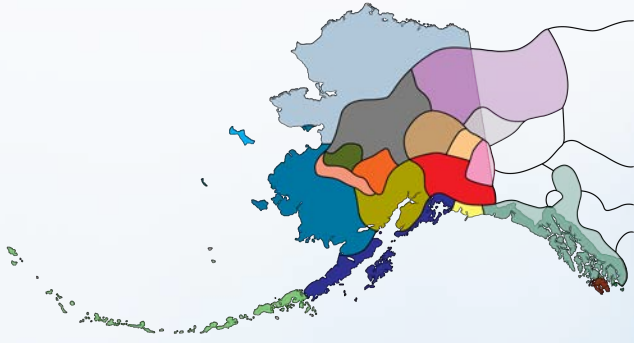


JANUARY 12, 2021



Alaska Native Studies Council



PROPOSAL FOR THE COLLEGE OF ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

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INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Native Language Center was established in 1972 to perform the following tasks: study languages native to Alaska, develop literacy materials, assist in the translation of important documents, provide for the development and dissemination of Alaska Native literature, and train Alaska Native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bilingual classrooms.¹ In 2009, Dr. Michael Krauss of the Alaska Native Language Center declared that “we stand to lose more Indigenous North American languages in the next 60 years than have been lost since Anglo-American contact.”² The Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council was formed in 2012, Alaska Native Languages were made co-official languages of the state in 2014, and the State of Alaska declared a linguistic emergency in September of 2018.

Despite all of this, Alaska Native languages have been in steady and at times rapid decline for over a century, and Alaska is on track to lose 80 percent of its Indigenous languages in the near future. Some might argue that public education systems are free from the responsibility of safeguarding the future of Alaska Native languages, but that logic operates ignorant of the effectiveness of education to address Indigenous language loss, and also the history of American education and direct contributions to the deliberate elimination of Alaska Native languages.

Reforming education to move Indigenous languages closer to the central parts of curriculum with intention has resulted in reversing language loss in Hawai‘i and Aotearoa (New Zealand), which present effective models that can be adapted to meet the linguistic diversity of Alaska. In order to secure an actual future for Alaska Native languages, they must be formalized into curriculum at all levels of education.

¹ Alaska Statutes, AS 14.40.117 (2019)

² Krauss, Michael, “The Condition of Native North American Languages: the Need for Realistic Assessment and Action” (2009)

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In order to examine the detrimental, inhumane, and deliberate efforts of public education to eradicate Alaska Natives, consider the following entry from an autobiography of educator Charles Replogle in 1904:

... we required them to speak nothing but English except by permission; but they often would get into the washroom or in the wood shed, and having set a watch, they would indulge in a good Indian talk. A few cases of this kind, and we applied a heroic remedy to stop it. We obtained a bottle of myrrh and capsicum: myrrh is bitter as gall and capsicum hot like fire. We prepared a little sponge; saturated it with this solution, and everyone that talked Indian had his mouth washed to take away the taint of the Indian language! One application usually was sufficient; but one or two cases had to receive a second application. From that time on, progress in their studies was almost doubly rapid, for they dared not talk their own language.³

In addition to this, many elders have talked about being beaten, verbally abused, picked up by their hair, made to place their tongues on frozen flagpoles, and more for speaking their languages in school. Much of this testimony lives only in the memories of elders and those with whom they shared their experiences of torture and cultural genocide.

The State of Alaska needs to initiate a Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) process to allow people to testify on how education has contributed to the current state of Alaska Native languages. Before that happens, however, immediate and structural changes must occur within the University of Alaska, Tribal Colleges, and DEED (Department of Education and Early Development). After consulting with scholars around the world who have been involved in language revitalization and educational reform, the Alaska Native Studies Council formally presents this request for structural changes to the University of Alaska, DEED, and to the Governor and Legislature of the State of Alaska.

As you consider your responses to this proposal, please keep in mind that Alaska has been neglectful in its response to continued calls of attention to a complete crisis, and the time has passed for incremental change and drawn out processes.

