

3600 Denali Street
Anchorage, AK 99503
Telephone (907) 343-2975
Fax (907) 343-2930
www.anchoragelibrary.org

February 26, 2018

To: State of Alaska Legislature
Re: HCR No. 19, a resolution urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic 2 emergency.

Dear Governor Walker,

The Anchorage Public Library is in support of the proposed resolution to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency and initiating and strengthening, legislative and policy measures that prioritize the survival and continued use of Alaska Native languages.

Our Library is also concerned about this issue and over the past year we have been working with the Alaska Native Heritage Center, First Alaskans Institute, the Native Village of Eklutna and other partners to determine how the Anchorage Public Library can play a stronger role in the preservation, education and celebration of Alaska Native languages.

We welcome any efforts from the State of Alaska to further prioritize this important cause and will gladly become a partner in any future efforts.

Thank you,

Mary Jo Torgeson

Director

907-343-2892

torgesonmj@muni.org



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



ALASKA
NATIVE
HERITAGE
CENTER

March 1, 2018

Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HCR 19 Urging Governor Walker to Issue an Administrative Order Recognizing Linguistic Emergency

Dear Legislators,

Thank you for this opportunity to connect with you regarding the Alaska Native linguistic emergency we face. I write to endorse HCR 19, a measure that supports the survival and continued use of all twenty of the state's Alaska Native languages. Every Alaska Native language has suffered an ongoing loss in the number of speakers over the years. If current rates of decline continue, all Alaska Native languages may lose their fluent speakers within decades.

Carefully-planned language programs can make a big impact on reversing language loss. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), states:

"It is estimated that, if nothing is done, half of 6000 plus languages spoken today will disappear by the end of this century. However, this process is neither inevitable nor irreversible: well-planned and implemented language policies can bolster the ongoing efforts of speaker communities to maintain or revitalize their mother tongues and pass them on to younger generations."

With HCR 19, the State of Alaska can influence and align language policy and planning through state departments to support the hard work of many Alaskans around the state who work to save these precious and renewable cultural resources. Particularly, languages are an incredible investment in closing the achievement gap for Alaska Native youth.

The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is one of many organizations working to strengthen and protect the languages of Alaska's Native communities. Our focus is on building capacity for developing and implementing language immersion programs. For the past four years, ANHC built its language immersion programs, and in 2017 through a groundbreaking partnership with Cook Inlet Native Head Start, Anchorage's first pre-K Yup'ik immersion option opened in Anchorage. We continue to explore new ways to use language to support Alaskans, from school-age children building self-confidence and cultural identity to Elders rediscovering their language and heritage after years of discrimination and isolation.

This work has only just begun. Development of innovative, transformative, and community-focused approaches is vital to reversing the trend of language loss.

Thank you for your commitment to empowering our Alaska Native community to address this serious issue of language loss. The Alaska Native Heritage Center proudly supports HCR 19, and we urge you to join us in our efforts to preserve, restore, and revitalize Alaska Native languages in the state.

Sincerely,

Annette Evans Smith
President & CEO



Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments

PO Box 33
Fort Yukon, Alaska 99740
Phone: 907-662-2587
Fax: 907-662-3333

www.catg.org

March 5, 2018

Via Email: house.community.and.regional.affairs@akleg.gov.

Representative Ortiz, Kriess-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, Chenault, Tarr
State of Alaska House of Representatives
Juneau, Alaska
(toll free): 844-586-9085

Re: Testimony for the HCR 19 Governor: AK Native Languages Emergency

Dear Representative Ortiz, Kriess-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, Chenault, Tarr;

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) is a tribal consortium founded in September of 1985 with the vision of self-sufficient communities with a shared commitment to promoting common goals and taking responsibility for a culturally integrated economy based on customary and traditional values in a contemporary setting. The ten remote villages Gwich'in and Koyukon Athabascan Tribes that form CATG are: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Canyon Village, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Rampart, Stevens Village, and Venetie.

The traditional lands are the upper Yukon Flats, a 55,000-square-mile area encompassing what is now the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (YFNR) and part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Stretching from the White Mountains in the south to the Brooks Range in the north, from the western edge of the Yukon Flats near the Trans-Alaska Pipeline east to the United States-Canada border is of significant historic, cultural and geographic importance to the CATG Tribes. Since time immemorial the CATG Tribes and their tribal membership have lived in reciprocity with these lands and the numerous cultural and linguistic resources therein.

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments is actively involved in establishing self-governance in Alaska for our member tribes and supports the following statement: *The Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon recognize and value the fact that living on the land for many millennia has provided them with an extensive body of knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that many people today refer to as Indigenous knowledge. This knowledge, which has been passed down orally through personal experience and spiritual teachings, is the foundation of Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon identity and survival. It continues to have relevance today and draws its' strength from being used, revised and continuously updated to take into consideration new knowledge. The*

Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon hold this knowledge in trust for future generations in the belief that this knowledge is of benefit to themselves and all humanity. The Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon believe the best way to ensure its survival is to continue to use it and share it in a manner that respects this knowledge. Indigenous language is interwoven in all aspects of this statement.

The CATG member tribes are in the Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon languages within the larger Athabaskan or Dene' language family. Both Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon are critically endangered and Gwich'in is linguistically classified as Level 7 – Shifting in *The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages* (Baker, 1996, p. 67) by Fishman. In 2006, Dr. Sikorski reported that Gwich'in had 272 remaining Gwich'in first language speakers. The declining numbers of fluent speakers is alarming and a few local efforts initiating language programs continue to reclaim and revitalize oral fluency in Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon. CATG staff, Doyon Foundation, Tanana Chiefs, and the CRCDC Vice-Chancellor, Evon Peter, ANL Professor Dr. Sikorski to develop a range of programs that work towards increasing opportunities for the transmission of language to occur naturally or in a formal school setting from one generation to the next.

CATG has obtained funding from the US Department of Education Office of Indian Education (OIE) Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) for a 3-year grant to develop curriculum and to gather Elders and fluent speakers in a 2-week Yukon Flats Indigenous Language Revitalization Institute. CATG staff are very thankful for this project but simply put, Indigenous language reclamation efforts require more than one grant.

The local REAA, the Yukon Flats School District has 3 Gwich'in Language Teachers that continue to teach 6-hour of language per day in the school setting. These dedicated professionals have tirelessly worked to teach Gwich'in Language for decades without a unified curriculum, textbooks, printed materials for Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon medium education, or supply budgets. For the local district to continue to fund the Gwich'in Language Teacher position, these professionals often have to work up to 4 hours as a regular classroom aide limiting their instructional time in Gwich'in. Upper Koyukon may be taught in Rampart distance delivery from Fairbanks as part of the Yukon Koyukuk School District but not in the other villages.

