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Pat Isaacson from Manley Hot Springs

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

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Jeff Kennedy introduced Pat Isaacson who is the president and chairman of the board of the Bean Ridge Corporation of Manley Hot Springs, Alaska. Isaacson explained how his corporation was named. There is a ridge in Manley named Bean Ridge. It runs around the northern sector of their lands where they used to do a lot of caribou hunting. Jeff asked what their corporation has done with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement. Isaacson said they haven't gained title which wouldn't be a fee simple title but an interim conveyance title. The BLM is expected to present this kind of title in the near future. As far as monies are concerned they go according to population. Manley did not have that great enough population to warrant any significant amount of money. They are considering several ventures right now. The basic income for the corporation will come from the land. This is why they are pressing for title from BLM. Jeff Kennedy asked about population breakdown in Manley. Isaacson said their basic enrollment figures comes to forty-two persons. Of that group ten are in his family. They are about thirty percent Eskimo and seventy percent Indian. In order to qualify under the act they had to have at least twenty-five people living there at the time of the act which they qualified for that. There were thirteen Native children in school at the time. They also had to have an ancestral right to that ground. His mother and her two sisters were raised in Manley. It took a lot of running around and hard work to gather proof before the deadline. They presented a successful case. Doyon and Tanana Chiefs were instrumental. They presented a very successful case against the states claims. He wasn't able to be in court at the time this took place since he was in the hospital. All the foot work really paid a large dividend for them. Jeff Kennedy asked about the non-Native population in Manley. Isaacson said the voting roles have forty or fifty people on it, but a lot of those people are deceased. Many don't live there year round. The road is closed in the winter. They presented a petition to keep it closed in the winter.

Songs of the humpback whale

Jeff Kennedy asked about his work with the Alyeska Pipeline as a counselor. Isaacson said in the beginning it was a program designed to help the Native worker adapt in certain working conditions and situations. Eventually it was brought about to include all of the workers on the pipeline. In the beginning he would help them with labor problems, employer-employee problems and personal problems. They did have a lot of situations which weren't correct in the field of labor relations. There were instances of racial problems between the Native employee and the employer. He said they did a good job of keeping it out of the limelight and solving the problems, too. He said oftentimes he found personally on the pipeline there were supervisors who tended to hire their own family. Anyone who was Alaskan constituted a threat to their jobs and their family's jobs. Kennedy asked if there was discrimination against Alaskan Natives simply because they were Alaskan. Isaacson said this kind of a job had high

wages and people were going to go after the jobs. He talked about the attitude against the Native people. Isaacson said after seeing his people on the pipeline they do measure up. He said some people from Kotzebue and Barrow spend all day working out in the cold and people from Outside would go into the warm up shack every fifteen minutes. His people had a lot more stamina when working in those conditions. He said when they had to do a lot of sitting around the Native people thought they should be working because they were earning money. Kennedy asked if they had down time for whole days or several days. Isaacson said yes sometimes whole crews were just sitting around. They had ten or twelve hour days. Kennedy asked about complaints about hiring Alaskans because Alaskans don't stay on the job. Isaacson said a married man over thirty with a wife and kids has more of a tendency to stay on the job. Younger men are more likely to take off. He wouldn't classify this to Native and non-Native. It is more an age related problem. He said nine weeks is a long time to stay on a job continuous. A lot of Native people are not used to steady employment for that length of time and tend to take off time for hunting and fishing. This is in the minority compared to the age related problem. He said this is more prominent with the village raised people. Kennedy asked if the Alaska hire law really works. Isaacson said if the execution contractors were from Alaska it would probably work. He hasn't seen anyone trying to enforce it. Kennedy asked if most of the Native and non-Native problems arising with people from Outside or from non-Native Alaskans. Isaacson said it is more from Outside people. People in Alaska are used to each other. It is usually the newcomers that are the basic problem. They have attitudes that his people won't put up with. Isaacson gave some examples of attitudes. Kennedy asked if the hiring problem is a continuous problem or an isolated problem. Isaacson said it is a continual problem and it is contagious. There have been investigations and some of it has stopped as a result. The Kennedy asked about people being turned down because they are Native. Isaacson said they have made great strides in the past couple of years. He said it is going to work one way or another. Kennedy asked about a goal for Alaskan hire. Isaacson said it depends on how they are doing the counting. Are they using total numbers of hire or total numbers on the job. Kennedy asked about people's attitude towards Natives. Isaacson said he doesn't think Alaska is different than any other northern country. There is a high rate of alcoholism and drinking. There is a problem in that respect and he wouldn't deny it. They are being addressed and he hopes one of these days they will make some headway. Kennedy asked if it is only Native people drinking and not returning to the job. Isaacson it is happening with people in the lower forty eight, too. Kennedy asked about hiring of Native women. Isaacson said any woman is welcome in the pipeline camp but the non-Native woman is usually picked. He wonders if this is changing. Isaacson said the counseling program that Alyeska started seems to be working. He would like to see other companies do the same thing because there are a lot of problems that come up and there is a lot that can be done. There have been a lot of employees saved through this counseling program.

Song by Ann Murray

Jeff Kennedy said the governor's growth policy council has been asking Alaskans what if anything the state should be doing with the Haul Road which was built by Alyeska Pipeline Company to carry freight to pipeline camps north of the Yukon River. He asked Isaacson for his perspective. Isaacson said when his grandmother and grandfather had their homestead in Manley Hot Springs they could hear the caribou coming through. He said you don't see those caribou anymore. This could be the result of the

gold rush, influx of people and state hunting laws. There was a road built from Fairbanks to Manley. There used to be good moose hunting in Manley. A couple of summers ago they couldn't even find tracks of moose. The hunting is terrible unless you have an airplane. It is next to impossible to find the game. He said this is a result of ready access through the road. If the Haul Road is open to the public they will experience the same thing and more. He talked about public pressure and littering. People will see the game and want it. He has seen herds of caribou, moose and bear. He thinks it will be a catastrophe on the land. Tanana Chiefs have opposed roads across the Yukon and he agrees with that. He has seen in his country and surrounding area what a road can do to the countryside. There are forest fires and overhunting. The herds north of the Brooks Range have been depleted in just the last couple of years. He doesn't think opening the road will help the caribou at all. Kennedy asked about Fish and Game management in those areas. Isaacson said he doesn't think Fish and Game is equipped to handle this kind of problem. They are understaffed and don't have the money to patrol the area. They can't watch everybody. It's the subsistence hunter that suffers from their patrols and not the person out there from the states and hunting illegally.