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To: Rep. Benjamin Nageak

Subject: Feb 18th

Representative Nageak,

This morning on Gavel to Gavel testimony about have all Native languages listed as "official languages". I am all in favor of that bill.

To me as a historian, an anthropologist and resident of Alaska for 52 years, I support that bill.

If there is any debate about this bill, I would like to let you know my feelings and opinion.

In my college years, I studied several languages - Latin, Greek, French and even Norwegian. Then when I came to Alaska and began to live among Native people, I found that there were other languages I needed to understand if I wanted to understand the people around me. And so over the years I have studied Yupik, Innupiak, "Athabasan" (Dene) and then Japanese, Spanish, and other languages. At the University of Alaska Southeast I even taught "introduction to linguistics" courses. I am not "fluent" in all the languages I have studied, but as I told my students, "I can at least get breakfast and find a toilet and museum in at least six languages."

But beyond that there is something more important. **That is that every time a person learns a different language, their mind has to be open to see things in a different way. So if someone say that Innupiak is a language of the past, or not important in the world today, please let them understand that learning any language opens a person's mind to understand the way of life, the culture, the way people see things.** That is what it takes in the modern world - people who are willing to learn something about another language so they can talk to Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Spanish speaking people or others with an open mind. **People with two languages or more will have more opportunities in life than those who only know one language.**

A story.

Way back in 1968, in Denmark on my first trip to Europe, I stood in line at an airport and listened to the young woman ticketing passengers. She spoke German to a German passenger, then French to French passenger and then perfect English to me. Then as I looked at her I asked if she might be Inuit and she answered "Ii" "Yes I am an Inuit from Greenland" !!!! The language was not as important as much as it was the ability to understand and work with people with entirely different languages and cultures.

Wally Olson, Auke Bay

Wallace M. Olson, Prof. of Anthropology (Emeritus) University of Alaska Southeast.