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Fairbanks Native Association's Project Now

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Series: Potlatch series

1976

Jeff Kennedy said two instructors and four students from Project Now will be the guests for this episode of Potlatch. Mary Beth Smetzer is a journalism instructor and Howard Lingley is the acting director of Project Now. Margie Dirks, Bob Dirks, Bernadette Clark and Paula LaBarbaro. Howard Lingley talks about the goals of Project Now. He said Project Now is an alternative education program sponsored by the Fairbanks Native Association and funded through the Johnson O'Malley supplementary education funds through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Project Now provides classes in communications that will give Alaska Native students some supplementary education and the possibility of entering the job market with advanced training and the possibility of getting a meaningful job in the state. Jeff Kennedy asked about alternative education. Howard said they are alternatives to the standard 35:1 student teaching ratio that is found in the borough school district. The students work with instructors on a one to one basis. It provides a successful way of teaching the subjects. They are also subjects that aren't normally found in the regular high school curriculum. Jeff Kennedy asked him to list the subjects in the project. Howard Lingley said the Project has five components: TV/video, photography, art, Native culture and journalism. The school district hasn't displayed any interest in teaching TV/video. The direction in the regular schools is towards the basic education and avoid the frills. TV/video is important because it is becoming more and more important in the culture. It would provide the Native student with a way of interpreting his culture and disseminating it. It would provide a cultural synthesis with the dominant culture. Howard said Alaska is a large state and it is rapidly industrializing. They are providing students with a way of retaining the good, solid values in their culture and ways of interpreting them to 20th century American culture. They can integrate themselves as they want to integrate on their own terms and that is the synthesis.

Jeff Kennedy asked Mary Beth Smetzer as a journalism instructor for Project Now what she does differently than in a regular school setting. Mary Beth Smetzer said the class size is very different. They are very small classes and she has the opportunity to work with students individually. They also have a monthly publication called the River times at the Native center and the students are involved with it. The students contribute to the production of the publication and sending it out.

Song by Joan Baez

Jeff Kennedy asked Bob Dirks about his video class. Bob Dirks said he operates the camera and video tape recorder. He also works on the audio part of the video. Sometimes he gets in front of the camera. Jeff Kennedy asked about the advantage of learning these skills. Bob Dirks said it will help with his job career. He would like to be working in a video or television station working on the controls. Bob said his

dad is Aleut and his mom is Eskimo. He was born in the Aleutian Islands but has been living in Fairbanks most of his life. Kennedy asked Margie Dirks about her jewelry. Margie said she is wearing a copper necklace. She talked about making the necklace and the design. She said will also be working with silver. Kennedy asked Bob and Margie what type of material they are working with in video. Margie said they are interviewing each other. They are doing skits and are getting to know the equipment. Howard Lingley said the students are interviewing each other and practicing techniques with the camera. In the next couple of months there are several meetings that they will be taping them and doing some presentations. The students also taped a Native dance class. One of the last birch bark basket makers will be coming down to Fairbanks and the students will tape her making baskets. Students are practicing their communication skills and getting a little more confident with themselves and with the equipment. Project Now video classes have placed one of the students with a local television station.

Kennedy introduced a program put out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Tana Bebee said President Ford submitted his budget to Congress in January it contained a 589 million dollar request to operate Indian programs in the BIA. This was a nineteen million dollar increase over 1976. Morris Thompson said the 1977 fiscal year budget includes some new items and expanded items. There are general increase in monies to service the Indian community including money to implement the Indian Self-Determination law. Tana Bebee said Thompson said there will be some increases in education, housing and road programs. There will be no great expansion of old programs or development of new ones. The Act is designed to strengthen tribal governments and give Indian communities control over reservation programs has received special attention in the budget request according to Thompson because getting new legislation into operation is sometimes difficult and costly. Funds are needed to offer technical assistance and to meet tribal overhead cost for contracted programs. Thompson said this is absolutely essential for carrying out the administration's Indian policy and to make Indian self-determination a reality. Alaska Natives have been given a second chance to sign up for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. New legislation passed earlier this year allows those who missed the first go around to sign up for the Act. Many people were out of state and did not hear about the enrollment procedure. Tana Bebee said many Indian reservations sit on top of coal reserves. The development or non-development of these resources is a concern to Indians and non-Indians. Some tribes are pursuing development. The Northern Cheyenne in Montana do not want anything to do with it. Ray Spange explained why his tribe is opposed to tapping the coal reserves beneath their reservation. They are interested in keeping their land base, their language and keeping their tribe. Tana Bebee said Philip Deer from AIM explained why he is not celebrating the bicentennial.

Song from Peter LaFarge

Jeff Kennedy asked Bernadette Clark about her ethnic background. Bernadette said her mother is Eskimo and her father is Blackfoot. Her father was in the Army and she lived in Germany. She talked about her mother's background. Bernadette talked about her photography course and a trip to Anchorage for a meeting. Howard Lingley talked about the trip and future trips. Last year they visited the legislature in Juneau and met with the governor. He said now they have 49 students enrolled in Project Now.

Jeff Kennedy talked with Paula LaBarbaro.

Song from Tom Rush

Jeff Kennedy talked about the Festival of Native Arts which will be held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He described the different nights and the planned activities. He thanked his guests.