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Byron I. Mallot, Charles Aksurok, Donna Christie

Moses Wassillie, moderator

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Moe Wassillie said Byron Mallot has recently been name president of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). Byron was recently interviewed in Anchorage and talked about reorganization the board structure of the statewide organization. Byron Mallot said the board is comprised of the presidents or their designees from the twelve profit making corporations. Most of the AFN programs deal with the human resource social service side of Native affairs while advocacy functions out of his office deals with issues that affect the regional corporations. A lot of their research and technical work has to do with the assistance to profit making corporations with issues such as d2 easements. He said the board has recognized that there is a problem of representation there. They are looking at reorganizing the AFN board to more actively reflect the issues that AFN deals with. The board has appointed a reorganization task force. He hoped that AFN reorganizing will be in effect by next October. The reorganization revolves around bringing the non-profit corporations that are recognized in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act into AFN at the same policy making level as the profit-making corporations. They are looking at making AFN convention a forum that will allow significant input by individual Natives to AFN policy. He said hopefully that will be reflected through the organization. He thinks that the AFN annual meeting could be used to allow regional profit making corporations to let shareholders and other Native groups get a better understanding of what it is that they are and the kind of things that they are doing to displace using something along the lines of a trade fair.

Moe Wassillie said Mallot talked about the confusion of the interpretation of Public Law 03-638 and resolving the litigation between Natives and other groups. There are issues revolving around easement questions. They will be working closely with the regions to resolve those disputes through litigation. One of the suits is the Chulista suit. There is a defense suit. He thinks that the kinds of issues that exist between Natives and non-Natives in the state are issues that result from human nature. He understands that those federal agencies that have an obligation to have the Indian Self-Determination Act work are having difficulty interpreting specific provisions of the Act and what is required to carry it out. He said the Act itself is complex. He talked about the application of the Act locally.

Moe Wassillie asked what lies in the future for the programs, personnel and purpose of AFN. Mallot said he is going to be responsible for the implementation of policy as reflected by the board. He will be active in the spokesman role that is crucial to AFN's function. He is going to be looking for top management and administrative talent to fill the vacancies. He may have only a single executive VP for management in AFN. He said all of the programs have all management positions are filled at this time. He would like to see a better consolidation of program effort in the human resource programs. He would like to see fewer but more flexible kinds of programs in training and technical assistance. He thinks AFN needs to

be beefed up in dollars and manpower in those areas. He will be looking at the overall economy. For future needs he is looking at it from an in-house perspective. He thinks that AFN needs full-time legal counsel in house. They now have legal counsel on retainer. He said the whole issue of public affairs is something that AFN needs to be looking at. He will be looking at their role in that area.

Song by Loggins and Messina

Moe Wassillie said representatives of regional organizations met in August in Barrow to organize mental health and alcoholism programs under the health affairs division of AFN. It took them a year to organize what is now the Human Services Division. Their director Charles Aksurok talks about their role. He said they are mainly working on Indian Health Service grants and contracts under the Self-Determination Act. They are looking at how the funds will be disbursed. It gives authority to 405 villages to determine their own programs. There will be approximately 23 million dollars coming into the state of Alaska to establish these programs for the Native communities. President Ford finally passed a program called the Indian Health Care Program Act of 1976. It establishes adequate funding for Indian mental health and alcoholism programs. They hope to write a state bill to supplement funds for state programs. AFN wants to hear from the villages about what they need so they can address those needs at the state and national level. According to federal programs Alaska has the poorest health care system for Natives in the nation. There has been inadequate equipment for medical care in the villages. The Act appropriates 123 million dollars for Indian and Alaska Natives health care improvements across the nation.

Moe Wassillie said Charles describes problems unique to Alaska. Aksurok talked about the high cost of holding meetings. He said Alaska is faced with transportation problems and must depend on bush and commercial airlines. There are high costs of living and high operating costs. He discussed overlapping agency jurisdictions. He talked about future plans for the Human Services Division of AFN. He said there are only three people working in the Division at this time. They want to add at least three more people into their office.

Unidentified song

Moe Wassillie said Donna Christie is the deputy director of Technical Assistance at AFN. Donna Christie talked about hiring of Alaska Natives for the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. A certain set number of Natives were to be hired. She didn't feel like the number was great enough. She went out to the pipeline and stayed in the camps and thought the living situation was bad. She didn't like the work schedule for the workers. She said people were quitting because of the long work schedule. She said there should be a cross-cultural training program for the workers. She said they did make an effort to put people to work that lived near the pipeline. She said there were a lot of outsiders coming up to just work and leave. She described changes in Fairbanks. She has plans to form a private consulting firm for training staff and labor relations.