

# AFN Executive Director Harry Carter Sends Special Message

SPECIAL MESSAGE

BY

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As the sixth annual convention of AFN draws to a close it seems proper that we pause for a minute and give thanks to all the people who have worked so hard to save and preserve the rights of Alaskan Native people. The official records bear witness to the injustices imposed upon us and the resulting misery and deprivation experienced by so many.

Through unity of effort and common basic purposes, we have

begun our journey into a new future. We have joined hands in partnership and proudly accept the responsibility of trying to provide our future generations a more meaningful place in life. Our pathway has been narrow and filled with stones, yet we have continued on and have overcome obstacles and begun arterials. We wish to preserve our languages, our customs and our cultural heritage and be proudly recognized as people who care about our environment and our future generations.

The settlement of our Land Claims is simply the granting of

a paper 'title' to that which we already own and a payment of 'money' to that which is taken from us. Before us lies many other problems in the protection of our human rights. The right of land ownership must be preserved for our children's children throughout the future and the money belongs to all our people for all time. Let us continue to join hands and wisely protect the small token we have gained! History tells us that greedy people will try to take our belongings from us. The disguises of friendship, assistance, cooperation, and political commitments must be unveiled and our own people educated to

assume the responsible functions of management and trust.

Each village and each Region is faced with the awesome problem of planning and formulating management and development capabilities without duplicating efforts and unnecessarily wasting money through competition. There will be continuing attempts to divide us and thereby conjure us by elimination of our funds and forcing the sale of our remaining lands and removal of human rights. I sincerely hope that our Alaska Native people will not be caught in this greed and the fight for personal gain at the expense of future generations.

The Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. is your organization and controlled entirely by each and every Alaskan Native through your elected representatives on a village and Regional basis. Communications and good public relations has been poor because we have not had adequate money or staff, however, every effort is being made to solve this problem. We ask for your continued patience and understanding as we continue to serve you.

The AFN is currently operating ten programs through grants and contracts from State or Federal agencies. These monies pay for the administrative costs of AFN only as relates to the staff and offices in Alaska. The

money used for fighting the Native land rights has been borrowed and used for the expenses of the AFN Board of Directors and the lobbying efforts in Juneau and Washington, D.C. Our staff and the special committees of the AFN Board of Directors have worked diligently to carry out functional programs for the benefit of Alaskan Natives. We have met with advisory firms in business and finance and developed working relationships with State and Federal agencies and have helped to gain responsible positions for our people.

In addition to the many organizational and management problems facing us is the real threat of discontinued services provided now by public funds. If we are suddenly expected to provide for our own health, education or other social and economic needs, our funds would be exhausted and we would be forced to sell our lands and end up in greater misery and poverty than now exists. It is therefore mandatory that we protect our interests in current programs by becoming politically influential and carrying out a strong lobbying effort in our State and National Capitols. I am certain that all our people will understand the necessity of remaining united and jointly carrying out Statewide functions.