

Call number of interview: 85-122

Series title: Chinook Radio Programs

Episode title: Why is it necessary for Natives to take whales?

Date of interview: #1: 1977 **#2:** 1978

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Notes: There are no minutes on this recording. Jake Adams uses the term “Eskimo” rather than native. Paula Schuler uses the term “Indian”.

Interview 1: The Bowhead whale and traditional whaling

Interview 2: Discussion of the Indian Child Welfare Act passed by congress in November 1978

Summary: To ensure subsistence hunting of bowhead whales in the traditional, non-wasteful manner as well as explain the importance of the hunt for the native people. Jake Adams of Barrow is a whaling captain and chairman of Alaska whaling commission and is being interviewed by Paula Schuler (sp?). He discusses the nutritional value of the whales versus the level of effort used to find the same nutrition from other resources.

The question is raised about the cultural and spiritual significance of the hunt, and in Jake’s response he talks about the festival around the taking of whales, and that the hunt is the only time natives have a festival. The changing culture is discussed briefly and Jake feels it is due to the impact of the western world. The central focus of the Eskimo community is the whale hunt.

To the question of whether or not there will always be a hunt, Jake replied with a discussion about the traditional tools used and that the weapons are still the same, so there will not be a decrease in whale population.

The bad reputation of the Eskimo whaler was discussed, and Jake talked about how all the meat is used and how he is getting information about the true hunt to the public by going to groups and having public discussions. The misinformation about the weapons natives use is coming from groups who want a moratorium on the whaling.

The question is the goal for the future, and Jake’s goal is the management of the bowhead hunt through self-regulation. Jake feels that it is working very well due to the Eskimos working closely with the whaling commission. The number of whales taken were fewer in 1977 than

what was set by the Commission because Natives were asked to come off the ice due to the weather conditions and the quality of the ice, which is a limiting factor in the amount of whales taken.

There are penalties in the management plan, though at this time there has been no need to enforce any penalties. Jake feels there may be different regulations for future generations and then the structure of the management plan would be changed. Natives do not want the population of the bowhead whale to diminish. Interview ends.

New Interview: (about ½ way through) Paula Schuler (sp?) discussing the Indian Child Welfare Act passed by congress in November 1978. The act was to promote the stability and security of Native families in three ways: (1) to prevent the unwarranted removal of kids from their homes, (2) by mandating the recognition of the authority of tribal courts, and (3) by providing standards of Indian children into adoptive or foster homes. The law is on the books but regulations and standards are undetermined. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was in charge of holding hearings around the country to determine how this law will be used. This is a discussion on a hearing involving Karl Brimmer of the Fairbanks Native Association and Mike Erwin of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and both men testified in Juneau. Both are workers in the area of child welfare.

Paula asked them what they would like to see incorporated into the Act. They asked for clarification of the wording on tribal courts for example because there are no tribal courts in Alaska. They feel it was written more for the Lower-48. The two areas discussed were making tribal courts in Alaska, which would be costly and time consuming, and the other was to appoint an officer of the court who would bring in a member of the native community such as a social worker who would be more familiar with the needs of the native children.

Another point was how the law would maintain Indian culture. It would allow the control to be given to the natives on the reservations or Alaska Natives. There is a guideline to follow that indicates specifically where a child would be placed. These two men felt very positive about the law after some rewording and provisions made for Alaska. The bill originated in the lower 48 and much of the wording concerned reservations, leaving Alaska out.

Through this law, some of the benefits for the children would be that the state Division of Social Services would be replaced. It is difficult working through this service to get native children treated as the natives want. In the past, the practice has been to remove kids and bring them into Anchorage or Fairbanks, away from the villages and their culture, causing even more trauma. Some attempts have been made by Child Welfare to keep the kids in their villages but this will give more specific guidelines in keeping the native children with their native families. This would help them accomplish more goals.

Regulations and procedures to set up foster homes are difficult in villages because the homes are often not up to required standards, though one of the men (unsure who was talking because they

were not individually introduced) mentioned that the agency is pretty flexible when placing native children into native homes.

Problems with the bill- an expert witness in case of physiological damage to the child is required and they may not be familiar with the native culture so would not know what that child needs.

One of the areas they are asking for changes is that a social worker from the village or a village council member be included in the discussion before placing native children.

Interview ends.