



**ALASKA FEDERATION
OF NATIVES**

January 23, 2012

The Honorable Don Olson
Alaska State Capitol, Room 508
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

As you know, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska representing more than 125,000 Alaska Natives residing in Alaska, and more than 120,000 Alaska Natives scattered throughout the other 49 states. AFN was organized in 1966 to facilitate bringing the various regional and village associations together in order to advocate with one voice for a fair settlement of our aboriginal land claims, which became the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA).

Today, AFN is governed by a 37-member board of directors representing villages (both federally recognized tribes and ANCSA village corporations), 11 regional tribal consortiums, and the 13 regional ANCSA corporations. AFN's annual convention is the largest annual gathering of Native people within the United States. AFN's mission is, in part, to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the Alaska Native community.

AFN supports the enactment of Senate Bill 130, entitled "An Act establishing in the Office of the Governor an advisory council for the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages" and we join you in urging support for passage of this bill.

This bill establishes, in the Office of the Governor, an Alaska Native Language Preservation Council (Council) tasked with evaluating Alaska Native Language programs and making recommendations to establish new programs or reorganize current programs. We agree that indigenous languages are the most critical components in preservation of Alaska Native Cultures as they are the foundation of all cultural groups, including the Alaska Natives. Their preservations will preserve cultural ideas and traditions and serve as the backbone of all cultural elements. We also recognize the urgency of establishing such a Council as many Alaska Native Languages are threatened by extinction.

Attached is AFN Resolution 12-01, "Support of a State of Alaska Act To Establish The Alaska Native Language Preservation Council And Relating To The Preservation, Restoration and Revitalization of Alaska Native Languages." This resolution urges support of Senate Bill 130 and requests immediate action begin, by way of demonstration projects, to restore Alaska Native Languages. We believe inclusion of five language restoration demonstration projects will

strengthen the bill as it moves the issue beyond analysis and to a point where positive progress can be made.

I am also attaching a copy of a document entitled "Sealaska Heritage Institute Alaska Native Language Programs January 2012." The first sentence of this document states: "Alaska Natives are comprised of seven linguistic groups including the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian. Each has or had its own indigenous language." This document describes the efforts of the Alaska Native Community from Barrow to Metlakatla on preserving the indigenous languages that exist in these regions. Their efforts will lead to the preservation of the foundations of the cultures that exist across the State of Alaska.

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives, we urge passage of Senate Bill 130 with additional language adding five language restoration demonstration projects for the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan and Tlingit language groups.

Thank you for your continued preservation of the Alaska Native cultures during your times as a member of the Alaska State Senate.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions regarding this letter, please call me at AFN at 907-274-3611.

Sincerely,



Julie Kitka
President

Attachment: AFN Resolution 12-01, "Support of a State of Alaska Act To Establish The Alaska Native Language Preservation Council And Relating To The Preservation, Restoration and Revitalization of Alaska Native Languages"
Sealaska Heritage Institute: Alaska Native Language Programs, January 2012

Cc: The Honorable Lyman Hoffman
The Honorable Bob Herron
The Honorable Neal Foster
The Honorable Sean Parnell



**ALASKA FEDERATION
OF NATIVES**

**ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
AFN LEGISLATIVE/LITIGATION COMMITTEE**

2012 RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION 12-01

TITLE: SUPPORT OF A STATE OF ALASKA ACT TO ESTABLISH THE ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL AND RELATING TO THE PRESERVATION, RESTORATION AND REVITALIZATION OF ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

WHEREAS: Alaska Native Languages have been spoken for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native Languages represent a significant resource of the State of Alaska and have contributed to its vitality and diversity; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native Languages are threatened by extinction; and

WHEREAS: the foundation of Alaska Native cultures and ancient traditional knowledge are embedded in Alaska Native languages; and

WHEREAS: knowledge of Alaska Natives languages promotes positive self-identity of Alaska Natives; and

