrew Isaac said he has been asked to do a part-time job. He has been asked to come into the classroom and talk to the growing boys. He hopes to open the old school at Cross River and use it to show share traditional skills. He hopes to have a survival school after the regular school years ends.

Song by Ted Wesley

Jeff Kennedy said Chief Isaac believes that the Native young people can learn their culture best if learned in their own language. Chief Andrew Isaac said the young generation should have their culture alongside their education. If they are stuck out in the woods a long way from home and they know the Native way they can be saved. He used skin clothing until he was around 14 years old. When they first used western clothing the wind would blow right through it and they would have to get their skin clothing to cover back up again. He thinks it is a good idea for the kids to learn their language.

The raven spirit song by singers from Sitka, Alaska

Jeff Kennedy said Chief Andrew Isaac believes that the teaching of Native culture in the schools should include traditional Native skills. Chief Isaac said they can teach trapping, hunting, and

raft building for river travel. The young people today have outboard motors and tin boats. They could build a raft without nails and hammers. They were able to cross big rivers. The young people have to learn to cross a river. He said they used to track moose. They would track a moose for two days. Now there are many people hunting. People have been shot because people would get excited when they were hunting. Native people may hear something in the woods while they are hunting, but they have to see what is moving before they shoot.

Song by Gordon Lightfoot

Jeff Kennedy said Chief Isaac believes the home should supplement the school in bringing back the Native language and he discusses a new concept for Alaskan Native people, the hunting and fishing permits. Chief Isaac said he has an adopted boy who understands the Native language. He has been in school and is sixteen now. He said their oldest boy talks their language. He said the older people in the home need to talk their language to their grandchildren. It is hard for children to go back to their language. He thinks they need to have a school to teach them how to camp in the summer and winter. They would camp out at 65 degrees below. They would use spruce boughs and build a house. In the summer they would go out and hunt. They didn't have hunting laws then. In 1934 they had to get permits. He said they taught their children in the home. He said they used to go out and hunt ducks with a bow and arrow. He saw his first 22 rifle when he was 22. He still has it. He talked about the different shotguns they use.