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Segments of the Tlingit Haida Conference held in April 1977

Moses Wassillie, interviewer

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Ray Paddock, president of the Central Council, criticized the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and their implementation of the Indian Self-Determination Act, the makeup of the Central Council and the identity of the Tlingit and Haida people. Paddock said as federally recognized Indian tribe they have the right and responsibility to make their own rules of identity. He said he has placed a high priority the opening of their role and the setting of criteria for maintaining on a permanent basis their identity. He said his first year has been a year of learning. He believes this administration is the most diverse executive committee that have ever been assembled. They have a former legislature, a former mayor, and others serving on their committee. He said their strength is in the awareness of their problems and their resolve to bring about the unity to develop their people in their communities. They have faced the problem of the implementation of the Indian Self-Determination Act. Because of interpretations imposed on them by the Bureau of Indian Affairs finalization of their contracts have been delayed. Because of some of these problems funds that were earmarked for southeast Alaska have been returned or spent elsewhere. He said the result is their people have been the losers and the BIA continues its paternalism over the activities of Indian tribes. For six years the Central Council has been managing the southeast agency under contract. The BIA initially opposed this. It was one of the most successful contracts in the nation. The purpose of the Indian Self-Determination Act was to allow Indian tribes to do what they have been doing for the previous five years that is to determine their own goals and priorities and contract to achieve that purpose. The resulting Self-Determination Act as interpreted by the BIA was to set them back by systematically undermining the sovereignty of the Central Council. The BIA policies ending up confusing and dividing their people. He intends to meet these challenges and get them resolved. He hopes the convention will endorse his efforts. He talked about the move to the Sealaska Plaza. He talked about the Housing and Electric authorities. He discussed the efforts to bring the Tlingit and Haida organization to a self-supporting basis and funding. He plans to hold meetings in different communities to allow them to see how they conduct business.

Byron Mallot, Alaska Federation of Natives president, spoke at the convention about Alaska Native's strengths, hopes, and knowledge. Mallot said they must remind themselves that they are a diminishing minority in Alaska. They are still faced with racial insensitivity and misunderstanding of things that are important to them, but may not be important to others. He asked if they can sit back and feel secure in the knowledge that their future is secure. He doesn't think so. He thinks they can take strength and hope in the knowledge that they have the opportunity in land ownership and potential powerful profit making corporations and better educated young people who understand the issues that face them and can deal with them confident in their abilities. He said they can take strength and hope that the people present at the

conference and those that came before them established the foundation and bed rock of the future of Native peoples. They can take strength and hope in their mutual desire to use their own institutions like the Central Council and the Alaska Native Brotherhood and others in an unselfish and sensitive way to guide, lead and provide for their and their children's future. They can take strength and hope in the knowledge that they will never forget where they came from and will always remember who they are and willing to face the future with pride in their achievements and devotion to a higher ideal for them, their children and their children.

Song by Buffalo Springfield.

The Tlingit and Haida Association is in its second year of a contract with the Bureau of Indians Affairs. The director, Joe Wilson, described the program. He said the contract was to direct the federal programs and federal employees involved with those programs. The contract replaced the BIA superintendent with a tribal employee. The budget grew from about \$40,000 to 75,000 over a four-year period. It was not until July of 1975 that the tribes negotiated a contract to take over most of the programs of the southeast Alaska agency replacing federal employees with tribal employees. The contract was negotiated under the Indian Act authority. It was a three-year contract. Those programs under the contract include the social services program, the tribal operation program, the boarding school student movement, the housing improvement program, direct employment, college student assistance, adult vocational training and the Johnson O'Malley program. Some of the programs previously administered were not contracted for including the credit and finance program, the realty program and the forestry program. The Juneau area office established a service unit known as the BIA southeast agency in the area office to provide these services. There are presently six employees in the unit. In addition in the true sense of the Indian Self-Determination the people of Klukwan elected to have their day school remain under the BIA administration. 2.9 million dollars is under contract.

Bob Losier, director of the Tlingit Haida Housing Association, talked about some of their programs in Southeast Alaska. Losier said they have developed a senior housing unit in Yakutat. They built six apartments along with a health clinic. It was funded through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. They are now working on a 117 units under the HUD program and Farmer's Home Program and Section 8 Rental Assistance which will help bring rents down for the elderly. It will start in the summer. With the federal administration changing programs are happening. They have been concentrating on helping urban families. About half of their Native population in the southeast live in six urban areas. These families must work with existing housing. Section 8 Rental Assistance will assist families living in urban areas and help to offset the rent. They are working with the city of Juneau to build 80 multi-family apartment units. This depends on federal funding. They just completed an urban and rural housing study. It gives a basis for all the housing programs that they are undertaking. They have been seeking Rural Electrification Administration Loans and were just awarded a loan to finance construction and consolidated management for five of their villages. They were able to send thirteen young men to the electrical union school to meet the state standards and to supply training.

Song by David Bradstreet

Bob Losier talked about sewer, water and financing problems in the village and goals that he is working on. Losier said one of his chief goals this coming year is to bring the Indian Health Service back to designing, building, and financing water and sewer service mains to Indian Housing throughout all the villages in the state. Most communities do not have existing water and sewer service. He is concerned that the services may have to be provided through HUD funds and that won't allow needed housing construction.