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Name and place: 6th Annual Alaska Federation of Natives Convention

Date: 16-18th of December, Anchorage, Alaska

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Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

Recording begins with drumming by Rocky Bay drummers.

Karen McPherson introduces the recording in which the members of AFN will discuss Native Land Claims bill. President Nixon has indicated that he will wait to sign the bill that is pending on approval of assembled delegates from over 200 villages in Alaska. A meeting was called to explain the provisions of the bill, to discuss the bill, and to outline possible steps for implementing the provisions of the act that was pending on the president's signature.

The location in Anchorage, the student union of Alaska Methodist University, lent a businesslike tone to proceedings, and the convention was more of a people's convention.

1:53 Karen continues: On December 18th, Harry Carter, who is the executive director of Alaska Federation of Natives, led the opening of the 3 day meeting.

[Sound clip in which Harry Carter introduces Reverend Mercurief from St. John's Island. Mercurief gives the invocation and prays wisdom in dealings with the land they are about to acquire.]

4:10 Harry introduces the president of Alaska Federation of Natives [later, AFN], Mr. Don Wright. He says that he doesn't have a prepared statement. The Congress of United States has acted on a piece of legislation that will make history – not

only for the state of Alaska, but for the United States, and the world. Wright tells that to the best of his knowledge, a land transaction like that has never taken place in the world, and most land gains have been acquired through war. The U. S. Congress has acknowledged aboriginal title. Some of the people are not totally satisfied, but they have to recognize that they are citizens of Alaska and of USA, and proud of their own heritage.

7:28 Wright continues that the wording of the document is very complex and difficult. It says things that will be interpreted in different ways. It was intended to be a total settlement, recognizing that some regions will be treated different from others and some Native people are more deprived of proper housing, medical care, and education than others. The leadership of the Congress and the village delegates did the best they could and labored long and hard to come up with the document. There was also pressure from conservation groups, money institutions, oil industries and timber industries. The president's initial bill wasn't necessarily satisfactory to the Native groups, but it was a step to a right direction.

All of the views of many people are summarized in the document and they [the speaker and other attorneys] are going to take all the time that is required in order to help people understand what it contains and how it will affect the Native people. It isn't easy. That's why they have subdivided the conference room into 13 sections, one for each regional organization. They are going to ask each village delegate within a region to select and identify their regional chairmen. They need a representative from every region in Alaska. Then each region and every member who are present should read the bill carefully. Wright and other attorneys will be around to explain how the regions and villages will be treated under the bill.

11:50 [Socializing noises.]

12:25 A man's voice [Francis Degnan?] says they want a caucus because they want all the delegates who are present to know exactly what is going on. They don't want delegates who are popular, but who don't have time.

A man's voice says that delegates from Little Diomedes, Wales and Shaktoolik aren't present but he hopes they will come later. [Break in the recording.]

[A man is speaking in Native language.]

13:42 Joseph Upicksoun, the chairman of the credentials committee says that he'll read the certified spokesmen and village delegates to the credentials committee. He'll start with the Arctic Slope Native Association: Joseph Upicksoun, Riley Morey [sp?] of Anaktuvuk Pass, Kaktovik: Mickey Agiak, Joe Upicksoun and Jacob Adams from Barrow, Point Hope: David Stone, Wainwright: George Agmasaga [sp?]. The villages that have no representatives are: Atqasuk, Nuiqsut and Point Lay.

Northwest Alaska Native Association: William Hensley is the spokesman. Ambler: Jack Pen [sp?]; Bucklan, Sigwin Savak [sp?]; Dearing, Emerson Moto; Kayana, Vince Shirk [sp?]; Kobuk, James E. Komak; Kivalina, Elmo [sp?] Armstrong Sr.; Kotzebue, Bobby Schaeffer, Willie Hensley, Willie Goodwin Jr.; Noatak, Roland Booth; Noorvik, Paul Brown and Robert Nolan; Selawik, Ju Nelson; Shungnak, Stanley Custard [sp?].

16:11 Bering Strait Association spokesman is Martin L. Olson. [Unclear] Mission, Jerry Kaloki [sp?], Elam Andrew Daniels [sp?]; Campbell, Conrad Oziva [sp?]; Koyukuk, Stanley Charles; King Island, Margaret Savana [sp?]; Nome, Hanna Miller; North-East Cap, June Baker;

Birch Creek: Winston James; Chalkyitsik, Chester Drook [sp?] and Richard Martin; Circle, Allan John; Eagle, Horace Biederman; Fort Yukon, Larry Petersen, Donald Peter and Jonathan Sulliman; Rampart, Henry Wheel; Steven's Village, Gilbert Stebbins; Venetie, Bertha Frank; Allakaket and Alatna, Kathy Linus; Galena, Roger Huntington, Beverly Hundorf, Andrew Demoski, and Dorothy Atlan; Grayling, Evelyn Deacon; Hughes, John Sackett; Huslia, Alberta Vent; Kaltag, Franklin Madros and George Madros; Koyukuk, Andrew Dayton; McGrath, Ernie Holmberg, John Andrews and George Miller; Minto, Floyd Alexander and Melvin Charlie; Nenana, Raymond Johnson, Richard Ketzler, and Nicholai Dennis; Nulato, Ivan Sperry; Ruby, John Hony; Shageluk, John Jordan; Tanana, Philip Kennedy and Mary-Ann Charley; Bettles, none; Cantwell, Roy Tansey; Medfra, Tony Pitka; Takotna, David Miller; Telida and Wiseman have no delegates in the convention; Dot Lake, Carl Charles; Northway, Harold Northway; Tanacross, Oscar Isaac and Andrew Isaac; Tetlin, Helen David.

