



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Office of the President • Edward K. Thomas Building
9097 Glacier Highway • Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 28, 2018

The Honorable Justin Parish
House Community & Regional Affairs
120 4th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HCR 19: Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency

Representative Parish and members of the Community & Regional Affairs:

Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) is the State's largest federally recognized tribe, representing over thirty thousand (30,000) tribal citizens. Tlingit & Haida fully supports and urges the House Community & Regional Affairs committee to support HCR 19: Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

In the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council 2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature, all three of Southeast Alaska Native languages are listed as critically endangered as measured by UNESCO Scale of Language Endangerment. The survival and revitalization of our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages is of the highest priorities for Tlingit & Haida. Great efforts by elders, students, tribes, Alaska Native organizations, and communities have occurred to reverse language loss. After forty years (40) of limitless efforts, signs of language revitalization are emerging for Alaska Native languages. Even with these efforts, on the current trajectory, and with partial action by the State of Alaska, we stand to lose our languages by the end of the 21st century.

The State of Alaska has twenty one (21) official languages. Twenty (20) of these languages are Alaska Native. These languages have existed on this land for over ten thousand (10,000) years. Declaring a linguistic emergency will allow for necessary measures and initiatives to preserve, revitalize, and advance the equal status of the twenty (20) Alaska Native languages to their sister official language English.

In closing, Tlingit & Haida applauds efforts of the sponsoring Representatives that acknowledge the state of our Alaska Native languages and urges the members of this committee and legislature to support the issuance of an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency for the State of Alaska. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at (907) 463-7379 or rpeterson@ccthita.org.

Gunalchéesh / Haw'aa,

Richard J. Peterson
President