



ALASKA FEDERATION
OF NATIVES

January 23, 2012

The Honorable Don Olson
Alaska State Capitol, Room 508
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

As you know, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska representing more than 125,000 Alaska Natives residing in Alaska, and more than 120,000 Alaska Natives scattered throughout the other 49 states. AFN was organized in 1966 to facilitate bringing the various regional and village associations together in order to advocate with one voice for a fair settlement of our aboriginal land claims, which became the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA).

Today, AFN is governed by a 37-member board of directors representing villages (both federally recognized tribes and ANCSA village corporations), 11 regional tribal consortiums, and the 13 regional ANCSA corporations. AFN's annual convention is the largest annual gathering of Native people within the United States. AFN's mission is, in part, to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the Alaska Native community.

AFN supports the enactment of Senate Bill 130, entitled "An Act establishing in the Office of the Governor an advisory council for the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages" and we join you in urging support for passage of this bill.

This bill establishes, in the Office of the Governor, an Alaska Native Language Preservation Council (Council) tasked with evaluating Alaska Native Language programs and making recommendations to establish new programs or reorganize current programs. We agree that indigenous languages are the most critical components in preservation of Alaska Native Cultures as they are the foundation of all cultural groups, including the Alaska Natives. Their preservations will preserve cultural ideas and traditions and serve as the backbone of all cultural elements. We also recognize the urgency of establishing such a Council as many Alaska Native Languages are threatened by extinction.

Attached is AFN Resolution 12-01, "Support of a State of Alaska Act To Establish The Alaska Native Language Preservation Council And Relating To The Preservation, Restoration and Revitalization of Alaska Native Languages." This resolution urges support of Senate Bill 130 and requests immediate action begin, by way of demonstration projects, to restore Alaska Native Languages. We believe inclusion of five language restoration demonstration projects will

strengthen the bill as it moves the issue beyond analysis and to a point where positive progress can be made.

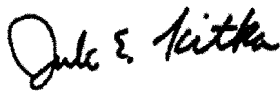
I am also attaching a copy of a document entitled "Sealaska Heritage Institute Alaska Native Language Programs January 2012." The first sentence of this document states: "Alaska Natives are comprised of seven linguistic groups including the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian. Each has or had its own indigenous language." This document describes the efforts of the Alaska Native Community from Barrow to Metlakatla on preserving the indigenous languages that exist in these regions. Their efforts will lead to the preservation of the foundations of the cultures that exist across the State of Alaska.

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives, we urge passage of Senate Bill 130 with additional language adding five language restoration demonstration projects for the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan and Tlingit language groups.

Thank you for your continued preservation of the Alaska Native cultures during your times as a member of the Alaska State Senate.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions regarding this letter, please call me at AFN at 907-274-3611.

Sincerely,



Julie Kitka
President

Attachment: AFN Resolution 12-01, "Support of a State of Alaska Act To Establish The Alaska Native Language Preservation Council And Relating To The Preservation, Restoration and Revitalization of Alaska Native Languages"
Sealaska Heritage Institute: Alaska Native Language Programs, January 2012

Cc: The Honorable Lyman Hoffman
The Honorable Bob Herron
The Honorable Neal Foster
The Honorable Sean Parnell