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Alaska Federation of Natives Convention

October 26-28, 1972 [?]

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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.

Tape begins with music and at 1:55 with speaker [Willie Hensley?] calls the meeting to order. He says that before they officially open the meeting, he'd like to read a petition that was signed by the majority of the AFN board members for the purpose of officially calling the October convention of AFN in compliance with the constitution and the bylaws. The undersigned officers and members of the board of directors of the AFN call 7th Annual Convention being held in Anchorage on October 26th-28th, 1972 in conjunction with rural affairs committee meeting. The signers are: Don Wright, Nels Anderson Jr., Francis Degnan, Frank Degnan, Cecile Barnes, Roy Huhndorf, Mike Swetzoff, John Borbridge, Willie Hensley, Ernest Holmberg [sp?], Al Ketzler, George Miller Jr. Hank Eaton, Al Naknek, George Walters [sp?], Larry Oskolkoff, Harvey Samuelson [sp?].

He will have the secretary call the roll of the official officers and board members of the Alaska Federation of Natives, and then call the village roll.

At 3:30 a woman's voice lists AFN board of directors' members: Donald A Wright, president [Don shouts he is present]; Philip Guy, first vice president; Tim Wallace, second vice president; Nels Anderson, treasurer; Francis Degnan, secretary; Frank Degnan, sergeant in arms; Cecile Barnes from Chugatch Native Association; Seraphim Stephen from [unclear] village, and Roy Huhndorf of CINA. 13 of the board members are present.

Willie Hensley continues by saying that the secretary will now call the roll to find out how many delegates are representing villages in the state of Alaska by calling the name of the village that individuals could be enrolled to under the Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

[The lady lists names of Alaskan villages.] Barrow's representative Charlie Edwards Jr. introduces himself. [The lady continues listing names.] Roger Huntington is representative from Galena. [Rustling of papers, laughter.] The secretary says that Roger Huntington is representing Galena, Henry Deacon from [unclear], Kaltag by Franklin Maddress [sp?], McGrath by Ernest Holmberg, Minto by Melvin Charlie, Nenana by Mitch Demientieff, Shageluk by Hamilton E. Hamilton, Tanacross by George Miller, Tanana by Morris Thompspon. [Recording fades into inaudible.]

At 9:16 Hensley [?] says he'd like to read a notice from August 28th, which called an AFN convention to be held in Wildwood Complex in Kenai, Alaska, on December 15th-18th, 1972. All housing accommodations have been arranged and Hensley asks that all the villages are adequately represented. Host tribe will be the Kenai Native Association Inc.

All regional corporations are functioning, and now it is time for the village corporations and groups to be formed. Hensley says that it's important that the entire council of each village would attend the 7th annual convention of AFN for the purpose of reorganizing the AFN and exchanging information between regions, villages and individuals. He asks people to remember each individual Native will receive a share of the settlement, beginning in December 18, 1973, and a proportionate amount of 10% of the first 12.5 for the first fiscal year of 1972, 50 million in fiscal 1973, and 70 million in fiscal 1974. Each region will retain 45% of the amount on population basis and each village will receive 45% on population basis.

10:40 "If the Native people wish to have a future voice in Alaska and in United States, we must remain united as the Alaska Federation of Natives." Hensley asks people to fill out convention survey forms and list those who will be attending from their villages. They need to be returned to AFN as soon as possible so they can continue with convention arrangements. Footnote: Each of the regional corporations have received approximately 500,000 dollars and arrangements are being made for each of the regions receiving 1 million dollars for the purposes of assisting villages and group corporations to organize. Transportation expenses could be paid from that account. Hensley says the speech is signed by Don Wright, president of Alaska Federation of Natives.

Hensley continues that because their convention convened in October last year, recessed and adjourned in December after the act passed, many of them thought it would be good to hold the convention one year after passing of the act so that everybody could participate and learn what had been accomplished by the date. He wants them also to make up a schedule that will fit into the timeframe set by the Congress. Hensley continues that articles and bylaws of AFN call that the board of directors and the officers call a convention in October. The petition confirms with the law and they are calling an AFN convention today. They were hopeful there would have been more representation, but since there isn't, there is more responsibility on everybody's individual shoulders.

12:43 Hensley says he has no intention of trying to influence anyone or cause any disturbance. He believes in an orderly convention and in the voice of the people. He also believes that the villages should be heard and is not satisfied by the regional leaders' attempts to give sufficient information to the villages in order for them to do an adequate job within the timeframe given by the Congress.

Every village that the secretary read is, was, or could be either a village under the act or a group corporation. That means that groups with less than 25 people could be entitled to 23,000 acres of land. Any village over 25 people is entitled to three townships, minimum. Hensley doesn't think that people in villages understand that or that the regional leaders are doing their job.