It is difficult for all involved in governance at the regional board level to adequately fund education in rural Alaska generally. It is difficult for administrators to balance budgets with shrinking enrollment and to meet the numerous Western academic mandates required, sports related extra-curricular activities, and ever-present energy costs and support a comprehensive language program for two unique languages. It is also difficult for the educators to properly prepare and instruct in Western academics and Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon Languages. Most importantly, it is more than difficult but completely unrealistic that any student achieves oral fluency or become literate in any language that is only offered in one-hour per day. Gwich'in medium and Upper Koyukon medium instruction must be the goal to have appropriate growth for oral fluency at more than a conversational level. I strongly support the development and formation of immersion schools.

This period of time is critical for language reclamation efforts in Alaska and a strong commitment by the State of Alaska with adequate funding for curriculum development and alignment, teacher preparation, material development and printing, and full-time salaries with benefits for Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon Language Teachers. Funding for immersion schools and mentor-apprenticeship programs will help those involved in Indigenous language reclamation efforts move forward as leaders to save our precious Indigenous languages for future generations. It is important that the tribes take leadership in administering schools through compacting, credentialing Indigenous Language Teachers, curriculum development, and teacher preparation and orientation.

Thank you for your recognition of the magnitude of the seriousness of the potential of wide spread loss of the Indigenous languages of Alaska, please consider a financial commitment as well. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. If I can be any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. Mahsi' or thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charleen Fisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charleen" being more prominent than the last name "Fisher".

Dr. Charleen Fisher
Executive Director
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments

March 18, 2018

Representative John Lincoln
State Capitol Room 432
Juneau, Alaska. 99801

Regarding House Bill HCR 19

Dear Representative John Lincoln,

I am writing to encourage you to support HCR 19. I am passionate about our Inupiaq language and would love to hear my grandchildren and great grandchildren speak it. With the help of our elders in Kotzebue and in the NANA Region, I have been reconnected with our beautiful language. Our Inupiaq dialect is unique and is closely connected to the land our culture.

I strongly believe that learning my native language has changed my life for the better. Our traditional ways have boosted my self-esteem and self-identity. It has enabled me to raise my children in a healthier lifestyle. Once I saw the positive transformations, I quickly wanted to share my knowledge with my children and those around me. I believe so strongly in the revitalization of our language that I sent my three children to Nikaitchuat where they attended for 5 years. I have also taught at Nikaitchuat under the direction and guidance from my mentor teachers and elders. I encourage everyone to learn their native language and teach it to the next generation. It holds the key to our past and brings us forward into the future.

I'd like to thank you for your time, and ask you to support HCR 19. The implications of carrying on our language and culture is immense. I know the positive changes that have occurred in my life from learning our language. This was only possible with the love and support I was given from my mentors, elders and community leaders. Our NANA Region faces many challenges, however, by supporting HCR 19, I feel strongly we can make positive changes for the future of our people. If you have questions or would like to speak with me please contact me at P. O. Box 1291, Kotzebue, AK 99752 or nauyaq@hotmail.com.

Quyaannaqpak,

Nauyaq Wanda Baltazar

March 6, 2018

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

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

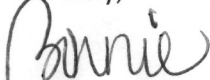
Dear Representative Parish and members of the Community & Regional Affairs:

As an apprentice of Xaad Kil – Haida Language, and a mother and grandmother of Haida children, I am writing to encourage you to support HCR 19. Since I started my journey on learning my native language I found how much I have missed out in knowing and learning my heritage tongue, and my children and grandchildren have been deprived learning their native heritage language. Our language is a beautiful one, as it links us to the environment around us. It teaches respect and reverence. It teaches us about the world and ties us to our families and community.

My mother was sent off to boarding school and there she lost her connection to the language. Therefore, as a child growing up I didn't hear or practice in my home. I learned a little from classes at school but it wasn't enough and we lacked resources and consistency. What I have learned is that it has affected my mother physically and emotionally, and she has had to deal with the loss her entire 70 years. When I speak what little Haida I know to her, it makes her feel good.

I'd like to thank you for your time and ask that you support HCR 19 and ask that you please understand the significance to me, my family and our people and people of Alaska. My heritage language has made a difference in my life. And with your support it will make a difference in Hydaburg, to our children and grand children, and even to those who it was taken from. If you have further questions, you may contact me at P.O. Box 1049, Craig, AK 99921 or eagle_one69@hotmail.com. Ja haw'aa – thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Bonnie R. Morris
Xaad Kil Apprentice

03/02/2018

Legislature of the State Of Alaska

Governor Bill Walker

Topic: Recognition of Linguistic Alaskan HCR19

Languages or Xaah kíl, (Haida Language)

I am very concerned about the State passing a bill to keep the Native tongue alive with all the Tribes. Please represent this to the state to pass without this, AK has no culture, it's what makes the state great in my heart. I am learning Haida on line with UAS Ketchikan. I have enjoyed it completely. Words I never could recognize I now have a meaning to go with how to pronounce the words. It needs to be pushed more into the school system if possible. There are so Many grants out there, not just having to rely solely on the State. We need the Legislator's help to push a Bill to move on teaching our young and old the value of this great language. The Old times Linguistic were White of different races that I have learned about in this online class, thanks to these men, women who have taking notes, writings to keep a record of the old languages. It's so important. Without Culture/Languages who are we as a State! Háw'aa, Thank you. Jim Brown

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

March 5, 2018

The Honorable Governor Bill Walker

I write to you in support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 recognizing a linguistic emergency. Alaska has a proud, unique history made richer by the Indigenous peoples of this great land. Former Governor Sean Parnell enacted a law when he established the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. This step demonstrated a commitment to place value on the remaining languages to raise awareness and accept an obligation to positively impact this body of rich knowledge for generations to come.

My parents, Irene (Hunter) and Andres Cadiente both shielded me and my siblings from learning their heritage languages, not because of shame associated with Tlingit or Ilocano, but to protect us from the blatant racism of their time that ridiculed anyone as ignorant if they spoke with a second language influence. As an adult I challenged the thought that I was incapable of learning another language other than the French or Spanish learned in school.

As an adult I enrolled in introductory courses in Tlingit and had the privilege of learning from Dr. Walter Soboleff, who broke ground at the University of Alaska Southeast by teaching the first course of its kind. Later, I engaged in more intensive study with Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, our esteemed linguists. The initial study was not without challenge. Not for the great complexity of the Tlingit language, but for gently engaging my mother as a tutor. The emotional impact of racism was the challenge. When she found I was not giving up she reluctantly gave in to me and we began regular language lessons that evolved from learning to make basic sounds to finally working together on translations from English to Tlingit. That journey and the learning of language were more meaningful than my graduate studies at Stanford University. Her healing was paramount. She would later establish herself as one of the remaining fluent Tlingit language speakers and serve as an elder in residence, teaching children Tlingit language basics in the Juneau School District and in Alaska Native Culture Camps in Juneau.

Today we know more. Dual and multi-lingual individuals have increased brain capacity. Students who find themselves with the opportunity to learn their Native language no longer are expected to leave their identities at the door of the school and classroom. I have the privilege of working with students from all over our great state who attend U.A.S. It is within your capacity to impact the trajectory of Alaska Native languages by taking this initial step of recognizing the linguistic emergency thorough administrative order.

