

**Call number: 002-00-133-08 PT. 4**

**Name and place: 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Federation of Natives Convention**

**Date: 16-18<sup>th</sup> of December, Anchorage, Alaska**

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**Series: ATS-1 Educational Satellite Project Tapes**

**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.

The recording begins with listing the villages from the Bering Strait region to see the delegates who are in. A man's voice says that the caucus is taken because President Nixon wishes to have an answer on the feelings ANF [Alaska Federation of Natives] has towards the Native Claims Settlement bill.

Another man's voice says that there are a couple of regions that are going to [unclear] the convention, and they have to keep in mind that they, the Bering Strait Native Association, are part of the AFN. He says that they want to keep the AFN as a solid unit and not break up because of regional jealousy. There are some things that they don't like about the bill but the speaker says that he wouldn't risk putting the bill through the Congress again. People vote yes.

4:13 Karen McPherson says that when the convention reconvened after noontime caucusing, Ken Bass, a national council for the Alaska Federation of Natives in the office of Ramsay Clarke, resumed a question and answer –period, while Tim Wallace came to the podium and motioned the convention to recommend the signing of the bill by the President Nixon.

4:32 Regional chairman reported on the feelings of their delegation: George Miller introduces himself and tells that he represents the Cook Inlet Region. [Including?] the biggest Indian village in Alaska, Anchorage, but also Kenai, Tyonek,

Nanilchick, Iliamna, Seldovia. Region of Cook Inlet. They recommend the president to sign the bill.

Cecil Barnes, who represents the Chugach Native Association, gives his support for the bill.

Richard Ketzler from Tanana Chief's Association says that their majority wants to wait and learn more about the bill, because there are questions yet to be answered. He continues that their opinions are still forming. Copper River Native Association representative says that they too want to have more discussions.

6:45 Don Wright says he will read a note from Bristol Bay Native Association: They have decided to say they won't oppose the bill if they are allowed to make changes to it within one year. [Applause.]

Bering Strait Association has unanimously decided to accept the bill, although there are lots of things they don't understand and things that they wish to change at later date.

Ed Nottion says that the Kodiak Native Association has voted unanimously to raise no objection to president signing the bill. Joe Upicksoun from the Arctic Slope who is the Chairman of Credential's Committee, says that after the Credentials Committee submits their report, the convention should be in order and Arctic Slope Native Association will submit a statement.

8:08 Karen narrates that the credentials committee report was read by Francis Degnan, AFN secretary, and it was decided that the same voting system would be used as in Fairbanks meeting a several weeks ago, in which votes were cast by region with a number of votes per region was determined by the size of Native population in that area.

Francis Degnan reads number of votes for each region.

9:31 Wright says that Credentials Committee's report is accepted and the convention is in order.

Karen narrates that John Borbridge asked Tim Wallis to restate his motion. Tim Wallace says he wants to move that the delegates in the convention approve the

president's signing the land claims bill, and says he asks for a roll-call vote. Don Wright says that the motion is seconded.

Charlie Edwardsen from the audience says that Arctic Slope would like to be heard. Joe Upicksoun speaks saying that he has a statement.

10:53 Upicksoun says that in a few days, a chapter ends in their fight for self-identity and respect, while another begins. It is right and proper to take a look at the world. They from the north have lead a happy life for centuries despite of the whalers and despite of their whales being gone. The real invasion of their land was, however, within 10 years. [The speech is copy of the one in 02-00-133-06 PT. 2.]

24:50 William Paul Sr. says he belongs to the Stikine country of southeastern Alaska which is represented now by Tlingit and Haida society. "As I said long time ago, the land is ours. What are you afraid of?" William Paul says that it seems to him that the bill is going to be approved, but he wants people to be not guided by their fear, and continues by saying that the United States Congress admits that they have the legal right to the land. In order to meet the Native rights, they are offering people the turkey buzzard [a reference to a joke that was made at ORAL HISTORY 02-00-133-07 PT. 3, in which an Indian and a White man went hunting in Oklahoma. They came back with one turkey and one turkey buzzard. The white man said to the Indian that he wants to be fair and so he will give the Indian a choice: The Indian can take the turkey buzzard and he will take the turkey, or he can take the turkey and Indian will take the turkey buzzard.]

They are going to get 40 million acres and \$500 million dollars, and if the land produces \$400 million dollars, they might get some more. But the act in itself means that the United States acknowledges Native people's legal rights to the land. The Native People don't have to go to the Congress with another bill if the AFN turns it down, because they are standing on firm, legal ground with their claims if they are going into Alaska State Court. He urges people to be as fearless as their ancestors who fought wars over what was theirs, and says that they aren't losing the land. He says he is going to vote no just to have it in the record that they didn't settle unanimously. [Applause.]

28:55 Don Wright asks if there are more comments, and John Borbridge says he shares the mixed feelings. He tells that in 1869 [?], the Tlingit chefs came together

to protest illegal sale of their country because they didn't have a question in their minds that the land was theirs. When Borbridge was in Washington in 1971, he thought that he was in the forefront, but looking at their heritage, a Tlingit Chief was in Washington in 1899, fighting for the same rights that Borbridge was advocating for 72 years later. Tlingit and Haida's went to court with one of the only judicially affirmed aboriginal title in Alaska. They weren't claiming something that didn't belong to them, but just asserting their rights that can be affirmed and tested in the court of law.

U.S government had the best attorneys, but the result was that the Tlingit and Haida have the judicial title to the land. Borbridge says that in similar way, all of the land in Alaska belongs to the Native people. Alaska Natives have a right that is recognized. The fight in southeast Alaska proceeded many years before Borbridge came into the scene. It was funded with gifts from people who had love and conviction for the land. Borbridge gives credit to Alaska Native Brotherhood which adopted a convention resolution in 1929, that they will pursue their land claims.

33:25 Borbridge says that they have always recognized with a great deal of pride that in the end, "you" [the audience] decided to include Tlingit and Haida in their land claims settlement. Borbridge talks about how they had the courage to turn down settlement for \$7.2 million dollars to \$180 million. They were told to accept the \$180 million, but they had the courage to know they could have better. Now is the time, because the Native people are united.

34:58 The settlement is not the final measure of benefits that the Native people are getting, but a tool for the future. What they do with it is up to them and they should use it with love, respect, and dignity. When the bill is passed, there is still the need for unity among the Native people, and when the time is right, Borbridge will cast the southeastern Alaska's vote with pride. [Applause.]

[End of the recording.]