

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Session

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Sponsor Statement

SB 133

Katie John Day

Athabascan elder Katie John was known for her determination and success in fighting for subsistence rights and for her traditional teachings, humor, gentle spirit and loving ways. Katie John died May 31, 2013. She was 97 years old and resided at Mentasta Lake. John was an Alaska icon who devoted her life to ensuring that her people had the opportunity to carry on traditional subsistence fishing in their ancestral homeland.

Katie John was raised in the traditional manner, living off the land under the tutelage of her mother, grandmother and other elders of her community. A consummate teacher, John was always willing to share her ancestral traditions, culture and history. She was known and respected throughout Alaska and around the world. Ahtna President Michelle Anderson said, "She taught us stories of our culture and history. She was a big part of our lives. Now her history belongs to the public, to the people."

Passionate about preserving Athabascan culture and language, Katie John has been involved with teaching her Native Language since 1974 and helped create the alphabet for the Ahtna dialect. She received an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2011.

John and her husband, Chief Fred John, who died in 2000, raised 14 children and 6 foster children together. She leaves behind approximately 250 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Due to the great importance of her role in shaping Alaska, SB 133 would establish the date of May 31st, as Katie John Day in her memory and honor.