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**Alaska Federation of Natives 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**

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**Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson.** THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

[The tape begins with drumming and singing.] The announcer says that the theme for 6<sup>th</sup> AFN Conference that was held at the Fairbanks Traveler's Inn on October 8<sup>t</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> in 1971 was: "In white man's society, we need white man's tools." Emphasis was in getting together on land claims settlement. A call for unity was made by many speakers, such as AFN's president Don Wright, during the 3-day convention. The convention will reconvene in Anchorage in November, after the land claims bill is put out.

AFN sponsors a delegate from each village to travel to the convention. It was anticipated by the press that much of the deliberation was centered on a suit that was filed by Arctic Slope Native Association in Washington, but it was seldom mentioned by speakers and no questions about that were brought from the floor. Proceedings were conducted in quasi-parliamentary style with only occasional references to that "white man's tool." Money was considered a tool of greater importance and AFN finance committee that was directed by AFN's treasurer, Nels Anderson, issued a leaflet titled "Money, White Man's Tool to Protect Your Land." It was the bills that were before the House and the Senate that received most of the attention. Tim Wallis from Fairbanks Native Association welcomed everyone and introduced the keynote speaker, Don Wright.

At 2:02 Don Wright begins his speech by saying that the congressional delegation from Alaska is working hard in Washington and couldn't make it this time. They have sent representatives and messages. He didn't prepare a speech because there are many things he wants to convey as his own thoughts about what the AFN is and what it means for Alaska Native people and to Indian people across the United States.

AFN was organized by leadership from every village of the state. It was organized because the Native people were in danger of losing all their rights if they didn't get together, unify, and face the challenges following statehood and total expropriation of all Native lands in the State of Alaska. Many of AFN have learned a lot over the 6 or 7 years, since 1966 when the AFN was organized under leadership of people like Emil Notti and Flori [Florie?] Lekanoff and everyone who lead the initial fight.

5:20 What they have today is a product of that determination and emerging of leadership. Many of their children are now high school and college students, many are integrated into business across the nation and within the state and many are integrated in the protocol arena. For the first time in the history of American Indian, a state is being led by Native people. If they apply their political strength in a way that's beneficial for all, they can make a state that everyone can be proud of.

Wright says he wants everybody to know that Alaska Natives are recognized across the nation because they are leaders. They have launched the single strongest lobby effort on behalf of Native Americans that's even been seen in Washington.

He says he can't overemphasize the importance of reasoning and of taking their future one step at the time. They are taking the largest step that American Indian and Alaska Native people have ever taken in their history since Custer's Last Stand. The significance of the meeting will be printed and re-printed in newspapers around the world. AFN is a champion of democracy, freedom and the respect for property rights and is watched all over the world. They look to Alaska as a stronghold of self-determination of minority peoples. Through people's

deliberations over the next few days, they have the responsibility of leading the State of Alaska, Native Alaskans, all minorities. They are setting an example that self-determination can be achieved if people put their minds together.

9:06 Wright wants to mention that Indian Education bill passed the Senate yesterday and now it is considered by the House and it will ultimately result in \$190 million dollars for Indian Education, including Alaska Natives.

Alaska Native Claims bill is pending before the house rules committee and it's anticipated that the rule will be issued shortly and that there will be floor action in the House of Representatives. Wright says that the people at the AFN convention have copies of the bill and committee reports, and he urges everyone to study them thoroughly so that they know what the meaning of the bill is when they vote. In the Senate, they will send the final Committee Report out on Friday, but the AFN can't get a copy before it's been circulated in the Senate. Then the Senate is ready for action.

Wright says that the lawsuit by Arctic Slope Native Association is a solid one that is based on aboriginal title. The effect of that lawsuit is being heard around the world. He stresses that whatever comes out of the convention is going to be a mandate of Alaska Native Peoples in the Congress. The board of directors and Mr. Wright himself will take the mandate back to the Congress and present it to best of their ability. He wants people to also realize that they can't expect to get all that they asked for when the Congress starts to move.