WHEREAS: studies have demonstrated that the academic performance of Alaska Native students improve when Alaska Native students are taught their Native language and culture; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native corporations, organizations, and tribes and educational entities throughout the State of Alaska are attempting to restore and teach Alaska Native Languages; and

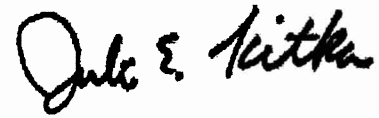
WHEREAS: the Legislature of the State of Alaska is proposing through the proposed Senate Bill 130 to establish an Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Alaska Federation of Natives conveys its support of Senate Bill No. 130 and urges the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor of Alaska to enact and sign into law the referenced Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Alaska Native Federal of Natives further urges the Alaska State Legislature and Governor of Alaska to support the allocation of funds to support Alaska Native Language restoration programs and appropriate funds for five demonstration language restoration projects for the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan and Tlingit language groups.

PASSED THIS 23RD DAY

OF JANUARY 23, 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Julie E. Kitka". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Julie E. Kitka
President



23 January 2012

Honorable Donny Olson, Senator
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol, Rm. 508
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

It brings me gratification to see the introduction of Senate Bill 130 - Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council, "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration and revitalization of Alaska Native Languages."

I have been working in the field of language preservation and perpetuation for nearly 40 years and have seen first hand the extreme decline of the Iñupiaq language. A handful of our people have devoted their lives to teaching it in the hopes of reversing this loss. Much remains to be done.

I write in support of the bill and urge passage. Having an Advisory Council whose responsibility would be to advocate for Native languages across the state will go a long ways towards creating an atmosphere where we can realize a shift in language priorities in Alaska. It is high time the state recognize the importance of perpetuating the languages of its indigenous peoples.

Quyanaq.

Respectfully yours,

Jana Harcharek, Director
Iñupiaq Education



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January 20, 2012

Senate State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Honorable Alaska State Legislators:

On behalf of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, and the many cultural and language bearers we serve and represent, I ardently express my support for Senate Bill 130 and House Bill 254 in the second session of the Twenty-Seventh Legislature, both entitled "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages."

The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is a 501(c) 3, non-profit organization whose mission is to serve as a gathering place for sharing, perpetuating and preserving Alaska's unique indigenous cultures, languages, traditions and values through celebration and education. Our 15-member Board of Directors is currently governed by members of the 13 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) Regions including Cook Inlet Region Inc., Chugach Alaska Corporation, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, NANA Regional Corporation, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Bering Straits Native Corporation, Koniag, Inc., Sealaska Corporation, and Ahtna, Inc.

As Alaska Native people, our indigenous languages fulfill a vital role in perpetuating cultural traditions and values. It is our sincere belief that it is critical to take proactive measures now to strengthen our languages while language speakers in each of the Alaska Native culture groups still exist, and the interest and aspiration to revitalize our languages for future generations is strong. At our core, we recognize that indigenous language learning promotes increased self-esteem and confidence for Alaska Natives, particularly youth, and a strong cultural identity and knowledge of self translates into a stronger person overall. In a recent early childhood development study (McIvor 2005), University of Victoria, B.C. researchers and speech pathologists working with Canadian First Nations have documented strong linkages between indigenous children who have a strong traditional cultural and linguistic background and academic and overall well-being.

Our vision is to promote intergenerational learning from within the indigenous Alaskan community. ANHC has sought to advocate for active language learning by hosting learning sessions for several Alaska Native languages, including Unangax (Aleut), Sugstun (Alutiiq), Iñupiaq, Tlingit, and Yup'ik, while the most thorough instructional efforts have been for Dena'ina Athabascan. Further efforts are underway as ANHC seeks Administration for Native



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Americans (ANA) grant funds, through the United States Department of Health and Social Services. The project will assess and identify local and statewide resources and partnerships that could be made available to Alaska Natives living in Anchorage, for teaching languages within the Eskimo-Aleut speaking, Athabascan speaking, and Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian/Eyak speaking nations.