³ Replogle, Charles. *Among the Indians of Alaska*. London: Headley Brothers, 1904. Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 1068- 1072.

PROPOSAL

The Alaska Native Studies Council (ANSC) requests that all current faculty teaching Alaska Native Languages in the UA System be moved to a statewide academic unit that encompasses all Major Administrative Units (MAU) and Community Campuses. Many of the current faculty who teach Alaska Native languages have been meeting monthly to determine which steps would be needed to move towards a comprehensive program that offers degree and certificate options for speakers and teachers of Alaska Native languages. It is our belief that without this option, Alaska Native languages will continue to move towards language death. In addition to the College of Alaska Native Languages, the faculty will be working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEED), the College of Education, and both the Governor and Legislature of Alaska to create systemic changes within DEED to open the door to a future where Alaska Native languages can survive.

This comprehensive initiative would require support from the Board of Regents, Faculty Senate, Senior Administration at UAA, UAF, and UAS, the Governor, and the Legislature. As we consider this proposal, please keep in mind that the majority of Alaska Native languages are already considered critically endangered by any form and linguistic analysis, and that the time for incremental change has passed. The following steps would be part of this movement to ensure that Alaska Native languages have a chance to survive for future generations.

- Form the College of Alaska Native Languages within the University of Alaska
- Form the Alaska Native Education Consortium within the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
- Incorporate Alaska Native Languages into State Standards of education for high school and higher education within school districts and public higher education

COLLEGE OF ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

The College of Alaska Native Languages would begin by an academic restructuring to move Alaska Native Languages out of their current academic units and into a single unit that is dedicated to the following goals:

1. Protect existing speakers while making new ones
2. Ensuring that Alaska Native languages are languages of power and use

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3. Certifying and licensing teachers of Alaska Native languages
4. Transforming educational institutions to create equity for Alaska Native languages

The timeline for this activity should be immediate and recognize that we have been living in a time of crisis for well over half a century, when elders, leaders, elders, and advocates began to sound the alarm of extreme language loss in Alaska and across North America.

The ANSC proposes that this process begin immediately, with plans to have the College in operation during AY 2022. We recognize that these processes often take years to develop, but Alaska Native Languages have long been marginalized in academia, and the reality of the impending loss of Alaska Native languages means that we have no time to wait and need to think outside the box. The declaration of an emergency for Alaska Native languages resulted in no specific actions, and this is the proposed action that seeks to move us from crisis to what we hope will be a place of health.

The working group that ANSC has already formed can work intensely on the development of the College of Alaska Native Languages, so that we have the following items in rapid development:

- accreditation (including Student Learning Outcomes and program assessment)
- mission
- management structure & strategies
- student services
- recruitment & retention strategies
- pursuit of scholarship & grant funding
- outreach and community service

Precedent exists in the University of Alaska system for a distributed faculty centered upon a single, accredited, state-identified higher education program, and this proposal extends the President's Alaska Native Success Initiative.

CERTIFICATES

The following certificates are already moving through the curriculum committee process at UAS, and will be adopted to include all Alaska Native Languages. The

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overall academic structure of all certificates & degrees will be to have the area of study be **Alaska Native Languages** and then allow for an emphasis area within the language of choice. This allows for all Alaska Native languages to be beneath a single academic umbrella. Each Alaska Native language has its own sovereignty, state of health, areas of use, and history of dialects and areas. Not all of them may be ready for the same things, but nesting them all under one area of study opens the door for languages that are further along in terms of revitalization to light the path for languages that may have fewer speakers and active language teaching and use programs.

- **Alaska Native Language Teaching Certificate**

- * Aimed at current speakers of Alaska Native Languages, this certificate aims to support teachers through a series of courses that focus on Indigenous language revitalization, field methods, language acquisition strategies, and teaching mentorship. The intention of this certificate is to replace the current Type M Limited Certificate process in regards to the teaching of Alaska Native languages.