11:33 Wright continues: The decision that the people make in the convention is going to be the final input to a legislative resolution. Wright believes that the legislation will pass in one form or another regardless of what their decision is. Their last line of defense is to appeal to the President of United States to either confirm or veto the paper that comes out of the Conference Committee. It's possible that the legislation will be on president's desk in the following 6 weeks. This convention and their mandate will be influential as the last mandate that they will have.

Wright says he intends to stay at AFN unless some emergency calls him back to Washington. He's going to hold an executive board meeting that follows the convention to finalize Washington strategy. Wright thanks the listeners for their contribution and closes his speech. [Applause.]

At 13:38 the announcer of the radio program says that following President Wright was an address by a member of the Yakima Tribe who cautioned the delegates on the stand they were about to take. Much of the address by Jim Thomas expressed deep concern for Alaska Natives and Indians across the nation and he suggested that it might be to their interest to opt for trust lands rather than title.

Don Wright introduces Jim Thomas: He is in Washington D.C. as the only Indian Press Correspondent in the nation. He has been doing an outstanding job ever since he hit the Washington scene. He did an outstanding job for AFN as a public relations director in its early stages. He welcomes Jim Thomas as a guest for AFN.

At 14:40 Jim Thomas thanks Wright and says that he hopes he'll be as welcome when he finishes his talk. He will comment on tribal affairs and says that it's been taking the Congress for some 4 years to come into a conclusion with their claims. Now they are getting ready for a floor debate in both houses of the Congress.

He says this AFN Convention is of the most important conventions and that people have grave decisions to make because now they must show their colors and show what they are made of as Alaska Native leaders. They must stand to take a responsibility of what future people will have and not have, and what they will curse the leaders for. There are decisions that are of grave importance that will affect Alaska Native people forever.

Jim says he read the theme of the conference with mixed feelings. "In a white man's society, you must use white man's tools." The more he thought about it, and the more he put it in the perspective of Indian history, the more he recoiled with disgust. The term "white man" explains nothing and the word "society" is vague. Even white men are tribes, Poles, French, English, Jews, and in their countries they have their own societies so that one group can enjoy the best of technology while another still uses the outhouse. Philosophies separate some

groups of white men-- in Ireland it's religion, and their tools are guns, grenades and hatred.

17:37 He says he'll talk about the white man in America. The white man has done okay: built big cities out of nothing, built an airplane that can carry 370 people in comfort, landed on the moon and found a way to defeat gravity for flushing the toilet upstairs. But, on the other hand, the white man sells more Visine [eyedrops] and congestion pills because people's eyes are straining. Their lungs are getting weak because there's so much crud in the air. The society into which the Alaska Natives are to integrate is filled with crime and lack of love. Jim tells an example on how there was a dead white woman in a square in Washington and people were eating lunches all around her. He and his friend tried to find a police officer, but because they couldn't find one, they walked on.

Jim asks where is God, law, and justice in a society that sticks up for the murderer. He also asks what they mean with tools. Are they talking about the U.S. Government and if they are, have they forgotten so swiftly that it was Benjamin Franklin who recommended the colonists that they should form a union like a Iroquois Confederacy. What's wrong with "our" [Native/Indian] tools that they want to abandon them for the mystique that they call the white man's world?

19:59 They don't lack tools, but wisdom of their forefathers and village elders. He says they depend so much on education in Alaska that they think the dumbbells in villages don't have anything to say about what they do to them.

The old chiefs came up with an expression for forever. In Alaska, people talk about "perpetuity", but they [the old chiefs] said, "as long as the river runs, as long as the sun shall rise, as long as the grass shall grow." The dumb, old chiefs had the United States sign up an agreement to that forever, and the U.S. Government is responsible.

The tools AFN is missing are not white man's tools. They lack the older, experienced people from villages who might advise them. The tool they are missing is informed input from the villages. How, for instance, could Venetie trade a million acres of trust property for a couple of townships of fee-titled land.

Alaska Natives with their expertise consider themselves as too good to look upon the settlement as a treaty “because they might look like the dumb Indians from the south.” They better look on the settlement as forever because it will take a miracle to undo what the Congress will decide.

22:28 Chiefs from the states have traveled to Alaska many times and have even held a convention to warn Alaskans and to tell them about benefits of trust properties, but they haven’t succeeded since AFN is hung on fee-titled lands, the ones that they can sell and buy at their whims.

