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Moses Wassillie; ATS satellite

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Fairbanks, Alaska

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Series: Potlatch series

A message for second class city councilmen.

Jeff Kennedy said Moses Wassillie was born in Nunapitsinchak and raised in Kwethluk. He attended school in Mt. Edgecumbe. He studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts in New Mexico and at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He also worked in radio and television at KYUK and Callita.

Moses Wassillie said he thought that the Eskimo people have had enough exposure to watching other people work that they can learn to do things by watching people work. They use their natural senses rather than studying about it in books. One of the biggest things that they have been able to do is pick up what they see and hear and make their own hand do what is happening. That is a traditional method of learning. It is an education more in the physical sense than in the mind. Then your mind is not pushed so hard to learn different things. In the system of education you learn by reading a book, studying, taking a test, and passing a test. In the traditional way of learning you are given the time to make mistakes and to try again. The Eskimos have a good enough sense of humor not to ridicule someone when they make mistakes which was something he grew up with and experienced. Eskimo people are traditionally patient. If they see someone fall you don't say that they are a failure. A lot of the Eskimo people spoil their kids, but spoiling them by loving them. They have a lot of passion for life and love.

Jeff Kennedy asked Wassillie how they could get more Eskimo people into radio and television. Wassillie said you have to use a different approach. When you are up performing like dancing people respect you because you are giving your best. It isn't an ego thing. When you are finished you have performed an art. The reason that the Native people haven't been in mass communications or mass media is because they need to be given the tools and the time learn.

Instrumental music

Jeff Kennedy said years ago rocket expert Werner Von Brown would not belong on a program about Alaska Natives, but today he does. Sue Pittman reports. Pittman said this spring the National Aeronautics and Space Agency launched ATS-6, an experimental satellite with the capability to transmit television signals to low-cost antennas. NASA plans to conduct over 20

different experiments on ATS-6. Next spring the satellite will be moved to India where it will be used in experiments in education to 500,000 Indian villages. Alaska is conducting one portion of the 20 U.S. experiments on ATS-6. Four educational TV series are being aired on the satellite as well as a number of experiments in providing better medical service to the Bush. Fairchild industries built the ATS satellite and a group of officers from Fairchild including Werner Von Brown, vice-president for engineering and development, visited Alaska recently. At a press conference in Anchorage Dr. Von Brown offered some background on ATS-6 and its unique communication features. Von Brown said communication satellites are not new. Back in 1960 the first communication satellite was demonstrated by NASA. It took the form of a simple balloon that was inflated in orbit. It was covered with a metallic surface that would bounce back radio waves aimed at the satellite. It served as a line of site relay. After this first demonstration of a passive satellite a repeater satellite was put into orbit. There was a transponder on the satellite. The first synchronous satellite was launched. About one third of the globe could be seen from the satellite. ATS-6 differs in one fundamental way. It is the first satellite that packs enough power in synchronous orbit to go directly into normal television sets. Instead of a multimillion dollar ground station the station only costs a few thousand dollars and should be able to provide live television. It requires an antenna dish about three feet in diameter.

Susan Pittman said that the Fairchild group visited several parts of Alaska including Prudhoe Bay and Tanana one of the ATS-6 experimental sites. Dr. Von Brown talked about Fairchild's interest in seeing how well their satellite worked and gave an example. Von Brown said the purpose of their trip to Alaska was to see for themselves what satellites can do for people in the education field and healthcare field. He said you have to see it in the real world. They visited a small village west of Fairbanks, Tanana. They visited the school and the hospital. He talked about what they saw there. There had been a young patient in Galena with a dislocated thumb and the doctor in Tanana and a specialist in Juneau could treat her through the satellite connection. They also viewed an electrocardiogram. Pittman said the use of the ATS-6 satellite is not available indefinitely. At the end of this year it will be removed. The Fairchild visit to Alaska was to see how interested Alaska was in the type of service ATS-6 could provide. Fairchild would like to have the second ATS-6 put into operation if they can find a group of users to pay the bill. Fairchild hopes to develop a plan to make the experimental service a continuing service.

#### Public service announcement

Jeff Kennedy said in recent years health aides in some Alaska villages were able to communicate daily with doctors and regional hospitals hundreds of miles away. School children in these villages often spoke with children in other villages, states and other countries. On the last day of September the University of Alaska ended its participation in the project because funds had run out. Bush villages face the prospect of losing some or all satellite service. Jim Milne of state operated schools in Anchorage tells why this service ended. Milne said ATS-1 is still available as far as the hardware is concerned. They have run out of budget to run them with. At this point there is no commitment at all on the part of the state-operated schools to pick up that budget. They were operating under a grant, but that program has expired. Jeff Kennedy asked Milne if Alaska Natives had been consulted about ending the satellite project. Milne said he doesn't believe they discussed it with them at all. It was based on the decision not to fund the program beyond the fifth year. Jeff Kennedy asked Milne if there was anything that Alaska Natives could

do to restore the service. Milne said he doesn't think there is a reason for the Department of Education in Juneau to arrange to pick it up. He said it would only cost 10,000 dollars to keep it on the air for the next few months while they try to find some other source of funding. Kennedy asked if people could request the federal government to reimburse the state for the program. Milne said that might be effective. He suggested that such letters be directed to Dr. Avens in ESEA/Title 3 in Washington, D.C. He thanked the people who have been manning the station without pay.

Jeff Kennedy said Daphne Gustafson was born near Nome and belongs to the Fairbanks Native Association and is on the board of directors for the Tundra Times. She commented on the loss of the satellite project. Daphne Gustafson said she is surprised that the funding has run out for the project. People have been working for the past sixty days to see that the project continues. Many Natives living in urban situations forget how important two-way communication is. They forget how isolated it is outside in the rural areas and how important the satellite project has been to them. She said with all of the equipment available it is surprising that the project would be stopped just because there aren't 10,000 dollars available. She suggest people to contact and write to request that the project be continued. She said without their input it is hard for decision makers to see how important a program is.

Song by Buffy Sainte Marie