Code	Title	Credits
General Requirements		
<i>Cultural & Language Proficiency (3 credits)</i>		
ANS S101	Intro to Alaska Native Studies	3
Program Requirements		
<i>Language Core: Select 2 of the following (22 credits)</i>		
AKL S1xx	Beginning I and Beginning II sequence	8
AKL S2xx	Intermediate I and Intermediate II sequence	8
AKL S2xx	Advanced I and Advanced II sequence	6
AKL S470	Indigenous Language Revitalization	3
AKL S451	Indigenous Language Field Methods	3
AKL S3XX	Practicum in Foundations of Indigenous Language Medium Education	3
AKL S415	Indigenous Language Instructional Strategies	3
AKL S410	Indigenous Language Teaching Methods and Materials	3
AKL S475	Indigenous Teacher Mentorship	3
AKL S490	Practicum in Native Language Education	9

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Code	Title	Credits
		Total
		52

- **Alaska Native Language Speaking Certificate**

- * Aimed at learners of Alaska Native languages, this certificate

Code	Title	Credits
General Requirements		
<i>Cultural & Language Proficiency (3 credits)</i>		
ANS S101	Intro to Alaska Native Studies	3
Program Requirements		
<i>Language Core: Select 2 of the following (22 credits)</i>		
AKL S1XX	Beginning I and Beginning II sequence	8
AKL S2XX	Intermediate I and Intermediate II sequence	8
AKL S2XX	Advanced I and Advanced II sequence	6
AKL S401	Alaska Language Apprenticeship/ Mentorship	3
		Total
		28

DEGREE OPTIONS

The degree will be the same courses listed under the Alaska Native Language Teaching Certificate, and will incorporate General Education Requirements. As the cohorts move through the degree process, more courses will be added over time. At this time, we have the courses to currently offer certificates and a Bachelor of Arts in Alaska Native Languages. We would have to make sure we have the a critical mass of faculty and a plan for growth.

The Bachelor of Arts should be developed right away and then can be adjusted over the next few years as new courses are developed as needed. However, the coursework already exists to begin enrolling students and to begin moving them towards acquiring a degree.

- **Bachelor of Arts in Alaska Native Languages**

- * This degree would prepare students for teaching and work in Alaska Native languages. They would have three years of language learning, and one year of classes that further their language skills through use and domain reclamation. Students would also have two years of in-class experience as

teachers, and would be ready to provide language instruction in schools and community programs.

- **Master of Arts in Teaching Alaska Native Languages**

- * The College of Alaska Native Languages will begin structuring a graduate program that certifies and licenses teachers of Alaska Native languages. This option currently does not exist, which presents a situation of inequity as Alaska Native languages are co-official languages of the state and are irreplaceable and invaluable resources. By shifting towards full certification and licensure of teachers, Alaska will shift the way it approaches language revitalization and education by embracing inclusion and decolonization on practical levels that focus on securing a healthier future for all Alaskans. This program will be linked to similar programs that have already been developed for Hawaiian, Māori, and Saami languages. Developing a teacher preparation and licensure program that is equal to those offered in English is the only path to revitalization for many Alaska Native languages.

- **Ph.D. in Alaska Native & Indigenous Language Revitalization**

- * A Ph.D. program will be developed modeled after the only known one to exist in the world, which is at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. The goal of this program is to produce world leaders in language revitalization efforts, focusing on the following areas: language and society, language and education, structural institutional shifts towards equity, language planning and policy, and language program development. This program will be linked to the other Indigenous language revitalization programs and will lead to increased research, program capabilities, and institutional transformations.

RELATION TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

The College of Alaska Native Languages would seek to unify all Alaska Native language education under one academic unit. Recently the College of Education attempted a similar model, but the College of Education attempt ultimately proved unsustainable. This attempt was made while already dealing with deep seated ongoing fights for control of the program between UAA, UAF, and UAS which ultimately did not lead to success. In contrast the College of Alaska Native Languages would be significantly narrow in its focus, which is to gather

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marginalized languages towards the academic center of a unit and to transform education in order to ensure language survival.

