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Billy Johnson, Tony Basta, Richard Frank, George Manuel

Jeff Kennedy, moderator

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Billy Johnson speaks at the Alaska Federation of Natives Conference. He said he is a share holder of the 13th Regional Corporation and is a member of the board of directors and a chairman of the land committee. The 13th Regional Corporation was created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. He talked about the investments of the corporation including vessels and construction. There is also a non-profit corporation which is structured to help Alaska Natives in the lower forty eight states no matter which corporation they are affiliated with for their personal service needs. They are trying to obtain federal lands which is possible through ANCSA. He discussed selection rights and land rights as it applies to the 13th Regional Corporation. Twenty percent of those enrolled through the Settlement Act are non-resident Natives. The 13th Regional Corporation sees an inequity created by ANCSA for their corporation when they were not given land rights and there must be an amendment to the Act to correct this. Johnson said he will pursue this until the issue is resolved.

Unidentified music

Jeff Kennedy said another speaker at the AFN Convention was Tony Basta from Bethel, Alaska.

Tony Basta said in considering the theme of the convention – does one way of life have to die so another can life – is to realize that education plays a large part in survival. The Department of Education, State Board of Education and others have been working on a comprehensive bilingual bicultural education program. Initially there was a 217 page handbook with minimal guidelines that were proposed to the State Board of Education for creating bilingual bicultural programs. After hearings were held throughout the state the guidelines were rewritten down to eleven pages. He said there are a lot of deficiencies such as local school decision making and the new regulations are very vague. They are fighting for their own language rights. Their education superintendent came out against the handbook. Regional and National civil rights offices have been fighting to ensure that the state of Alaska is in compliance for offering Alaska Natives equal opportunity in education. The state of Alaska has fallen short in offering equal opportunities for Alaska Native children. There are no regulations stating that school districts must have bilingual bicultural education. He said they need more involvement. He talked about the funding system based on grants. He said they need to have the bilingual bicultural program be part of the regular program and not an add-on based on grants.

Song by Mississippi John Hunt

Jeff Kennedy said Andrew Isaac of Dot Lake, Alaska won the citizen of the year award at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention. Richard Frank from Minto, Alaska accepted the award for him.

Richard Frank said Andrew Isaac is a traditional chief and has always been striving for education of the young people. He was involved with land claims. Frank said Isaac was concerned with issues of his own tribe as well as the concerns of the general Native people of Alaska. If he could be of help to the people of the lower forty eight he would provide that.

Music by Loggins and Messina

Jeff Kennedy said that George Manuel attended the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Barrow as a representative of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

George Manuel describes the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. He said it is the original people of a country who are not part of the governments in existence. At the present time they represent indigenous people as they are known in the United Nations. They represent people in nineteen countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United States, Greenland and Scandinavian countries. They have charter that has been adopted by the general assembly but it still needs to be ratified by some of the countries. It is a statement of rights and also how the organization is going to function. The principle of their struggles is land claims but also cultural retention. He talked about the different federations formed by the Scandinavian countries and Central American countries. He talked about the first meeting of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. Their first meeting was held in October 1975 in Port Alberni, British Columbia. They did not allow the media to attend for security reasons. Some of the delegates were jailed in their countries. Manuel comments on the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and its significance. He talked about expansion of his organization into other countries. He said they have a belief of working together in a communal basis. He talked about having a cultural evening at the first meeting of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and creating unity within the meeting.