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Peter McDonald, Tom Richards, Jr. and Mike Gravel at the Tundra Times banquet in Anchorage.

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

Anchorage, Alaska

Series: Potlatch series

1977

Jeff Kennedy said the chairman of the Navajo Council, Peter McDonald, spoke at the Tundra Times banquet on November 12, 1977. Kennedy said McDonald said like Alaska organizations his tribe is also searching for self-determination and attempting to preserve its identity.

Peter McDonald said coming up here he continues to think about the word, subsistence. He said it is a word that is used quite a bit up here and he is sure they are familiar with it. He said in his Native language and in English that word has very little meaning. He talked about the word subsistence and its definition in Alaska. He said with the definition he understands the meaning of subsistence. Subsistence goes beyond the caribou, berries, and traditional methods of existing. It also means your culture, spiritual being, and the need for an economic program between the villages and the corporations. He said they have something in common there. He asked does one way of life have to die so another can live. He said both ways of life must survive for either to survive. Both will undergo change. Industry and technology can learn from their culture and achieve a greater harmony with nature. Their own people, the Natives of this continent learned how to anticipate change and to protect which is most fundamental and precious to them.

Song by Joan Baez

Peter McDonald said they are also struggling for self-determination. They are trying to make sure that the resources that they have and the assets that they have in terms of oil, gas, coal, uranium and timber are developed in such a way that it addresses itself to the future economic well being of the entire Navajo Nation. He said when you begin to do this and want complete jurisdiction there will always be those from the outside who think you are asking for too much and begin to complain. When many of the Indians in the lower forty-eight states began to assert their rights after being subjugated to state or federal jurisdictions then there was an anti-Indian backlash. In the lower forty eight it is very predominate. He wants to address this issue and what they must do now in the short run to survive and to protect their way of life and to choose what they must do in the long run. He said in the short run they must join forces. In order to be strong they have to be together. They must join forces to fight the backlash against Native Americans to buy more time to figure out how to cope with the future. He said the backlash is arising from the east coast land claims in Maine, Massachusetts, and elsewhere. This backlash is combining with a backlash in the West stemming from competition for water, energy resources and fish and game. They are making the Indian look like a greedy bandit demanding more of his fair share of land, fish, water and wildlife. They have been pictured as a kind of bully. Middle class America

is being taught to resent their ownership of energy resources and to blame them for rising fuel bills more than the OPAC nations and the oil companies. It is as if their attempts to conserve their resources and utilize those assets to build a future for their children is a special act of treason to their fellow Americans. The assertion of their rights is now being characterized as a demand for sovereignty and for more than equality. Every American is now being rallied under the banner of equal rights for all. In the lower forty-eight the word sovereignty is the big scare word. In Alaska he doesn't hear much about sovereignty, but the same issues are present. He said the real issue is survival both economic and cultural. They have been set up partly by their own militant rhetoric and partly it serves the purpose of others to stick them with the bully label and then attack them. He said the issue is survival. They are not invading other people's land. They just want to control what they have. They are not asking for more they are simply trying to prevent more from being stolen and exploited. He said when something belongs to the Indian any attempt to protect it is called a demand for sovereignty. When something belongs to non-Indians it is called private property and it is protected as sacred.

Song by Cody Bear Paw

Jeff Kennedy said Tom Richards, Jr. shares the psychological toll of publishing the Tundra Times.

Tom Richards said those of us who get bogged down in getting their paper out sometimes wonder how it can continue. They struggle to make income and keep pace with expenses. Sometimes they feel like the Northwest Arctic caribou herd, the wolves always seem to be chasing them. Some weeks it seems as though the Tundra Times is responsible for all of the sins of the world. Public officials and Native leaders denounce their news coverage and editorial policies. At other times they do not hear a word and they wonder if they aren't doing their job. Sometimes they secretly tell themselves that it isn't worth it anymore. In those darkest moments they get a reminder why there is a Native newspaper. They may get a letter from a reader about a special issue or an offer to increase circulation or a thank you. They then tell themselves that it is all worthwhile. He can tell Howard Rock that his little newspaper is still around thanks to his friends.

Chet Atkins and Johnny Gimble song

Jeff Kennedy said Senator Mike Gravel briefed the banquet attendees on pending legislation including a 40 million dollar energy bill before Congress. Mike Gravel said if this bill does pass one of the items agreed to is a twenty percent credit for a new furnace that will save energy. This also applies to thermostats and new equipment to lower the cost of heating. One of the things that they are working on is the use of peat. He said we have extensive quantities of peat in Alaska. He hopes to get a tax credit for the stoves and furnaces that will be fabricated to handle to burning of peat. This will cost about two billion dollars. He hopes there will be compromises and President Carter will get an energy package through Congress. Another piece of legislation has the appropriation for the Susitna project. This means this project will hopefully move forward in the electrifying of the Interior of Alaska. Future issues includes tribal definition legislation. There is also the IRS determination about capitalizing the cost of selecting land. Here in Alaska with the leadership of AFN they are coming together in various meetings and hopefully they will be able

to get that resolved without having to go to legislation. He talked about d2 and the possibility of land transfer. Guy Martin is working on this. If the administration can't bring about the land transfer he said this will be accomplished through the Congress in law. He talked about the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) organization. He said the leaders have made an outstanding contribution. He talked about the history of the AFN in 1965. Since then there have been two important things happen. The first one was the departure of the North Slope Organization from the AFN. Gravel said he tried to get them to return to AFN. He said there is also the absence of Chulista. He made a plea to the members of the Chulista community. He believes that everyone needs to stick together. He said the claims would never have happened without the AFN.

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651 Navajo Nation, Arizona, New Mexico & Utah

650 Subsistence economy Alaska.

650 Self-determination, National

650 Indian newspapers Alaska

610 Tundra times

Power resources Law and legislation.

Susitna Hydroelectric Project Law and legislation