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Narration for Alaska Federation of Natives Convention

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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.

This tape seems to be a tape where Karen McPherson reads the script for narration that is to be cut and joined with sound clips from AFN meetings for the final radio program.

The tape begins with a narrator [Karen McPherson?] explaining that Don Wright, the president of the Alaska Federation of Natives [later, AFN], was ousted. He called for the 7th Annual Convention of AFN to be held in Wildwood Facility in Kenai, on December 15th.

Newly elected president of the board of directors, Willie Hensley, called the convention in Anchorage on October 26-28th in Gold Rush Hotel.

When Wright called in the September Executive meeting at Wildwood Airforce Base in Kenai, board members chose to convene in Anchorage, and ousted him as president, electing State Senator Willie Hensley to be the president.

Since 1966, the AFN has lobbied for land claims legislation, running a debt of \$703,000 dollars in that time. In 1969, AFN Inc. was formed. They had a board of directors that represented each of the 12 regions and it was the board of directors who called for Don Wright's resignation.

7th Annual AFN Convention was held on October 26th-28th at Gold Rush Hotel in Anchorage, amid court litigations, because of a technicality in AFN's bylaws that called for an October convention.

In last year's convention in Anchorage, Land Claims Settlement Act was the topic of the meeting, and this year the delegates will discuss what to do with the debt from 6 years of AFN operations. Another problem was the need to establish an organization to effectively manage financial responsibilities.

Convention began with both Hensley and Wright sitting at the front table along with AFN Inc. board chairman, John Borbidge, Jr. Don Wright begun the convention with an emotional plea to delegates to pay their debts. Then Wright, who continued his chairmanship, opened the convention with a prayer from Reverend Nicholas Komkoff [sp?]. Then Credentials Committee was created in order to decide the voting power by the delegates who were present. Late that night, the committee decided to give out voting rights based on the population formula that was used in previous year's convention. Each region was allotted votes based on population of people who were enrolled in that region. During the night, the board of directors of AFN had worked on a set of priorities of which the debt was foremost. [Karen pauses and asks the tape to be cut because "it's wrong".]

2:47 Karen continues that foremost among the priorities were the debts, development of administrative policies for AFN, and assistance to regional corporations in implementation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The morning of the second day, Hensley presented the priorities to the delegates and following his presentation, Don Wright introduced a book that was prepared by the Bowling [?] company for AFN. Hensley went over an important section of the book, "Our Challenge". Because it was election time, many politicians were present to give speeches to delegates. Senator Ted Stevens used the opportunity to talk about legislation that was in Congress that would affect Native people.

The first real order of business was to dissolve the old association of AFN. President Don Wright read the resolution and then AFN attorney Ken Bass explained it. Before the vote was taken, Don Wright read a prepared statement

which said that the convention was not representative of the Native People of Alaska. He declared the convention to be in recess until December 15th and left the convention. As Wright walked out, John Sackett, who is the president of Doyon Ltd., a regional corporation of Tanana Chief's area, pointed out that president can't recess a meeting or a convention. John Borbridge, a president of Sealaska Corporation, confirmed that the delegates can continue if they want. Following clarification by John Hope, a parliamentarian, the convention continued and passed the motion to dissolve the old association of AFN.

4:45 The third and final day of the 7th annual Alaska Federation of Natives Convention was devoted to designing a structure for AFN Inc. John Borbridge, chairman of the board who later resigned during the convention, explained that the board of AFN Inc. was elected from regional corporations and all regions were represented so that the board would have a support of the people it represented. He later explained that they had not settled on a structure of the organization, but they were giving that power to the delegates in Anchorage meeting.

Robert Nick presented alternatives to the restructuring of AFN Inc. along with apparent advantages and disadvantages of each. Then Attorney Ken Bass presented yet another alternative that was based on his interpretation of the experiences of early colonists.

5:54 Each region went into caucus to discuss the alternatives. Then each of the regional spokesmen were asked to come forward and give decisions of their area's preferred alternatives. The majority favored alternative no. 1 that was a 12-region concept for the board of directions and all of the regions promised to assume their share of the debt of the AFN, probably on per capita basis.

The 7th Annual Convention of AFN begun as a meeting about old AFN on Thursday, but by late Friday, AFN had been dissolved despite of protests of its former president Don Wright. Delegation voted to transfer all debt, obligations, rights, and responsibilities to AFN Inc. Following a walkout by Wright who also walked out of last year's convention, the convention voted to proceed as an informal meeting of AFN Inc. The delegates pledged to pay all old debts, to work

toward implementation of land claims act, and to assign a lobbyist to Washington D.C. to serve as a watchdog to the land claims.

7:10 Following Wright's walkout, after which he filed a suit against support of AFN Inc., the meeting changed from having power in Chairman to one where power was clearly with people. [End of the recording.]