Progressively, ANHC is working to develop programs on site at the Center to provide indigenous language learning opportunities in a full immersion environment. Such opportunities are urgently needed at a time when all 19 indigenous languages still spoken in Alaska are endangered or critically endangered. The passing in 2008 of Chief Marie Smith Jones, the last fluent speaker of Eyak, underscores the vulnerability of Alaska Native languages.

SB 130 / HB 254 will help provide the much-needed political infrastructure, as well as resources both human and financial, to build and follow policies within and outside the state government, to promote sustainable Alaska Native language efforts. Meaningful investment by the State of Alaska in the cultural strengthening of Alaska Native languages will not only contribute to a stronger Alaska Native society, but a stronger Alaska as a whole, and therefore warrants the highest legislative priority.

I am available to discuss this matter, and provide verbal or written testimony to further provide evidence for these facts, in my vehement support for SB 130 / HB 254.

Sincerely,

Annette Evans Smith, President & CEO
Alaska Native Heritage Center



January 20, 2012

Senator Donald Olson
State Capitol Building
Room 508
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support of SB 130, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council

Dear Senator Olson:

In the majestic forests of Southeast Alaska, along the coastlines of *Haa Aani* (Our Land), our people have gathered in the clan houses and told our stories for thousands of years, passing down the wisdom of Elders and the richness of our culture for generations. This oral history stood unbroken for centuries, but now the languages of the Alaska Native people face extinction. It is imperative that these languages be preserved and with them, the foundation of Alaska Native cultures and ancient traditional knowledge.

Sealaska Corporation offers its overwhelming support of SB 130, An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. Sealaska urges the Alaska State Legislature and Governor of Alaska to also champion an allocation of funds to programs that restore Alaska Native Languages.

We can all be part of a solution to address the many challenges facing Alaska Natives. Native youth have been shown to improve academic performance when taught in their Native tongue; healthy self-esteem has been linked to a strong sense of identity; and thriving communities are built on the foundation of strong family relationships and lines of communication.

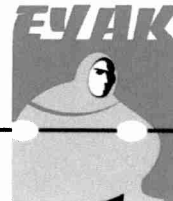
Please share this letter of support to any extent that it might encourage others to vote for the passage of SB 130, and secure funding for programs to restore the words of our ancestors.

Sincerely,

Albert M. Kookesh

Albert Kookesh, Board Chair
SEALASKA CORPORATION

The Eyak Corporation
360 West Benson Blvd., Suite 210
Anchorage, AK 99503
Email: nbarnes@eyakcorp.com
Phone: (907) 334-6971
Fax: (907) 334-6973



January 23, 2012

Senator Donald Olson
State Capitol Building
Room 508
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support of SB 130, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council

Dear Senator Olson:

The Eyak Corporation greatly appreciates your introduction of SB 130 to establish an Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. We strongly support the bill and encourage the Alaska State Legislature to adopt it this year.

In January 2008, after the passing of the last fluent speaker in the Eyak language, Chief Marie Smith Jones, the language was thought to be extinct. However, a number of shareholders of The Eyak Corporation, including descendants of Ms. Smith Jones, are of Eyak descent and have begun learning the language of their ancestors. In 2011, immersion clinics were held to teach the Eyak language in Cordova and Anchorage. Those clinics proved, beyond the slightest doubt, that Eyaks are fighting valiantly to keep their language alive.

Please let us know how we can support your efforts in furtherance of SB 130. We look forward to our Eyak shareholders and descendants expressing their appreciation to you, in Eyak.

