



February 23, 2021

32nd Alaska State Legislature

Re: HB 10 - Social and Historical Significance of the Funter Bay Unangan Cemetery

To the Honorable Representatives and Senators of the 32nd Alaska State Legislature:

I write to you today on behalf of the Tanadgusix Corporation (TDX) Board of Directors, its shareholders and descendants, who originate from St Paul, Alaska. TDX is the village corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, to serve shareholders and their descendants from Saint Paul, Alaska.

Our mothers, fathers, grandparents, great grandparents and other relatives were evacuated from Saint Paul when on June 16, 1942, the *U.S.S. Delaroff* arrived unannounced and told the people they had one day to prepare, to only bring one blanket and one bag. The people of Saint George were rushed to pack and board immediately. From Saint George, the *Delaroff* went to Unalaska, where the people of Atka were loaded on. By this time, many Unangan people had intermarried, but their non-indigenous spouses were left behind.

The people of the Pribilof Islands were the property of the federal government, living in servitude to collect furs on behalf of the national treasury. The fur industry in the Pribilofs was a key driver leading up to "Seward's Folly", the purchase of Alaska from the Russian American Company. The federal government kept the Pribilofs very secluded, their enslavement of the people a secret practice, perpetuated by the US Government following the purchase of Alaska. The Unangan people were forbidden from leaving Funter Bay in a deliberate effort to keep them from experiencing a world other than that known in the Pribilofs. The first summer the men were in Funter Bay, the federal government lost a million dollars in revenue. All the men were forced to return to the Pribilofs for the seal harvest the second summer, threatened with losing everything they had left behind and to not be allowed to return to their families. While home, they were forced to live in bunkhouses while military personnel occupied their homes.

In Funter Bay, while the men were harvesting skins for a nickel each in the Pribilofs, measles and the flu spread through the camps. At least 19 people died from measles. The flu took many more lives, as the conditions at Funter Bay were deplorable.

This part of the Pribilof Unangan history is both heart-wrenching, and ironically, when despair became hope for the future, turning the tide for our people. Our men experienced real wages washing dishes and performing other jobs in Juneau, where they were paid a lot more than what they earned harvesting seal for furs. They met men from the Alaska Native



Brotherhood, and with the help of William Paul, Felix Cohen and others, were able to begin what would become a successful fair and honorable dealings lawsuit against the federal government.

This is a very short version of this history that is not only important to the Unangan people but should be important to our State and our Nation. Our relatives who perished while at Funter Bay are interred at the Funter Bay Unangan Cemetery, having spent the last days of their lives in the worst conditions they ever experienced.

As family and descendants of the people interred at Funter Bay, we urge the House and Senate of the 32nd Alaska Legislature to pass HB 10 to forever protect the gravesite of the Unangan at Funter Bay, as they sacrificed their lives and homes for the War on behalf of the nation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beverly Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Beverly Woods
Chair