

# AFN PR Man Poses Land Claims Issue In State of Washington

The Alaska Federation of Natives has launched a statewide effort in Washington to obtain further support for the natives on the land claims issue.

When the bill, now in the Senate committee on Interior and Insular Affairs comes before the full Senate and, finally the House, the AFN would like the support of the congressmen from Washington, according to Jim Thomas, public relations director of the AFN.

Chairman of the committee in the Senate is Henry Jackson of Washington.

Thus, Thomas is now touring the state in an effort to contact every newspaper editor in Washington in hopes that at least 90 per cent of them will publish editorials on the land claims issue by March.

In addition, he will also be speaking to church groups, Chamber of Commerce officials, and Indian groups and laying the groundwork for future visits from other AFN spokesmen.

In approaching the people of Washington, Thomas has explained the position of the natives on the land claims issue and stressed that anytime Alaska gains, Washington gains because everything going to Alaska must first go through Seattle.

"Alaska's stagnation as a result of claims is also Washington's diminished return," he explained, before starting the trip.

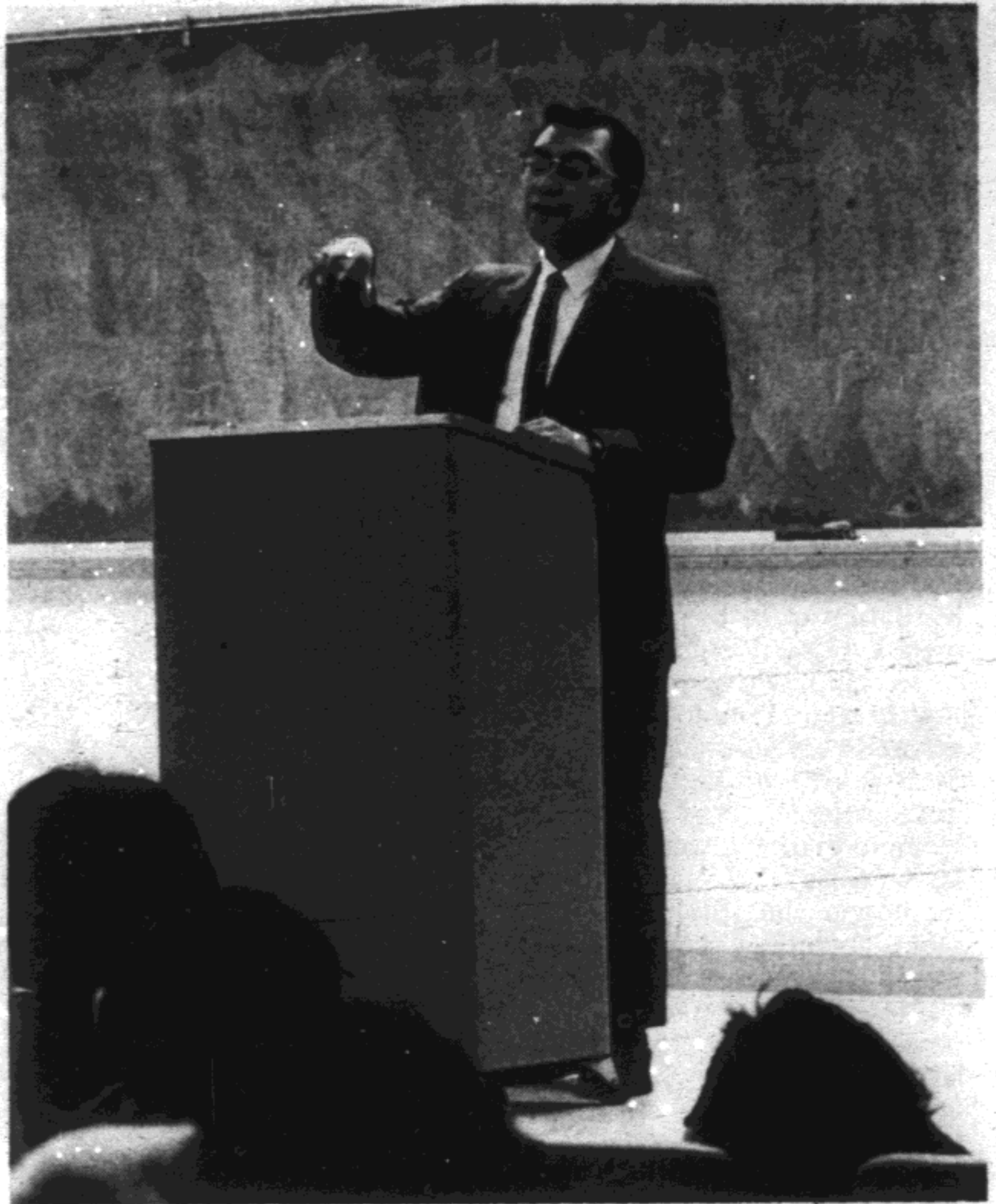
Thomas left his office in Anchorage on Thursday.

On Jan. 16, he met with Virgil Greipp, communications director for the Washington Presbyterian Synod and scheduled speaking engagements for the AFN officials in the area churches.

As the result of a meeting the next day with the Small Tribes of Washington, the organization will hold a statewide "Pow-Wow" February 7 in Tacoma for about 2,000 people.

The event will serve as a press conference for the Alaska native leaders who will be arriving in Washington.

Thomas also spoke at the Olympic Presbyterian Church in



JIM THOMAS

Tacoma where each of the 40 Presbyterian Churches for the Presbytery were represented. According to Thomas, the response was very good.

In Everett, he addressed the North Puget Sound Presbytery speaking to about 80 ministers and elders who will in turn relay his message to their respective churches.

Thomas's plans then took him to Seattle where he talked with a Seattle Times writer. As a result, a lengthy article on AFN efforts in Washington appeared Jan. 19.

The next day an article appeared in the Seattle Post Intelligencer titled "Indian P.R. Chief Speaks."

Other meetings included an interview with editor of the Bellingham Herald, a speech before

125 people of the Bellingham Rotary Club, a meeting with the editor of Mt. Vernon Skagit Herald, a taping at KOMO radio television station, interviews with the associate editor of Presbytery Life, circulation of one million, with KING television and radio in Seattle, and with KIRO radio and television.

In one day, according to Thomas, the story of land claims will be shown on three of Seattle's largest stations.

He also addressed the Seattle Presbytery, representing all Presbyterian churches in Metropolitan Seattle and the Washington Council of Churches where he was to present a resolution for them to act on.

Thomas plans to conclude his trip in Seattle on Jan. 28.