The programs most affected by this would be the UAF Bachelor's Degree in Yup'ik Language and Culture, and the Bachelor's Degree in Eskimo. These would be requested to shift under a single degree: Bachelor of Arts in Alaska Native Languages. This degree would allow for the selection of the following emphasis areas: Ahtna, Cup'ik, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Eyak, Gwich'in, Haida, Hän, Holikachuk, Iñupiaq, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Sugpiaq, Middle Tanana, Upper Tanana, Lower Tanana, Tanacross, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Unanga̋, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik.

This structure does present administrative challenges. Each language would need its own course code, which would be AKL following by a unique identifier for each language. There would likely be sustainability issues with several languages, but that is because we are starting this initiative too late and waited too long, not because those languages are not ready. This is the last effort we can make to save many of these languages, and the university needs to collectively understand that it is looking at something different than most academic disciplines. Educational structures in Alaska have a responsibility to ensure a future for Alaska Native languages, and doing so will require immediate and substantial action.

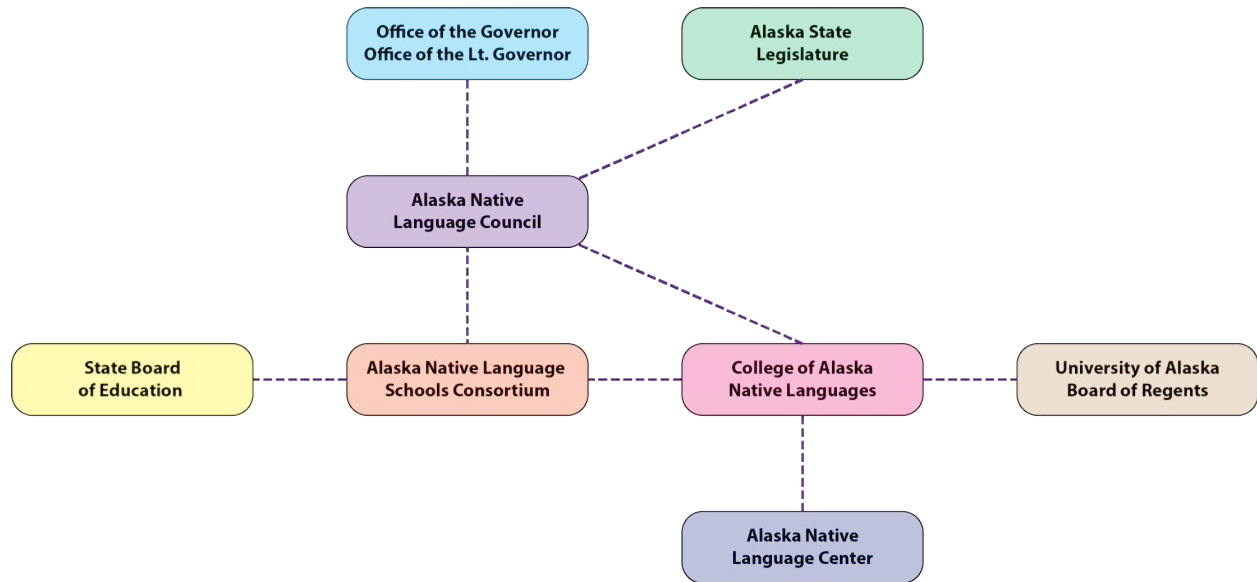
Minors would also have to be re-evaluated and switched over to a similar model, where the minor would be in Alaska Native Languages and the student would select an emphasis area. The certifications are listed earlier in this document, and would also be adjusted to make room for all of Alaska's Indigenous languages.