18:45 Karen says that 200 village delegates were present from over 200 villages.

Don Wright introduces Janet Parks who is an enrollment officer from Washington, D.C. She's going to talk about the work that has been done with enrollment.

Parks says that they now have a bill and a definition of a native person and what will be required from a person who wants to enroll. Now they are developing regulations for preparing the roll. They are developing forms and computer programs.

Parks says that they hope to employ Alaska Native people through contracts, but she doubts that they would be able to contract Native people in the preparation of the roll. They will, however, be working with villages and regions in identifying Natives who should be enrolled.

20:28 There was a suggestion for contracting with regions instead of with AFN, since regions know their people. Park's reply is that they will be working with the regions and with villages also. Secretary's decisions are final, but in cases where there's a question of whether an individual is a member of a tribe, the individual will be consulted.

Secretary [of the Interior?] is responsible for the final decision and if an individual is rejected at the local level, they may appeal to the secretary for a revision. They have a 2-year limitation that is provided by statute. To meet the limitation, they have to use different procedures. It's going to be a census roll rather than a judgment roll and they won't require birth certificates, which was one thing that held up action in Tlingit-Haida roll, since the people had trouble getting their birth certificates in.

The people will need to contact a census taker personally, but those who live in Lower-48 may contact them by mail. The act provides that the people who will be on the roll must have been born prior to, or living on the date of enactment of the bill. The question about who is a permanent resident of a region hasn't been determined yet.

22:31 The question of whether the enrollee will be in a national or regional group or an urban group is determined in the bill: Each person is enrolled as a member of the region in which he resides. If he isn't a permanent resident, the secretary determines where he will be enrolled, based on where he lived the previous two

years, where he has lived in past 10 years, where he was born, and where his ancestors were residents. Another provision of the bill is that if a person is residing outside of Alaska, they have an opportunity to elect if they wish to be enrolled as 13th region or within one of the 12 regions as a non-resident.

If the 13th region isn't established, the individual would be enrolled according to the selections Janet already explained. Children are enrolled based on how their parents are enrolled. 1/4th of Alaska Native blood, or in absence of proof of Native blood, a recognition by the Village in which the parents were or are members in, are necessary.

24:17 Don Wright introduces Robert Bruce who will talk about some of the particulars in implementing the work that the Interior Department will do.

Bruce says that they are meeting with all the affected bureaus in Washington, like BLM [Bureau of Land Management], BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs], Forest Service, Social Security, and HEW [Health Department?]. They are talking about how to proceed. They have a rather involved education program where they try to educate all Alaska Natives about the bill and about the lands that are available for selection. It's imperative that BIA and BLM are in constant contact with the Native people in order to address any questions.

Bruce continues by reading the question about the Hardship clause: The question relates to a statement, according to which the secretary of the Interior can pull out 2 million acres of land for certain purposes. There are 4 historic village sites in Alaska that are modern, and not entitled to any land, and they would get land for town sites. There is also a provision in that section, according to which the Secretary of the Interior can take historical and cemetery sites out of that 2 million acres.

27:58 Question about whether regional corporations will be private corporations: The bill provides that once the regions are designated to maximum 13, but no fewer than 7 corporations, they will be privately formed corporations. The bill places some limitations and requirements on the corporations for the first 20 years of their existence. [Break in the recording.]

29:21 Is there any authority in the bill to protect the people who were forced to move [out of their region] by government action? Bruce says that there is not such authority in the bill, even though there was in the earlier drafts. They have to look at the forced movement closely, but Bruce says he can't answer the question specifically at this time.

Another question is if there is a clause protecting the Natives from lawsuits from organizations such as the Miners' Association, and Bruce says there is not. Once the corporations are founded, they become corporations under the State Law and are subject to suits same as anyone. He suspects that the person who posed the question has some specific lawsuits in mind and says that if the suit involves land that the Government has deeded [?] to them, the land is protected by the act of the Congress who gave it to them. In those cases, the government will look at the responsibility of those who are in possession of the land. [Break in the recording.]

31:40 There is a question about villages in the lower Alaska Peninsula that are either included in the Aleut League or in the Kodiak, whereas they should be in Bristol Bay Native Association. Bruce says that the lines of the regional corporations should be discussed with the Secretary. Bruce thinks that those villages that lie in the area of one or more associations, and who have interest, should sit down with BIA and BLM people and discuss moving the boundaries of the associations so that they could be included in the corporation they want to be a part of.

33:08 Those on reservations have been explained the advantages and disadvantages of staying in reservation status. Bruce says that in section 19 of the Bill, the reservations of Alaska, except for Metlakatla, are terminated. In a subsection it says that those Natives who live on those reservation lands can choose to take a title to the reserve and to the subsurface land as well, and give up other rights under the bill. [As an alternative?] they are to select land and receive all other rights under the bill.

Prior to "this selection," one of the most important things that have to be done is to explain the options to the villagers who live on the reserves. In some instances, the decision between reservation or land claims bill status will be difficult, and people need to be thoroughly educated on the matter.

Wright thanks Mr. Bruce.

[End of the recording.]