

Nazune Menka

2800 Peter's Lane Apt. B Juneau, AK 99801 (907) 465-9113 Nazune@outlook.com

March 5, 2018

House Committee on Rural and Community Development

Dear House Committee on Rural and Community Development:

Desaanh nezoonh. These two words are Denaak'ke (or Koyukon Athabascan) and mean "hello"; or "good day"; or "pretty day"; or "beautiful day." The point being that Denaak'ke language is multifaceted and words can have several meanings. The language enriches our understanding of the world around us and creates a greater knowledge of the place we collectively call home, Alaska. For example, "tloon' ne'elts'eeyhleyaah" means the wind waves the stars, and "a peculiar twinkling of the stars considered as a forerunner of windstorms." What a beautiful way to view the world.

The Denaak'ke language dictionary was printed for the first time in 2001 by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and until recently was out of print. Without this dictionary and the work of the people, Native and non-Native alike, I would not be able to continue to learn my indigenous language. I have assisted in naming my nieces and nephews through the use of this dictionary. Traditionally, an elder would name our youth. But as my sister's family lives in Hawai'i they were only going to be given Native Hawaiian or Kanaka Maoli traditional names from elders in my brother in law's family.

My name was given to me by Alaska Native Denaak'ke elder Catherine Minook. You can see it is spelled "Nazune," but in our dictionary it is spelled "Nezoonh." If our community were to learn how to say hello in Denaak'ke when they come to the Interior I would no longer be asked where my name is from or what it means because they would understand that it is part of the way to give warm greetings when we meet. In Hawai'i everyone knows what Aloha means and the words are part of what makes Hawai'i such a great place to visit. Imagine if we were to begin to recognize the worth of Alaska Native languages and share it with our visitors so that it becomes part of the unique visit to the great state Alaska. It would enrich us all.

For these reasons, I encourage the Committee to pass HCR 19.

Sincerely,

/s/Nazune Menka

Denaak'ke, J.D. Candidate 2018

University of Arizona James E. Rogers School of Law

Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy Program