EXISTING COURSES

All current courses would be examined and all languages would be encouraged to work towards a three year sequence of language teaching (beginning, intermediate, and advanced), and then to develop content courses for the fourth year experience that focus on language use in topics such as literature, spirituality, current events, and history. Language such as Yup'ik and Tlingit have been following this model, so the framework of the course has already been designed. Some languages may need to teach their way up to this level, but the increased degree options will result in increased enrollments and interests. One of the recommended College of Alaska Native Language benchmarks is that by the fourth

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semester of study (intermediate II), the language of study becomes the language of use for at least 50% of the class time.



TRANSFORMATIONS WITHIN THE STATE OF ALASKA

The success of the shift towards statewide Alaska Native language revitalization depends on structural changes within the State of Alaska, namely the University of Alaska, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. The University of Alaska has already been discussed, which is the development of the College of Alaska Native Languages, so the additional shifts are discussed in summary here.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (DEED)

Currently state statutes charge DEED to working with districts and to carry out education through three main types of public schools: public schools, charter schools, and correspondence schools. An additional structure should be set up that provides for a fourth type of school called **Alaska Native Language Education Consortium**. These schools would function as single site school districts. The Alaska Native Education Consortium would be established to acts as a statewide school district board for Alaska Native Language nests, schools, and programs in public schools. This consortium would not govern the policies of these schools, but would act as an advocacy group, would make determinations on interpretation of educational standards, and would pursue funding for annual conferences on

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Alaska Native Languages with the intention of uniting existing programs and assisting new ones with development.

ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL

There is currently a bill in the legislature that proposes to change the name of this council to the Alaska Native Language Council, and it would continue to serve as an advisory board to the Governor and Alaska State Legislature. The roles of the council would shift to include hearing reports from the College of Alaska Native Languages and the Alaska Native Education Consortium, and then making policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature based upon those reports and subsequent discourse.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the University of Alaska has many pressing issues to contend with now and in the future, it has systemically ignored the fate of Alaska Native languages even when its own faculty have tried to call attention to the current journey towards language death for the vast majority of Alaska Native languages. The systems in place would all point towards unsustainability and the instinct of the institution is to move at a slow pace, language advocates, speakers, and instructors have heard the same reasons why something like this cannot happen for decades. Elders, teachers, learners, children, parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors, and allies have all watched the steady move towards death, and it is time to face the cold reality of disinterest and a lack of institutional dedication to create a different destiny for Alaska Native peoples.

We are the controllers of what the University of Alaska is, and we can finally make room at the table for Alaska Native languages. This takes courage. This takes stepping outside the box, because the box was built to keep Alaska Native languages out. Consider the words of Māori scholar Moana Jackson:

If times change, can we make new realities too? Can we also dare to be brave, and long once again to be free? If there is anything that we need to reclaim most of all in translating the ideas of *mana motuhake* of self determination into action, it is the belief in our right to be free. If

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colonization does more than anything else to damage our people, it is to make our people lose faith in ourselves.⁴

There are many decisions we make on a daily basis, and those who are leadership positions will have to look back someday and reflect on the legacy of their work and where they decided the focus should be placed. In consideration of that, we propose that we make a collective decision that languages live and that education truly is inclusive to Alaska Native languages. When our grandchildren are together in this great state, in these institutions, they will be able to speak in languages that are not in conflict with one another, but seek to enrich each other through essential traits of humanity: love, humility, compassion, and respect. They can learn and use languages in ways that are not as limited as the options we present our students with now, and we will be able to know we made the right move when we had to, we took the bold step.

We have passed the time for incremental change, but it is not too late. Next year we will have fewer speakers than this year, and we will be going farther and farther down the path where languages that are tens of thousands of years old are likely gone forever. When we look back at what we did, let us make sure we made the choice that leaned towards equity and away from racist ideologies. The faculty that we currently have can undertake this endeavor if supported, and we will build a program that influences Indigenous languages around the world.

⁴ Jackson, Moana. "He Manawa Whenua 2017 Day 3." Te Kotahi Research Institute. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV2PORbBQsM&feature=youtu.be&t=32m24s>