Respectfully,

Ronalda Cadiente Brown
1970 Fritz Cove Road
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 723-1656

Cynthia “Sis” Bolivar M.S.
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
1407 W. 31st Ave, Suite 602, Anchorage, AK 99503
907-276-5944

To Our Honorable Legislators:

I strongly support House Concurrent Resolution 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an Administrative Order recognizing a **linguistic emergency in Alaska**. Alaska’s Native languages are imperiled, as the last generations of fluent speakers are an aging population and younger generations face ever increasing assimilation pressures. UNESCO’s Endangered Languages listings include Seward Peninsula Inupiaq (King Island, Diomedes, and Norton Sound dialects) as *Critically Endangered*, Kotzebue and North Slope Inupiaq dialects are *Severely Endangered*; Siberian Yup’ik is listed as *Definitely Endangered*, and Central Yupik and Nunivak Island Yupik are listed as *Vulnerable*. The loss of Native languages reflects centuries of unjust policies and practices that resulted in innumerable social and health consequences for Alaska’s first peoples. As a mental health professional, I have witnessed these consequences first hand. I also have experienced the resiliency and recovery that are hastened by access to ancestral lifeways, pride in one’s indigenous identity, and sacred connections to the land, animals, family, society, and spirituality which are best conveyed and understood in one’s own language. As a non-Native person, my own mental, physical, relational, and spiritual well-being have been improved enormously through contact with Alaska Native languages and lifeways. I know of many other non-Native persons who have received similar benefits.

I urge you to support Concurrent Resolution 19.

Thank you,
Cynthia Bolivar
Cynthia Bolivar



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



615 Bidwell Avenue, Suite 101 | Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
907.459.2048 | 1.888.478.4755
foundation@doyon.com | www.doyonfoundation.com

DOYON
Foundation

March 6, 2018

Committee Chair
House Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: House Concurrent Resolution 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order declaring a linguistic emergency for Alaska Native languages

Dear Chairman Parish and members of the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

Greetings. Doyon Foundation would like to lend our voice in support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 19. We concur with the sponsors of this resolution that an emergency situation exists for Alaska Native languages. There are ten languages in the Doyon region, half of all 20 Alaska Native languages in the state.

Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga (Lower Tanana)
Dihthaad Xt'een Iin Aandëg' (Tanacross)
Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim)
Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in)
Deg Xinag
Denaakk'e (Koyukon)
Hän
Holikachuk
Inupiaq
Nee'aanëegn' (Upper Tanana)

Through the work of our language revitalization program, we see firsthand how each of these languages are greatly endangered. In the majority of these languages, one can identify each of the speakers by first name only. We see a great need for substantial changes in order to open the door for the survival of Alaska's precious first languages. Some of the supports that could make a crucial difference are funding for immersion schools & programs, the formation of an Alaska Native Language School Board, high school graduation standards that include basic proficiency, and statements of commitment such as HR19.

Na basee', Dogidinh, Basee', Tsen'anh, Hai', Mähsi' Xasagidaghisidhoot, Tsin'ee, Tsin'ee and Quyanag for your commitment to Alaska Native languages.

Adak'ohtii, take care.

Doris Miller
Executive Director

Allan Hayton
Language Revitalization Program Director

From: Gavin Hudson
To: [House Community and Regional Affairs](#)
Subject: HCR 19 Testimony Thursday March 8, 2018, 8:00AM
Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018 8:52:17 AM

HCR 19 Testimony Thursday March 8, 2018, 8:00AM

To: House Community & Regional Affairs Committee
844-586-9085, House.Community.And.Regional.Affairs@akleg.gov

From: Gavin Hudson, Chairman of the Haayk Foundation, Metlakatla, Alaska

Honorable Members of the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee, and to all the members of the Alaskan Legislature, I am compelled to testify to you this morning because we need the elected leadership of Alaska to admit that we have A Linguistic Emergency on our hands. We are losing what might be the last generation of Tsimshian fluent speakers. Sm'algyax, the beautiful language of the Tsimshian people, is dying. In the entire world, there are less than 100 fluent speakers of our language. In Alaska, there are only six. Every living fluent speaker is over the age of 65, many in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. Many with poor health. I have heard that some Alaskan languages could be gone within 100 years. I am here to tell you, that our language, one of the official languages of the State of Alaska, could be gone in 20 years. That, ladies and gentlemen, is within my own lifetime, and within yours. We all could very well be the witnesses of the death of our last fluent speaker. If and when that day comes, what will history say about you? Did you do everything you can do to stop it? Did you even admit there was a problem? Did you at least acknowledge the emergency? In our language, we have an ancient and positive expression, sa'aaml waan, it means make good what you do and make your name good. Our names, the quality of them, is determined by our actions. Did we behave with integrity and compassion? Did we answer the call to serve? Do we hold others up when they need our support?

No one can save a language on their own. But languages can be saved, if we do it together. Whether you are indigenous or not, we are all in the same canoe, and we have to pull together. We need you, all of you, to help us. I am asking for your support in the effort to save the Tsimshian language, I am asking you to vote yes in declaring a linguistic emergency. We have all sworn oaths to do what is best for our peoples. And I am telling you, having living and vibrant indigenous languages is what is best for our State. Learning our grandparents' language, and then passing it down to our grandchildren, is an act of overcoming colonialism and historical trauma. Bilingual children do better in math, science, reading, art and music. As Mr. Boxley and Dr. Alice Taff have both testified, when an indigenous language is healthy, rates of suicide and drug abuse drop significantly. So this is not just a matter of health, but literally of life and death. At a time of division and animosity, we can decide to move forward together toward the beautiful and noble goal of saving our mother tongues.

We Tsimshian have another ancient, positive expression, Wayi Wah! Wayi Wah means,
Let's go!

So I say to you today, Wayi Wah, because this is an emergency, and we have no time to waste.

Thank you for your time.

For the Attention of
Governor Bill Walker of Alaska,

Greetings. I am a minister from a small church in Ketchikan Alaska where I am also a student of Haida language in pursuit of a B.A. in Alaskan Native Studies and Languages. Rarely have I seen people more determined to learn and preserve their mother tongue than the Haida people I am privileged to study with. It is difficult to put into words, ironically, the importance of preserving every threatened language we can. When we lose languages, we lose whole ways of viewing the world and perspectives on our shared human experience that cannot be recovered. I am not of Alaskan Native heritage, but when I am learning Haida I practice it with my 5-year-old son because he will need to understand the cultural history of the Alaska that will be his homeland. The preservation of Alaskan Native language is essential to the scholastic integrity of the State and thus is to the benefit of our populations as a whole; as a result, it is necessary for all of us to preserve Native Languages, and is not the responsibility of ethnic minorities alone.

There are 20 officially recognized Alaska Native Languages in the State the loss of which would adversely affect the spiritual, social, and regional well-being of Natives and Non-natives whose experience and identities are informed and inspired by the great history and tenacity of the peoples who have lived and thrived in this land before us. We do not only seek to preserve the language of an ethnic minority, but to save the cultural heritage of the land we inhabit.