Sincerely,

The Eyak Corporation

Nancy C. Barnes
President



CITY OF BARROW

"Farthest North Incorporated City"

21 January 2012

Senator Donald C. Olson
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol, Room 508
Juneau, AK 99801

FAX: 907-465-4821

SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of Senate Bill 130

Good afternoon, Senator Olson:

The Administration, Council and I personally, wish to commend you on the introduction of Senate Bill 130, Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council, in the Alaska State Legislature. We understand that the first hearing on this bill will be presented in hearing tomorrow, 24 January 2012, in the Committee for State Affairs. Because of our short notice on this hearing, please submit and accept this letter as the City of Barrow's unqualified but interim support in this effort.

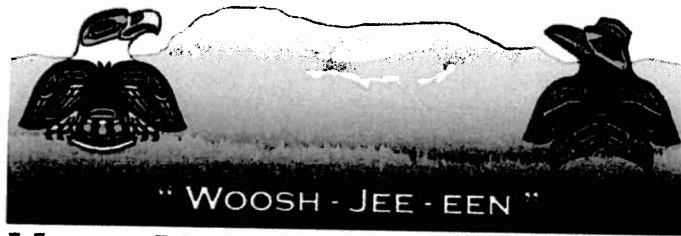
For the Barrow City Council meeting this Thursday, 26 January 2012, I have submitted a formal resolution indicating the City's unqualified endorsement of this legislation for Council ratification. On Friday of this week, I will send you a copy of that ratified endorsement for your files.

Senator Olson, I commend you on taking the initiative of introducing this long-overdue and necessary piece of legislation. I look forward in discussing its progress through the legislature with you. If there is any way that the City of Barrow can assist in facilitating its passage, please do not hesitate to contact me. I also look forward to visiting you in Juneau during the second week in February.

Cordially,

Bob Harcharek, Mayor

Cc: Mayor Charlotte Brower, NSB
Barrow City Council
Superintendent Peggy Cowan, NSBSD
Jana Harcharek, Director Bilingual Education NSBSD
Files



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January 23, 2012

Senator Donald C. Olson
Alaska State Capitol Rm 508
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

The Huna Heritage Foundation wholeheartedly supports Senate Bill 130 which would establish the Alaska Native Language and Advisory Council to assess the State of Alaska Native Languages and re-evaluate the programs within the state and make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to establish new programs or reorganize the current programs.

SB 130 would help to preserve and maintain Alaska Native Languages which are critical to the preservation and cultural ideas and traditions of all Alaska Natives.

We believe that SB130 would support indigenous languages and help stem the tide of language extinction within the great state of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Marlene Johnson
Board President
Huna Heritage Foundation

Senator Wielechowski, .

I am writing in support of SB 130, An act establishing in the Office of the Governor an advisory council for the preservation, restoration and revitalization of Alaska Native Languages, which I believe is scheduled for a hearing before your committee tomorrow. I am Tlingit, born and raised in Juneau, with ancestral ties to Hoonah. However, I have lived in East Anchorage for almost 40 years. You are my senator and I greatly appreciate the work you are doing on our behalf.

I do want you to know that this bill is just as important to those of us in urban areas as it is to those in rural areas. My mother was a first language Tlingit speaker. I remember listening to her speak in Tlingit to her mother, siblings and friends. However, most Tlingits of my generation, me included, did not learn the language. We did learn a few words and phrases because they were used on a daily basis as we were growing up. And I still remember them. But for all intents and purposes, English was our first language, and continues to be so.

I am a retired educator and am now spending my time trying to learn the language. I probably know several hundred words and a few phrases and am trying to teach my children and grandchildren some of what I have learned. I was fortunate to take two semesters of Tlingit at UAA in 2007-08 and am now studying on my own. It is difficult to learn in isolation, but it is important for me to persevere.

Knowing that our elected officials are as concerned as we are in the restoration of our Native languages may help individuals and communities continue their work in this important arena; and it may give others the impetus to join this critical endeavor.

Please support the passage of this bill. I would be happy to respond to any questions or comments you might have regarding this issue.

Thank you.

Edna Lamebull