

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SENATOR DONALD C. OLSON

### Session

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### Sponsor Statement: Senate Bill 130 Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council

"An Act establishing in the Office of the Governor a task force for the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages."

Alaska Native Languages (ANL's) are threatened by extinction. The intent of SB 130 is to preserve and maintain ANL's. Indigenous languages are the most critical components in preservation of cultural ideas and traditions and serve as the backbone of all cultural elements.

SB 130 will establish the Alaska Native Language Task Force to assess the state of ANL's and re-evaluate the programs within the state and make recommendation to the Governor and Legislature to establish new programs or re-organize the current programs.

The Task Force would have a maximum of five years to complete this task.

According to the Alaska Native Language Center's *Population and Speaker Statistics* published in 2007, only 22 percent Alaska Natives statewide can speak their native language. More specifically, only 29 percent of the Eskimo Aleut population, less than 2 percent of the Tsimshian and Haida, and less than 5 percent of the Athabascan and Tlingit communities combined are fluent speakers. The Eyak language recently lost its last native fluent speaker. (Krauss, Michael E. 2007. Native languages of Alaska. In: *The Vanishing Voices of the Pacific Rim*).

It is vital that the State of Alaska creates this needed establishment and I urge your support in the passage of this bill.