As you may know, there has been a historic effort in the State of Alaska to strip cultural traditions, spirituality, and language from the indigenous peoples of the state by the enforcement of English only education. This policy has been the result of linguistic Darwinism that seeks to undermine and erase the importance and cultural significance of Alaskan Native language through the acculturative efforts of Sheldon Jackson, the damage he caused, and the precedents he set. It is imperative that we alleviate some of that damage. You have the power to rectify some of the mistakes made by the U.S. government, and the authority to uphold the American value of equality that empowers all Americans with self-determination. Our self-determination must include certain liberties such as freedom of religion, and by extension, certainly, the freedom to speak our own languages and to teach them to our children.

1) When, where, and by whom was the first bilingual school in Alaska opened?

Answer: 1824, in Unalaska, by Fr. John Veniaminov. The languages of instruction were Russian and Aleut.

2) When, where, and by whom was the last Aleut bilingual school closed?

Answer: About 1912, St. Paul Island, by the U.S. Government.

3) How many of you knew this?

4) Why not?

(p.2, Dauenhauer 1980)

Our state is in critical danger of losing its native languages, and as per Senate Bill No. 130 it is the responsibility of the state to reasonably respond to the advisement of the Alaskan Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. By recognizing and validating the threats to these languages and the needs of our communities we prioritize their struggles in a way that has not yet been achieved in State history.

12 **WHEREAS** Senate Bill No. 130, enacted as ch. 48, SLA 2012, signed into law by
13 Governor Sean Parnell, established the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory
14 Council to advise both the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects to
15 provide for the cost-effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native
16 languages in the state; and

(Page 1 Line 12, House Concurrent Resolution No. 19)

Studies suggest that language immersion increases proficiency in both English and the immersive language studied. These studies and their resulting data is applicable to Alaskan Natives and Non-natives alike, who attend public schools.

Alaskan Natives have an inalienable right to educate their children in a culturally-appropriate way, in the languages of their ancestors. It would be inconceivable to an American English speaker to be required to send their child to a school that teaches only in a language foreign to the language spoken in the home. Why, therefore, do we impose this requirement on Alaskan Natives, when language immersion would be beneficial to all students regardless of age, race, class, or creed?

7 **WHEREAS** 50 years of research shows that early, total language immersion
8 education for English speakers increases academic proficiency in both English and the
9 immersion language, as well as in other academic subjects; and
10 **WHEREAS** indigenous peoples should be able to provide education in the peoples'
11 own languages in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and
12 learning;

(Page 2 Line 7, House Concurrent Resolution No. 19)

It naturally follows from our understanding of the benefits of language immersion and the way literacy has been stripped from Alaskan students through the closure of bilingual schools that the solution to recovering Alaskan Native languages is to reinstate bilingual schooling in the State of Alaska.

If you would truly seek to prioritize the survival of Alaskan Native Languages as per the request of the Alaskan Native Language and Advisory Council then I request that you create a requirement or option to include bilingual and language immersive study of regionally specific Alaskan Native languages in all elementary, middle, and high schools in the state with direct emphasis on early childhood education.

What follows is a description of the result of English-only education in Alaska by an English teacher, and the effects of English-only education on students' literacy and mental health. The assumption that language immersion impairs literacy in English is wrong. It does not hold up to statistical study.

We have the ability to improve literacy in English by encouraging literacy in Alaskan Native Language.

The kind of pressure described above was put on all Alaska Native languages and peoples, with devastating results. The legacy has been one of linguistic insecurity. Generations of teachers have convinced parents that Native languages will result in stupidity and difficulty in learning English. Unfortunately, the battle still rages; we are fighting the same issues we fought 100 years ago. We have the results of English-only education in Alaska, and frankly I don't think the results are much to write home about. Irreparable damage has been done to the mental health of the Native community and individual. As a teacher, I have to deal with the impact of this every day, and it makes me angry.

(p.27, Dauenhauer 1980)

Not only do you have the opportunity to set right a historic injustice, but you have a duty to the educational integrity of all Alaskan children who are expected to compete internationally with people from foreign countries who absolutely benefit from years of multilingual education. We have a responsibility to train children in their own languages and to teach children to respect and appreciate the cultural significance of the languages of other cultures if we expect them to hold their own in an interdependent international society.

If we value any of the State's official languages, English or Alaskan Native, then we must not repeat the mistakes of our forebears.

operate in a very intricate language community. It is our responsibility to understand our own language and its interaction with other languages in the community. Unless we begin to do this, we will only recycle the frustrations of the last hundred years. Unless we really understand our language and how we use it in the cultural context, we will never really be teaching English--we will only be teaching a lot of prejudice about English, which is what I think we've been doing for a couple of hundred years.

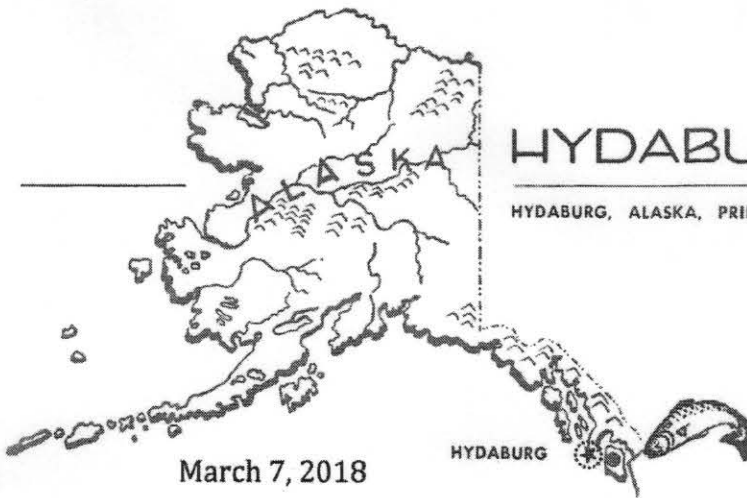
(p.29, Dauenhauer 1980)

Governor Walker, you have the chance to set the tone for what education should be, and could be, to put your name down in history as a leader who worked to preserve justice and promote equality, and to protect the history of the State you govern.

I humbly urge you to declare a state of Linguistic emergency as outlined in House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 by Representatives Ortiz, Kreiss-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, and Chenault. I further urge you to advocate to the best of your ability for language immersion in Alaska schools.

Sincerely, and urgently,

Kelsey "Etalia" Greenstreet
Student, University of Alaska Southeast
Minister & Organizer, Twisted Root ADF
(541) 510-2633



HYDABURG CITY SCHOOL

HYDABURG, ALASKA, PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND 99922

March 7, 2018

Justin Parish
Community and Regional Affairs
Juneau, Alaska 99801


Re: House Concurrent Resolution No. 19

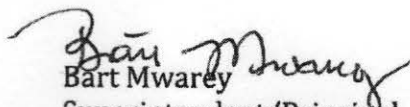
Dear Mr. Parish:

The Hyدابург City School District would like to express its strong support for the Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A). We have embarked on a language preservation effort for about three (3) years now and our efforts, so far, have been pretty positive. We have seen increased interests and participation from young children to adults, in the Haida Language and Culture and need your support in the passage of the Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A). The passage of this resolution will greatly enhance the survival of indigenous languages as well as enriching the larger society by ensuring the perpetuation of cultural diversity within Alaska.