Jim tells that he flew to Barrow 4 months ago with a great, old chief of the Choctaw. He stood before “your board up there” and asked them to look at Oklahoma where the Indians have no land, to Menominees, to Klamath, to places where Indians have no land base. He asked them not to jeopardize the land of their coming children, but said that they make their own decisions.

Two weeks later Jim stood beside the old chief's casket and thought he must have been sick when he was in Alaska, but he fought to go to Alaska and warn the people. Jim wondered how soon his prophecy of Alaska would come true.

Jim continues that Alaska Natives seem to be afraid of lands held in trust and protected by the government, but which they can use at their discretion. Maybe it’s because “we” consider anybody from a reservation a second class citizen although they don’t see themselves like that, as exemplified by Bob Jim, the Chairman of the Yakimas. He said in TV that when you [the settlers] came into this country, we had the land and it was a beautiful and productive land. The settlers came here [into America] as 3<sup>rd</sup> class citizen with no freedoms, such as freedoms of speech or worship, not even freedom to their own land. The Yakima made the mistake of welcoming the settlers, and Bob Jim asks whether that makes them 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens. Yakimas live in a reservation at the heart of Washington State. Their income is in millions of dollars each year. It’s not taxed, and every year they fight for other Indian rights.

25:55 It didn’t take years of deliberation for Yakima to loan \$225,000 dollars to AFN because they believe in AFN and in the perpetuation of “you as people.”

These days they are buying their own allotments and putting them in trust for the future. They are fighting for 21,000 acres of land that includes the Mount Adams, which is the second highest peak in Washington State. That is to be held in trust for the people. Folks in Alaska have been told that their lands can be put to non-taxable status through a tax-free, non-profit corporation, but that's hogwash.

There's a special relationship that's between American Indians and the United States and if there is to be one for Alaska Natives, it must come through the Congress. The Indians have that special treatment because America is built on their land. Bob Jim was also asked on TV whether the Yakimas pay taxes and he said no, because America has become one of the most powerful nations in the world on land that was either given to them or that they stole from American Indians. They became so powerful that they could steal land and then give it back, like they did in Okinawa [?]. They are a world-power because they have a wealthy land, "our land". "We paid our taxes for all time, and Bob Jim was right."

Jim states that what the Alaska Native people have asked from Congress is to be terminated and Congress has responded along those lines. In talking with congressmen, senators and their aides, the attitude in Washington is to get rid of the land claims bill.

The Menominees of Wisconsin are now trying to get their land back. Jim says he's going to read from an article that appeared in Washington Post. The article tells about how the decision to turn the Menominee reservation into a county stopped all the aid from the government and forced Menominees to sell their land to pay taxes, and it would be impossible to turn back without an uprising of the whole nation.

30:48A man called Jim White, who is also a Menominee, said that it's incredible that all that stealing from the Indians crap is still going on. He wishes he could show the people that they don't have to take it.

Jim Thomas continues by saying that the Indian leaders throughout the country would agree with everything he said today and that they watch Alaskan situation anxiously and some of them with sad hearts. If Jim was in advisory position, he'd

advice every reservation in Alaska to maintain its status and he begs their leadership to keep at least some lands, perhaps 50% in trust. He advises that if trust status can't be put into the Land Claims bill, it should be voted down.

Jim pleads to people's conscience to vote what's best for the villages and for the children. If hunting and fishing rights are not protected in the bill, they'll become victims of the state. He pleads on behalf of American Indians for the people to think before they put their signatures to that treaty.

In 1960s when Jim was going to college, he saw the play Camelot on stage. Richard Burton, Julie Andrews and Robert Coulee were playing in it and it was a story of a kingdom where everyone was equal. Knights and the king were equal around the Round Table. But all good things come to an end and Sir Lancelot fell in love with Guinevere the queen. To save face, Arthur had to go into a war with his best friend and on the evening of the battle, a little boy who wanted to fight on Arthur's side swore to remember the brief, shining moment that was known as Camelot. Alaska Natives had a Camelot once and there will be a bit of Camelot again. Jim Taylor hopes to have that for all the people for all time.

He ends his speech. [End of the recording.]