He believes he has done a good job during his 2 years of service at the AFN and wants to continue working for the people. He continues that there has been a misunderstanding about AFN as an association that has a signed membership of people who have paid dues. When they started, they took a \$1 dollar from each member, and Emil Notti could testify that they got thousands of dollars from people across the

state. Those people authorized AFN to borrow money from Yakama [tribe in Washington State], Tyonek [a tribe in Alaska], and from other sources, in order to pursue land claims act.

He asks people to pay their bills first, inform people in the villages, and then to organize. Hensley points out that they don't have to make snap decisions but the convention must proceed. He mentions that he got personally smeared in the papers, and his family was smeared and embarrassed as well. His term would have expired on October 18th and there was no need to oust Don Wright from the AFN. His term would have expired by the bylaws just a week ago, but he feels hurt due to ousting but he's not bitter. [Not sure if it's Don Wright or Hensley talking.]

He calls the convention in order after 10 minutes of recess, and reminds people that they will be remembered for their decisions. [Applause.] [Break in the recording.]

At 16:49 Don Wright officially declares AFN Convention to be in session and calls Reverend [Nicholas] Komkoff for invocation. He introduces himself and says he's a pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox church in Tyonek and tells that in the Orthodox church they call on the Holy Spirit before commencing any tasks. [He prays.]

17:48 Don Wright says they will act on the majority in figuring out where to go from here. He states that the floor is open for suggestions or any decisions that might want to be made in regards to credentials or any other committee or agenda. The official agenda wasn't drafted because they weren't prepared for the convention. They will leave it up to the body to decide what they want on the agenda.

A man's voice says he'd like to make a motion to recreate a credentials committee that would consist of the old AFN board. They would resolve membership problems with voting within each region.

Mr. Wilson addresses the chairman: He thinks everybody's obligation is lying on their shoulders and that there is no question about what they have to do. He has apathy for the people in his village and for "leaders who are leaders." Right now, the question is not that they sit in a convention and wonder what they could do with their land or their leadership. There are two men in the whole state who have "the pipeline to the United States Congress, right now." One is Willey Hinckley [sp?] and the second is Don Wright. [Applause.]

Mr. Wilson continues: The other thing is that Mr. Wright's term is up and that they have no president. AFN Inc. was incorporated with 12 people without the knowledge of the villages. They have to have a legal entity and they know that AFN needs to be incorporated under the state law. They also know that AFN is a vehicle for the people, not means of making oneself politically powerful. The obligation of the convention is nothing else but to name a president.

At 21:18 Someone addresses Mr. Chairman and says that Mr. Swetsoff has made a motion and asks if anyone seconds that motion. Wright says the motion has been moved and seconded and the convention is appointing the old AFN board to act as a credentials committee to define those who are eligible to vote and the number of votes. He asks if there is any discussion about the matter.

Wright addresses Mr. Borbridge letting him know he can ask his question. Borbridge says he's not certain about whether they are there to start campaign speeches for individuals, or whether they are there to help their people with a full sense of restraint and dignity of people who have accomplished as much as they

have. The comments he has to say are “germane to the motion under discussion.” People should be informed that the board of directors of the AFN Inc. have called for the convention be held in Gold Rush Motel in October 26-28th, recognizing that they should have an honest, dignified, and completely thorough approach in regards to solving the issues that are before them.

23:08 They further agreed through signatures of Mr. Hensley, Mr. Swetzoﬀ, the speaker, and others in the AFN board that they should give their blessings to the convention as the body known as the unincorporated association of Alaska Federation of Natives.

They are beginning a session in which formal blessings of both, AFN Inc. board and the old board of the Alaska Federation of Natives. He doesn’t think that they have come there in terms of an advisory proceeding and he doesn’t think that the history of the land claims started just a few years ago.

On calling of the quorum, he asks that the secretary will call the names of those individuals who are seated on the board of Alaska Federation of Natives and who have joined in the call. Once that is done, the speaker feels that they are ready to proceed.

At 25:22 someone asks if he means the AFN Inc. and he says he does. The secretary will place a roll of the AFN Inc. [A man’s voice thanks Mr. Chairman.] There are 9 members present.

Wright says he’s informing the people that he was in touch with the Arctic Slope Native Association representatives and they told him they aren’t formally a part of the AFN Inc. Another man’s voice says he has no further questions and the Wright asks people to vote. [A few voices say aye but even fewer indicate that they are opposed.] Wright says the motion carries.

26:21 Wright continues that before they recess, the 29 members of the AFN board of directors are the credentials committee and he’d like to appoint George Miller as the chairman of the credentials committee and call a recess on advisement from the credentials committee as to when they might go back in. [End of the recording.]