Hyدابург City School District has begun several programs that have been very successful: Haida Language, Haida Art, and Haida Canoe Building. Next year we hope to offer courses on Haida History, Haida Culture and Tribal Government. We believe that these programs will restore and reshape the social and emotional health of our students and the community as a whole.

It is vitally important for all Alaskans to keep our rich Native cultures, heritage, and languages alive. It is this diversity that makes Alaska unique and a very special place to live. We thank you in advance for a favorable response and urge you to support the House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A).

Sincerely,

Bonnie Morris
Board President
Hyدابург City School District


Bart Mwarey
Superintendent/Principal
Hyدابург City School District



Iñupiaq Language Commission

Iñupiaaraagupta ataramik naluruat Ilitkisirut
Speak Iñupiaq and they will learn

P.O. Box 49 • Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 • 1-800-478-3301 • (907) 442-3301 • Fax: (907) 442-2863

March 5, 2018

Committee Chair

House Community and Regional Affairs Committee

Capitol Room 124

Juneau, AK 99801

Regarding: House Concurrent Resolution 19 Urging Governor Bill Walker to Issue a Linguistic Emergency for our Alaska Native Languages

Dear Co-Chair Parish and members of the Committee:

The Iñupiaq Language Commission strives to preserve and perpetuate the Iñupiaq language of Northwest Alaska. The Commission includes Iñupiaq language speakers from across Northwest Alaska who are appointed by the Regional Elders Council for their knowledge and experience in teaching and speaking the language. The Commission created the Iñupiaaraagupta app, updated the Iñupiaq language dictionary, and hosted elders and youth conferences in region to encourage the transmittal of our culture to the next generation. Despite our efforts, we continue to see many challenges that are preventing young people from learning and speaking our language.

The Northwest Arctic Borough Census area is 84 percent Alaska Native/American Indian according to the 2010 census. Yet, according to a survey of our region from 2005, only 14 percent of the people living in Northwest Alaska speak Iñupiaq fluently. Since the survey we have lost elders and members of the community who are fluent speakers. The Iñupiaq language, like other Alaska Native languages, contains knowledge and history of our traditional lifestyle. This knowledge and history cannot simply be translated into English without losing the connection to how our people survived in the Arctic for thousands of years.

The Commission has attempted to bring more of our language into schools in Northwest Alaska without success. The barriers to doing this are significant. Local School Boards are dealing with increased mandates, reduced funding, and no incentives to provide language learning or immersion programming.

Fluent speakers that would like to teach in school, but may not have the financial means to obtain a degree, are available but underutilized.

The Commission and other Elders in our region see every day how hungry our young people are for their language. It is central to the identity of our people. It is central to the well-being of individuals, communities, elders, youth, and adults. Every year, more fluent speakers pass away and a new generation that have parents who do not know their language are raising them. Time is of the essence and we believe House Concurrent Resolution 19 urging Governor Bill Walker to issue a linguistic emergency for our Alaska Native languages will create the sense of urgency needed to address this situation if it is followed up by legislative and administrative action.

In addition to the Commission's support for House Concurrent Resolution 19, we respectfully request that the legislature adopt statutes that create a requirement for School Districts in the State to implement Alaska Native language immersion programming to address this urgent situation. This curriculum should be directed at all levels from early childhood education through high school. These statutes should allow school districts to develop language immersion locally and use local experts and traditional knowledge holders. Though School Boards may be empowered to implement programming today, the path to implementation is challenging and often puts language programming at odds with other mandates.

We know that teaching our language will perpetuate our culture and way of life. We will strengthen the next generation of Alaska Native people, and all of Alaska, by recognizing the value of our languages and acting on the urgency of this situation.

Quyanuk for your time and consideration,



Christina Ugik Westlake, President

CC:

Representative John Lincoln

Senator Donny Olson

Governor Bill Walker

Annette Evans Smith, Chair, Alaska Native Languages Preservation Advisory Council



IÑUPIAT IĻITQUSIAT

Respect for Elders • Knowledge of Language • Love for Children • Knowledge of Family Tree • Respect for Others • Sharing • Responsibility to Tribe
Respect for Nature • Hunter Success • Domestic Skills • Family Roles • Cooperation • Humility • Avoid Conflict • Hard Work • Humor • Spirituality

Legislative Written Testimony to the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee
in support of House Concurrent Resolution 19 *Urging the Governor and Other State Agencies
to Work Actively with the Legislature and Alaska Native Organizations to Ensure the Survival and
Continued use of all 20 of the State's Alaska Native Languages* 03/08/18 by Gail Dabaluz

Good afternoon to the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee. I am pleased to submit my legislative written testimony to this body in support of House Concurrent Resolution 19.

My given name is S'eenakw' and English name is Gail Dabaluz. I am a tribally enrolled citizen with Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA). It is our sovereign governmental entity that administers the P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act, as amended contractual agreements on behalf of its 31,000 tribal citizens. I am a current doctoral student enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in the Indigenous Studies Ph. D program.

I am voicing my support of HCR 19 from a deeply personal level. My family and I relocated from Juneau, AK to Hilo, HI in 1994 to attend the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH), so our daughter Ke'ala could be enrolled in the Hawaiian Immersion schools. We left our jobs, house, boat and large network of family and friends to move to Hilo, to be a part of the Pūnana Leo 'O Hilo (language learning nest) Hawaiian Immersion Preschool and later, Keaukaha Hawaiian Immersion Elementary School. Our daughter was accepted into the program, after a year in Hawai'i. She is the only Alaska Native who has been admitted to the Pūnana Leo 'O Hilo and Keaukaha Hawaiian Immersion schools that I am aware of. The medium of instruction was 'olelo Hawai'i Wale No (Only Speak in Hawaiian) on all campuses and is pre-K up to the Ph. D level. Participating families had to commit to the Hawaiian epistemology, which is a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge, from a Hawaiian paradigm (worldview).

While an undergraduate at UHH, I worked with the founding members of the Pūnana Leo, including: Drs. William "Pila" Wilson, Kaunoe Kamanā, Larry Kimura, and Kalena Silva. They provided me the foundational knowledge to understand how to create an immersion language program, incorporating an Indigenous worldview, which exceeded western educational standards. This first-hand knowledge as a parent of a Hawaiian Immersion student is the only one in the entire state of Alaska and probably, throughout the United States.

I later broadened my understanding of immersion schools, through my travels to Aotearoa (New Zealand) to gain direct knowledge of Te Kōhanga Reo (language

learning nest) Māori immersion schools. The Indigenous language learning model was first launched by the Maori's in Aotearoa in 1981, and later, followed by the Hawaiians in 1982.

