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Emil Notti, Bob Arnold and Lydia Hays talk about the Alaska Native Claims textbook

Moses Wassillie, moderator

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Moses Wassillie said that Emil Notti, president of the Alaska Native Foundation, talked about some of the foundations of their textbook. Emil Notti said about two years ago the parent advisory committee that works with state-operated schools had some money that they wanted put into a project to provide information to Native students about land claims. The state-operated schools approached the Alaska Native Foundation to see if they were interested. They wrote up a proposal and submitted it to the then state-operated schools and the board of directors accepted the proposal. They had a very short time to write the book and looked around for a project director. They found Bob Arnold who was formally with the federal field committee. They have been in the process of writing the book for a year and a half. The book is now finished. The state operated schools and the parent advisory committee wanted a hard bound book. It has a nice cover with high quality paper, photos and maps. They have also supplemented the project with money. The Anchorage School District also help fund the project under the Indian Education Program. It was about 160,000 dollars to develop the materials for the book. He said they are making an effort to get it into the curriculum for every student in the state. Everyone is affected by land claims. The students coming out of high school regardless of who they are will be affected if they live in the state of Alaska. They should understand the basis and some of the elements of the land claims. This book will provide the background information and the elements in the land claims that are necessary. He feels it will lessen friction between Native and non-Native people. He said the experience field testing indicates that people start talking about issues on their mind. He feels as long as people can talk about it the issues will disappear.

Moses Wassillie said Bob Arnold, former director of the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission, talked about the concept of the book and how it is different than other books in the school system. Bob Arnold said one thing that is different about the book is it is the destinies of the Alaska Natives that are the focus of attention for the authors. It does make it different than other books. Those who would think it is biased are those that don't understand history. All history is interpretive. One must choose the subject of the attention and then follow that through. They have written a section on American Indians that is correct historically. What they have condensed into five chapters of a unit might be scattered throughout a 700-800 page book. Authors of other books might be focusing on other subjects like cowboys, the railroad, etc. What they tried to show that over the years from the time of the Treaty of Session (?) to statehood that Alaska Natives were unable to obtain land except under terms unsuitable to their circumstances. He discussed the 1915 meeting of Athabaskan chiefs with delegate Wickersham. Wickersham said they were worried about the railroad coming through their country. Wickersham said they could get a town site lot because that law exists. The chiefs said that wouldn't work for their circumstance since they range far and wide. They didn't want a reservation because of what they had

heard about what happened in the lower forty-eight. It would be smaller than the area they used for harvesting of resources. The chief said what they want is to have the white men go away and let them live on the land as they have always done. Delegate Wickersham said no that wasn't possible. Arnold said they tell the story somewhat differently than another writer. Their focus is to build to the climax of when the pipeline's development with the increasing white population in Alaska and it then became desperate that formal land title be attained. He thinks careful observers and readers of history will not take issue. They will understand that destiny is the subject of attention here.

Song from Barbara Streisand

Bob Arnold said they decided that half the book would explain how there came to be a claims settlement act. The second half explains what the Act is. He said the book is different because the climax of the book is in the middle of the book with the achievement of the Settlement Act in 1971. The following chapter tries to summarize what the claims settlement act is in a much abbreviated way. All of which is elaborated upon in the following chapters. Because the Act is very abstract they are talking about upper secondary school users and general readers. They try to make the provisions of the Act concrete by reference to what corporations have done by way of implementation through 1975. Through propositions like prior rights, navigability of waters and land selection they try to make it more real by reference to villages and what they have chosen. They selected eight village corporations that helped to illustrate these ideas. They had ten collaborating writers who prepared drafts on the topics that they jointly worked out. He then looked at the drafts to see what was missing and where clarification was needed. He sometimes added material or removed it. He sometimes moved ideas from one chapter to another. He produced a working draft for the text. They knew that the text needed to be self-contained. At the same time because they conceived of the text as meeting the instructional use they thought in terms of educational objectives. They developed statements of what the learner would know after certain chapters. So the student's attention would be focused on these kinds of outcomes. They have 139 defined objectives. He said readers will learn more than these 139 things. They have obtained their photographs from a variety of sources including Howard Rock who is one of the collaborating writers. They also obtained them from the state museum, the university archives and from personal collections. Bruce Vidard had personal photographs when the oil lease sale was picketed in 1969. They also had photographs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Smithsonian Institute in New York. For some they had to pay a fee others donated photographs. He talked about the maps they included in the book. It turned into quite a project. They wanted maps to portray each region, its boundaries, villages, and streams. They wanted maps to illustrate village selections and a large map in the back. Some of the map sources were in error. They double checked through the cooperation of regional corporations and they believe they have correct maps region by region as well as the large map at the back of the book.

Song by Joe Bing

Bob Arnold talked about the design of the cover of the book. He said since their focus was specific – land claims – that there was little opportunity to take up matters of culture. This isn't a culture course although each groups of Alaska is introduced. One thing that has always troubled the American Indian

spokesperson is the stereotype. People talk about Indians as if all Indians are alike. Because of the united land claims movement the reference most often used in the text is Alaska Native. They thought first of obtaining translations of the English language title, Alaska Native Land Claims. He decided on the final title. As he talked with one or two who provided approximations of translations it occurred to him that instead of translations these were new titles for the book. He liked the translation titles better than the English title. They knew they didn't have room for twenty titles. They drew upon the work of Mike Krauss to know the present-day use of the languages and about how many people used them. He used the titles in the design of the book cover. He is pleased with the outcome. He thinks the reader who looks at p. iii and sees the translations of the many titles on the book will have an enhanced understanding of the land claims. He talked about some of the translations. He hoped that the classrooms would talk about the translations of the book title.

Lydia Hays talked about her involvement in developing additional materials for the book. She said several months after the beginning of the textbook project she was hired by the Foundation to develop a teacher's guide and student workbook that would accompany the textbook. She said it is a necessary part of the whole thinking process about the textbook because in the teacher's guide and the workbook the learning goals and objectives are listed which are applicable in the classroom. She and Bob Arnold worked together closely to determine objectives. Based on the objectives she developed suggestions for the teacher's guide for learning experiences in the classroom. She also developed the student workbook and provided various kinds of review, experiences, and questions that students could think about that were directly related to content in a chapter of the textbook. The teacher's guide is designed so the teacher can service a guide to assist students in broadening their understanding about the contents in the textbook and also to bridge the classroom into the community. Students can learn more about what is going on in their own community in relation to the land claims. And the community can benefit from what is being learned in the classroom. Many suggestions are for the class to go to the resources available in the community such as Tetlin students going to their corporation and talking with the people there. They attempted throughout the project to identify some of the films, videocassettes, and audiocassettes that are available pertaining to the land claims settlement. They are listed in the teacher's guide and their locations where they can be obtained. The workbook and teacher's guides are both springboards to new ideas that might be sparked in each of the communities.