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Caribou Conference held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Fairbanks, Alaska on December 4, 1976 part 2 ; Glenn Fredericks is interviewed by Moses Wassillie about setting up a reindeer herd in Aniak

Series: Potlatch series

Moses Wassillie, moderator

Moses Wassillie said Bob Hinman from the Department of Fish and Game talked about factors in the decline of the Arctic Caribou Herd and the high cost of caribou census taking.

Bob Hinman said they didn't develop the present method of caribou census – the aerial photo extrapolation census technique – until the late 1960s. They applied this technique in 1970. They thought it would be adequate to do a census every three or four years because things would not change that rapidly. It was also necessary to do it every three or four years because of financial aspects. Such an operation has an extremely high cost – about \$70,000 to do a complete census of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. There are also about twelve other herds in the state that they also have to consider. Their state agency does not have the funds to consider a survey every year. He said it may well be that the decline of the herd began or was caused by some degree by natural factors relating to overabundance. It is also undeniably true that the degree to which it declined and the rapidity to which it declined was accelerated by other factors. It is these factors they have been attempting to put controls on in order to restore the herd. He said he is talking about the harvest by man and the harvest by the chief predator. He said this decline had the benefit of vastly improved human technology with a capability of accelerating that decline where those in the past have not. One judgment in error by their department following the 1970 census was the assumption that because of the rapid change in village life from dog team transportation to snow machine transportation and the lessening of the use of caribou to feed dogs. They felt that the local need for caribou would decline, but it did not. He said he is still optimistic about the chances of restoration of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The factors that make it possible for the herd to increase are there. He believes the curtailing of hunting by man and predator will accomplish this providing the land resource is not damaged or destroyed or altered. It will maintain the potential for having caribou for a long period of time.

Moses Wassillie said Dr. David Klein talked about atmospheric pollution and its effect on lichen.

Dr. Klein said in the Soviet Union the fallout of carbon dioxide from industrialization has had a significant effect on the lichen growth. It is well known that close proximity to carbon dioxide will cause the death of lichens and decreased growth in less exposure. They do know that in circumpolar regions the level of fallout of carbon dioxide and other atmospheric base products from industrialization have increased. He said there is a great need for research into this problem. There has been very little done and virtually none in Alaska. He said it is a primary area of concern, which can have great impact on the well-being of caribou and reindeer in the future of Alaska.

Song by Jimmy Spheris

Moses Wassillie said Edward Hopson talked about the grazing area of caribou and the regeneration of lichen.

Edward Hopson said the depletion in the population is a mystery. When he was growing up there were no caribou in the Barrow area. You had to travel about 150-200 miles to see a caribou. In the past few years they have been overpopulated with caribou. He said he does not have the figures for how long it would take the caribou to eat up the grazing area. He said he does know that it will take seven years for the condition of the lichens to recover on the tundra. He said his Native people should be considered seriously.

Moses Wassillie said Jerry Gustafson has first-hand experience in the village and the cost of living there. Jerry Gustafson said if you move into a village you would find that there is a need for meat. On his teacher's salary he was buying fuel oil, paying rent, buying groceries and dog food. He had a difficult time making ends meet. He said there was no doubt that the people in the village needed the caribou to exist. He said if anyone from Fairbanks could afford to fly up to the Kobuk region and shoot a caribou then they didn't need the caribou for subsistence. He thinks there was a waste of caribou when the caribou wandered into the Kobuk area. He said it is partially the Fish and Game's fault. The villages had information that the herd was increasing and it would be a good idea to trim it down. As soon as the people heard about the census information they started acting in accordance with the facts. The people are reasonable and they are acting in accordance with their needs. He said he enjoys seeing caribou, eating caribou and

using it for some clothing. He resents the fact that he can't hunt them anymore. If he wanted to hunt caribou now it would be a sports like hunt. He said the herd was hunted to a state where it can no longer tolerate any hunting. He said they should be discussing what they should be doing with the Porcupine Herd because in five years they may be wondering what happened to the Porcupine herd.

Song by Brian Dougherty

Moses Wassillie said Arnold Brower talked about the importance of getting an accurate count of the caribou population and when they should be taking the count. Arnold Brower said when the survey was taken on the caribou he thought it was on the wrong time of the season. He thought the survey should be taken when the caribou are in great concentration. He said there is a certain time of the year when the caribou are very interested in each other. They group together and fight amongst themselves for their harem. He said once that is started the caribou concentrate together in large groups. That goes on until about in January and then they start to scatter back out again. He said they need to come up with the right count. He is very much for the conservation of part of the herd. He said unless they come up with the right figure they can't do that.

Moses Wassillie said Ray Bayne testified on the decline of the caribou. Ray Bayne said he has harvested caribou on a subsistence basis. He has also fed caribou to his dogs when it was acceptable to do that. He now harvests zero. On the Koyukuk River they have no permits. He said once the knowledge that the caribou herd was declining and in serious condition the Native people responded to that and followed the law reasonably well. He recently had the chance to go to Anaktuvuk Pass and he has worked with the people up there. The people in Anaktuvuk were allotted ten caribou per family. He said their response to the process was admirable. When there is a family with only elders a young person will go out and hunt for them. He said the people are following the process.

Song by John Prine

Moses Wassillie said he interviewed Glenn Fredericks of Sleetmute who is attempting to set up a reindeer herd in the Aniak area.

Glen Fredericks said NANA Corporation got the reindeer up north. He has been trying to talk with Mr. Threestars and trying to get some deer from Bergermeister Island. He said

they have lichen in their area and it could support 10,000 deer. He said they are in a stalemate because there aren't enough reindeer to give to everybody