These personal experiences with language immersion programs were applied when I returned to Juneau to work for Sealaska Heritage Foundation (SHF) as their Language and Culture Specialist to develop the At Yatx'i Satu Kei Nas.ax̱ (The Voices of our Children are Rising) Tlingit Immersion Preschool in 2000. The preschool was based upon the Head Start model and experienced challenges, since it was based upon an income criteria. Those lessons learned have led to various approaches to reversing language shift, in order to preserve our ancestral languages in a tangible way. The CCTHITA, Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, University of Alaska (UAS) and Juneau School District (JSD) has worked collaboratively to create Indigenous language opportunities in order to save them. We have few remaining fluent speakers in the southeast region, representing the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Nations.

The importance of learning one's ancestral languages is to understand the paradigms and deep philosophical connections to our homelands. These lessons are shared through an oral tradition of our Elders and transmitted, oftentimes, in secular ceremony. We understand the importance of looking at unique ways to share our languages and Ways of Being. Some of our tribal citizens have You Tube channels to teach the languages. Others use social media to foster comradery among geographically diverse and separate places to maintain our cultural identity through language.

I can attest to the efficacy of total immersion and using as many approaches to achieve this goal. It is my family's experience that immersion is the way to instruct our People in order to regain our Indigenous languages, as they relate to our culture.

I urge each committee member to concur with the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council's recommendation to work with Governor Walker and state agencies to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency is occurring in the State of Alaska. All measures to reverse this are recommended. There is no threat to displace the English language through this measure; there is literally no escaping the English language in the state of Alaska.

Gunalchéesh,

S'eenaaakw'

Gail Dabaluz

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF JULIE KITKA, PRESIDENT
ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
TO THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
March 5, 2018

Re: In support of HCR 19, Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 186 federally recognized tribes, 177 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community on a wide array issues.

AFN strongly supports House Concurrent Resolution No. 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Alaska is home to 20 officially recognized Alaska Native languages, Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unanga Dená'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. HB 216/SLA 2014, signed into law by Governor Sean Parnell, added the 20 Alaska Native languages to the official languages of the state.

Alaska Native languages embody our cultures, worldview, and the knowledge of our ancestors. Alaska Native languages exemplify the richness of our land and define our group orientation and kinship, personify our tangible and intangible relationship to our land, wildlife and universe. The wisdom of a people is embodied in their language, as it has been said: language carries the wisdom of Elders from one generation to the next. Solutions to the problems facing Native communities can be found within the culture and the language upon which it is based.

The state is in critical danger of losing those languages and, according to the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council – the creation of which was also signed into law by Governor Parnell in 2014 -- the state may lose the last fluent speakers of all 20 Alaska Native languages by the end of the 21st century.

AFN urges Governor Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Attachments:
AFN Resolution 14-44

March 2, 2018

The Honorable Governor Bill Walker
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Governor Walker:

I am Karla Booth and I am a constituent of District 19. I am interested in bill HRC 19 Alaska Native Language Emergency because I am Tsimshian and my family comes from the community of Metlakatla, Alaska and no one in my family can fluently speak our indigenous language called Sm'alg yax. In our community as a whole, only about five Elders can fluently speak our language and two adults are second language learners that are almost fluent speakers.

I am asking that you support efforts to place greater importance in the preservation and learning of Alaska Native languages. Alaska Native people cannot save our languages on our own. This needs and deserve the attention of the state of Alaska and all its citizens to take an active role in preserving these treasures that connect us to our ancestors and a people that truly exemplify the spirit of Alaska. By placing an emergency status on the preservation of our languages this could provide the motivation that is needed to enact supportive actions that will strengthen our dying languages. Those actions could include:

- Public recognition and use of indigenous place names
- Use of indigenous greetings and salutations
- Use of indigenous forms of giving thanks
- Indigenous language learning by all K-12 students
- Inclusion of indigenous introductions by all Alaska citizens

Nt'oyaxsn, thank you for your time, energy in serving Alaskans, and your support in preserving what makes Alaska so unique and important to the world. Our languages are a connection to the past that should not be allowed to break.

Sincerely,

Karla Booth
446 Bliss Street
Anchorage, AK 99508



March 5, 2018

Representative Dan Ortiz
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol 513
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HCR 19

Dear Representative Ortiz:

Thank you for introducing HCR 19, "Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency." Koniag, Inc. supports HCR 19.

As HCR 19 indicates, the Alaska Native languages of Alaska are at risk. In our region, we have fewer than 30 fluent speakers of Alutiiq. Although there is a concerted effort taking place in our region to preserve our language, with each passing year, we lose more of our fluent Elders. Time is of the essence if many of our indigenous languages in Alaska are to survive. The more resources and attention this issue receives, the more likely we will be successful in the survival of our languages. HCR 19 helps keep focus on this critical cultural matter.

Again, thank you for introducing HCR 19 and Koniag, Inc. urges the Alaska State Legislature to pass this resolution during its 2018 session.

Sincerely,

Shauna Hegna
President

194 Alimaq Drive
Kodiak, AK 99615
(907) 486-2530
Fax (907) 486-3325

From: Lacey Jade
To: [House Community and Regional Affairs](#)
Subject: Testimony for HCR19
Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018 8:58:07 AM

Good Morning to the members of the committee:

Today, I'd like to speak towards language-based marginalization taking place today and in the history of our people.

Language is our identity in that it impacts how we understand our relationship to the world, the structure of our society, and our ability to see the possibility of the future. Without our original, indigenous language, our people cannot relate themselves to the world and to our people in a healthy way. As in the case of nurturing children, and also in the case of nurturing ourselves, neglect is tantamount to murder by inaction.

The loss of our language is directly impacted by our people being marginalized by english speaking society and colonial law. We are marginalized in that in this society we are allotted limited resources to address our societal struggles, such as poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence. This has left little or no resources left for language revitalization. Having to put our language on the backburner for so long has resulted in it's waning status as an important component to our health as a people.

Our language is the the root of our identity. It is a part of the land where we grow. Losing it from this land, is like losing oxygen from our soil. It causes a structure of toxicity where nothing will grow. We cannot hope to grow and be a healthy people, if we lose our language.

Please vote today in recognizing the linguistic emergency in Alaska, so that we may hope to have the resources allocated to bring back the roots of our identity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Lacey Wilson, Program Director
Tourism Dept, Metlakatla Indian Comm.
Ph: 907.886.TOUR
Fax: [907.886.4436](tel:907.886.4436)

Patrick Courtnage

From: LIO Sitka
Sent: Tuesday, March 6, 2018 9:26 AM
To: Rep. Justin Parish
Cc: House Community and Regional Affairs
Subject: Written Testimony on HCR19 for the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee

Dear Chairman Parish and the entire House Community and Regional Affairs Committee ,
Please accept this written public testimony for distribution to the committee from Sitka constituent Libby Stortz libbystortz@gci.net as submitted to the Sitka LIO. Thank you! Ken Fate, Sitka's Legislative Officer

1) Alaska Native languages: Dear committee members, I would like to add my voice of support for defining Alaska Native languages as a linguistic emergency. Years of attempted annihilation of the use of Alaska Native languages and assimilation have resulted in far fewer Native language speakers in Alaska. There are fewer speakers and for many of them, it has taken a very long time to remove the yoke of educational and cultural shaming they experienced throughout their youth, to give themselves permission to share their knowledge. The generation with the greatest linguistic knowledge and skill are aged and dying out without having had sufficient time and support to pass their traditional knowledge and languages to the younger generations. Please give support to this linguistic emergency.

