

First Alaskans Institute

May 2, 2019

House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Honorable Representatives,

This letter is in support of House Bill 126, an Act establishing November as Alaska Native Heritage Month.

First Alaskans Institute is a statewide Alaska Native non-profit organization that works to educate key decision makers about our peoples, advance our ways of life, and amplify the voices of our communities. As such, we stand in support of HB 126 and urge you to pass this bill to further recognize the major economic and cultural contributions Alaska Natives have made to this state.

The only people proven to responsibly steward Alaskan lands, waters, and air, our cultures should be celebrated for the everlasting ingenuity through which they teach people to thrive on our lands. Our spiritual connection to our lands, waters, and other living beings needs to be honored.

This is an opportunity for the State of Alaska to establish a month for all Alaskans to celebrate Alaska Native peoples and traditions together. Furthermore, November is a great fit for this type of celebration. It comes at the end of our fall harvesting seasons and there is abundant Alaskan food to enjoy.

Rather than vote each year to honor our heritages in November, Alaska Native Heritage Month should mirror the permanency of Alaska Native cultures and be established as a permanent official holiday.

This recognition will have positive long-term effects on Alaska's future. When Native children see themselves reflected in the culture of their schools and institutions, they feel a sense of belonging and pride in who they are. This will uplift them and the people around them.

On April 9, 2019, First Alaskans Institute provided testimony to the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs in support of HB 126. Please see link to the video below:

<https://www.360north.org/gavel/video/?clientID=2147483647&eventID=2019041089>

We urge you to pass House Bill 126 and formally recognize the contributions of Alaska Native cultures by permanently establishing November as Alaska Native Heritage Month.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Medicine Crow (Haida/Tlingit)
President/CEO

Founding Board

William L. (Iggiagruk) Hensley
Inupiat

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Byron L. Mallott
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Mission

True to identity, heritage,
and values, Alaska Natives
are informed and engaged in
creating the decisions that shape
the future.

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