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Potlatch Radio Show produced by KUAC

Anthropologists and anthropology

Claude Demientief and Tommy Richards

Anthropologists and anthropology Levi Lott interviewed some of his neighbors in Tooliksak about anthropologist that come into the villages to study Natives. One neighbor suggested that the anthropologist study the language before coming out into the villages to avoid mistakes in analyzing cultures. Another person didn't think it was good to analyze people and making judgments about them. And another didn't think anthropologists should be studying people. Levan Lott pointed that in Western civilization that cultures need to have a written history to preserve history. He asked who should be doing that. One of the respondents suggested that the Eskimo and Indian people should do that and it could be translated over to the anthropologists. Another also thought the Natives should be doing their own studies.

Claude Demientieff said anthropologists have been trained to study other people and when that trained person studies his own culture it is sociology. He believes that anthropologists have unintentionally exploited the people and have not contributed to their growth from their findings. The Native people can not see any direct benefits from studies by anthropologists. Time within the Native culture does not have a definite meaning like in the white culture. We should look toward the future and learn from the past. Anthropologists seek the past to find the future.

Tommy Richards, Jr. said traditionally the anthropologists have not been too concerned about their subjects. He thinks there are threats that have to be faced such as from the NPS concerning subsistence use of NPS withdrawals. He thinks it would be used for regional corporations to obtain the services of anthropologists and social scientists to back up the traditional use of Native lands. They have problems that will need the help of scientists to solve.

Roger Powers told Levi Lott that there are four types of anthropologists: archeologists, linguists, physical anthropologists and social or cultural anthropologists. Often the social anthropologists do studies which benefit the people that they are studying. Powers and Lott talk about the discovery of a women frozen intact on St. Lawrence Island. Savoonga villagers transported the body to the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Studies were done to see how she died and how old she was. Powers said it is rare to find a body from a prehistoric culture. She was about 2,000 years old. Excavation diggings are very systematic. What they are trying to do is understand the ancient cultures. Grave excavations are very sensitive and has to be addressed. They like to know what people were like through the study of skeletons. The health, nutrition and quite a number of things can be determined. Levi asked why people come from outside to study his

culture. Roger Powers said there is an interest in different cultures not just in Alaska but throughout the world. Mainly their purpose is to document the vast variation in human culture. It became clear that data was needed. The Eskimos and the Athapascan people are interesting because of their adaptation to extreme climatic conditions. It is a successful adaptation and anthropologists want to know all they can. There is a strong need for Native people in Alaska to become interested in anthropology. He would like to train Natives to study their own culture. Levi Lott asked if oral histories are used with anthropology findings. Roger said that this is done a lot. More and more they find that folk tales do contain important historical information. He found some stone structures on the Seward Peninsula. Levi Lott said there are many tales that have not been recorded. Roger believes that this could and should be done.

Tana Bebe reports on the responsibilities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Forestry is big business for a number of reservations. Forest management and reforestation programs on Indian reservations are discussed. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is discussed by Morris Thompson.

Morris Thompson talks about opening up enrollment again for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. There have been approximately 70,000 Alaska Natives enrolled in the program. The benefits include being land owners and stock holders in the various corporations.