Thank you,
Libby Stortz
Sitka

Nazune Menka

2800 Peter's Lane Apt. B Juneau, AK 99801 (907) 465-9113 Nazune@outlook.com

March 5, 2018

House Committee on Rural and Community Development

Dear House Committee on Rural and Community Development:

Desaanh nezoonh. These two words are Denaak'ke (or Koyukon Athabascan) and mean "hello"; or "good day"; or "pretty day"; or "beautiful day." The point being that Denaak'ke language is multifaceted and words can have several meanings. The language enriches our understanding of the world around us and creates a greater knowledge of the place we collectively call home, Alaska. For example, "tloon' ne'elts'eeyhleyaah" means the wind waves the stars, and "a peculiar twinkling of the stars considered as a forerunner of windstorms." What a beautiful way to view the world.

The Denaak'ke language dictionary was printed for the first time in 2001 by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and until recently was out of print. Without this dictionary and the work of the people, Native and non-Native alike, I would not be able to continue to learn my indigenous language. I have assisted in naming my nieces and nephews through the use of this dictionary. Traditionally, an elder would name our youth. But as my sister's family lives in Hawai'i they were only going to be given Native Hawaiian or Kanaka Maoli traditional names from elders in my brother in law's family.

My name was given to me by Alaska Native Denaak'ke elder Catherine Minook. You can see it is spelled "Nazune," but in our dictionary it is spelled "Nezoonh." If our community were to learn how to say hello in Denaak'ke when they come to the Interior I would no longer be asked where my name is from or what it means because they would understand that it is part of the way to give warm greetings when we meet. In Hawai'i everyone knows what Aloha means and the words are part of what makes Hawai'i such a great place to visit. Imagine if we were to begin to recognize the worth of Alaska Native languages and share it with our visitors so that it becomes part of the unique visit to the great state Alaska. It would enrich us all.

For these reasons, I encourage the Committee to pass HCR 19.

Sincerely,

/s/Nazune Menka

Denaak'ke, J.D. Candidate 2018

University of Arizona James E. Rogers School of Law

Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy Program

> Dear MS Gatti,

> I have been publishing on the critically endangered state of Alaska Native Languages since the first publication of my map defining them in 1974, including actual numbers of remaining speakers. Finally there's the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC), and their new report on those numbers, page 8 of their 2018 report, at last recognizing the crisis. In part due to a tendency to keep low profile on those numbers (e.g. ANLC's latest version of my map, eliminating those numbers entirely), even ANLPAC's numbers sometimes do not show quite how grave the situation is, especially how old those speakers are in addition to how few. For example, Tanana Athabaskan now has one fluent speaker, Sarah Silas of Minto, age 93.

> I strongly support recognition and action for Alaska Native Languages in this crisis. If there is any way I can help you or Representative Ortiz with this bill please let me know.

> Sincerely, Michael Krauss

February 27, 2018

Governor Bill Walker
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Bill Walker,

I'm writing in support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 and to urge you to recognize the linguistic emergency that exists in the State of Alaska. As a member of the Haida Nation and a Haida Language Learner I cannot express enough the need for language revitalization for my tribe and the 19 others tribes that are at extreme risk of losing their languages.

As our elders continue to pass on, so does our language. With fewer and fewer fluent speakers left, what will our people do? How else will we carry on our traditions without this vital part of our culture?

It is our duty to work together to prioritize the survival and continuation of Alaska Native Languages. We must develop immersion and restoration programs within our state in order to build a platform for sustainability.

Háw'aa, Thank you,



Michelle Eakman
2417 Tongass Ave Ste 111-213
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-220-6946

***"Wáayaat hl kíilang sk'at'áa. Kíilang sk'at'géik uu kílganggang."
Learn your language now. It is important to learn your language.***

The hearing for HCR 19

in House Community and Regional Affairs

March 6th at 8am.

Honorable legislators,

Paglagivsi!

My name is Ronald Hopson Brower Sr. I am in support of HCR 19.

As we speak of Alaska Native languages, and in support of HCR 19. I am reminded of a time, of a fellow Inuk, The Honorable Mary Simon, who served her people as the National President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. She had such an impact on me when she spoke in Tromsø Norway in 2008. I quote: "We who are of the circumpolar world are facing many challenging issues relating to our environment our economies and the social conditions in our communities. But I do not think there is an issue that speaks more to who we are and how we are doing than the state of our indigenous languages." I think there are many here, and in the villages, who feel the same way about the health of Alaska Native Languages but feel helpless in their desire to know their own cultural language and be able to speak it.

In 2010, I was invited to speak at Sivutmuutilugu Uqapaitiqput. It is a vision to stabilize, even revitalize the health of our Iñupiaq language with a further goal that it will empower our communities to excel in our Inupiat heritage and culture through the use of Iñupiaq as our first language. And we have over the years had many meetings and conferences to seek ways to preserve, and perpetuate the Iñupiaq language so it remains our first language and not a heritage language. Even though we have set goals with good intentions, to enhance uqapiaqniq, speaking our language, the resulting experiences show we are moving in the opposite direction. Iñupiaq as a first language is declining. Today in many villages Inuit under the age of 50 are not able to converse in Iñupiaq at all. I am sure Inuit are not the only ones who feel this way

I did some research in regard to the Northwest Arctic Borough from 2010 Census statistics. Records showed: There was a population of about 7,300 residents. About 83% are Iñupiaq people. That would be around 6,060 Inuit, who should be speakers of the Iñupiaq language. Out of that number, about 55% or 3,332 are children under the age of 18. That leaves us with 2728 adults of whom about 40% speak Iñupiaq at home. This suggests that out of 6060 Iñupiaq in the Northwest Arctic Borough there are now about 1090, or less, fluent Iñupiaq first language speakers.

The North Slope Census statistics recorded the same trend with about 13% fluent speakers remaining. and other Inuit regions in Canada are also going through a similar trend.

As we experience language shift to English today, our traditional first language is rapidly becoming a heritage language. Today, we need assistance to see what needs to be done to reverse this situation for many Alaska Native languages. HCR 19 Would help us to consider ways to reverse this trend.

In 2008 the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues published an 'Expert Paper' on "Indigenous Children's Education and Languages". The main conclusion of the UN Expert Panel after examining all the research was this (and I quote): "the greatest predictor of long-term success in school for indigenous children is how long they receive instruction through their first language. The length of time students receive education in their mother tongue is more important than any other factor (including socio-economic status) in predicting the educational success of bilingual students. The worst results are with students in programs where the student's mother tongues are not supported at all or where they are only taught as subjects". The UN Expert Panel is making it clear to us that unless our

children grow up speaking a first language first then adding English later is very important to the educational success of children as bilingual Alaska Native students. We should implement that advice.

Not so long ago. A hunter decorated his equipment made from ivory, bone and wood with the animals he would hunt and was filled with ritual to ensure that the spirits of the animals were not offended but enchanted to willingly give themselves to the hunter. The engravings embodied in the art forms are one of the most unique in the world and is comparable to the art of other societies thriving around the same time, the Maya, the Egyptians, and of course those high cultures that developed agricultural societies. While these cultures developed writing systems, Inuit developed an oral tradition to pass on historical knowledge which was incorporated into the engravings but in language that could be spoken. It should be noted that in the magical character of artistic carvings, many sculptural and graphic compositions appear as encrypted illustrations of myths. Therefore, the markings on these tools have greater significance than just a design. They carry engraved information that allowed the storyteller to remember the messages to be repeated like coded text for generations until the hunting tool completed its service to the community. In this way traditional knowledge could be used to pass on Iñupiaq cultural history as a part of “a unique ethno-cultural language tradition”. The role of the Iñupiaq language was significant because it helped people in communities pass darkest days of winter through story telling gatherings. The oratorical skills of story tellers which we hear on radio today are preserved accounts of such historical events. They reveal ancient cultural encounters and connect events of a time past to the modern age. From the mythical tinjmiapqak (Giant eagle) to tinjutiapqak (jet plane).

Just as our art forms have changed to meet the changing conditions of the time, our Iñupiaq language has also evolved to meet the challenges we as Inuit face life in modern and western society. However, in our case, the application for support of our government, through HCR 19 to support the full perpetuation of our Alaska Native languages opens the way to hope for positive change.

As the statistics show, we have come to a time where we strongly want to revitalize our Iñupiaq and Alaska Native languages. Community People who know the language must be included as resources in any implementation program that will look at the health of our Alaska Native languages as a measure of our well-being. I support the legislation to take the first step to go beyond good intentions at home to move our language from a heritage language back to a first language. If mother speaks Iñupiaq to her child during its newborn years then it becomes the child's first language. This can become a reality with your support. If father tells Iñupiaq stories to the child, the health of our Iñupiaq language will be reinforced and allow our children to excel in school. Yes, with your help. I would encourage a vision where children of school age are praised for speaking their Alaska Native Language in school and on school grounds. We must help a new generation of school administrators and teachers who are willing to implement a bold vision of bilingualism for our schools with Alaska languages as the first language.

This is a huge challenge and it will take the whole community to make the vision of moving the Alaska Native languages from a heritage language back to a first language. I believe it is our responsibility to honor our parents and elders of Alaska leaders to lead a new era in Alaska Native language revitalization expressed in HCR 19.

Tavra,

Ronald H, Brower Sr.

Inupiaq Language Instructor - UAF



SEALASKA HERITAGE

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Bill Walker
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Re: House Concurrent Resolution No. 19

Dear Governor Walker:

We would like to express our strong support for the referenced resolution, HCR 19A. As the resolution notes, we are at a critical juncture in language preservation efforts. This administrative order from your office would greatly enhance the survival of indigenous languages as well as enriching the larger society by ensuring the perpetuation of cultural diversity within Alaska.

Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) is a non-profit that was established more than thirty (30) years ago by our region's tribal elders and leaders. SHI is dedicated to addressing our regional language community needs. We have worked diligently to collaborate with the University of Alaska Southeast, school districts, and other organizations to revitalize the languages of our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people.

Currently, SHI has several programs that are having success in supporting the restoration of Native language learners, including Haa Shuká, Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska Schools (PITAAS) scholarship program, and the Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy (TCLL) language program. With the knowledge that most of our fluent speakers are well over the age of 60, we have worked diligently to create a library of our spoken word so that we can have resources as our new learners become more fluent in the language spoken as it was for generations. Our Haa Shuká language program also pairs our elders with emerging learners to give them the opportunity for immersion in the language in order to increase language proficiency. However, our language learning opportunities are just the beginning of language revitalization. Each of our languages are uniquely complex, and advancing language learners to a level of proficiency high enough to ensure transgenerational transmission is a daunting task.

The referenced resolution is a valuable and necessary endeavor not only to save our languages and cultures but to bring the endangered state of our Native languages to the public and to encourage state and city agencies and other entities to use our Native languages and words on public facilities and for street names. The benefits of these efforts to Alaska Native children reach further than simply learning their languages. Language preservation can improve educational opportunities for Alaska Native children and promote cross cultural understanding. Research has shown that students who are fluent in both their Native language and English perform better in school. Additionally, these efforts will contribute to the overall well-being of Alaska Native peoples. Alaska has one of the highest mortality rates by suicide in the nation. However, research has shown that creating strong cultural identities can form a key preventative factor against youth suicide.

It is imperative for all Alaskan's to keep our rich cultures, heritage, and languages alive, as it is this diversity that makes Alaska the special place it is. We thank you for your consideration and urge you to issue an administrative order that recognizes the state of emergency of Alaska's indigenous languages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosita Worl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rosita" and last name "Worl" clearly distinguishable.

Rosita Worl, Ph.D.
President

cc: Lt. Governor Byron Mallott

Representative Dan Ortiz & co-sponsors



Dear Ms. Gatti and Rep Ortiz,

I'd like to express my support for House Concurrent Resolution 19 that asks Governor Walker to declare a linguistic emergency in the state of Alaska.

As Chair of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I represent the efforts of our faculty and students to document and conserve the world's endangered and threatened languages. As you know, many of the indigenous languages of Alaska are threatened, endangered or extinct, and this represents a loss to humanity that cannot be calculated. But the losses are significant and tangible, and I urge the passing of this bill. The languages of Alaska are unique and represent a history and culture that teaches Alaskans, and indeed everyone across the world, something about humanity. I thank you for this effort, and the opportunity to be heard. Sincerely,

Kamil Deen

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Kamil Deen
Professor and Chair
Department of Linguistics
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Dear Representative Ortiz,

Quyana for recognizing how important our Native languages are in today's world. I am fifty percent Yup'ik yet I was born and raised in the lower Forty-eight. My Yup'ik mother knew how to speak Central Yup'ik; however she committed suicide in February 1996, the year I entered kindergarten. I believe my mother committed suicide due to what the Army did to her and my brother in 1993. My brother is no longer alive. My father still has the records of what happened then. Nonetheless, since she passed away I have not had the chance to learn Yup'ik fully myself. I have spent my whole life trying to learn what I can of the language; especially after I discovered in high school 2009 that a dialect of Siberian Yup'ik went extinct in the mid-late 1990's. I have been having trouble learning Yup'ik but I must say that the internet is far more helpful now than it was when I was growing up.

My husband and I plan to learn Yup'ik before we start trying to have children. We both want our future children to grow up learning Yup'ik, as well as English and Spanish, for our children will be mixed race. With all of my heart quyana for recognizing the importance our Native languages in today's world.

Quyana,

Virginia Silva, Jing'laq
Granddaughter of Mary Kawaglia
804-432-6076
622 Montauk Hwy
East Moriches, NY 11940
virginiaeskimo@aol.com
coastieskimo@gmail.com