



—Juneau Douglas—
CITY MUSEUM

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February 10, 2021

Dear Members of the House Resources Committee,

As Director of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, a department within the City and Borough of Juneau, I am writing in support of HB 10, “An Act relating to the Funter Bay marine park unit of the state park system; relating to protection of the social and historical significance of the Unangax cemetery located in Funter Bay and providing for the amendment of the management plan for the Funter Bay marine park unit; and providing for an effective date.”

At the beginning of 2019, a group formed to work on several initiatives related to the forced removal and internment of the Aleut people to Funter Bay and other camps during World War II. This evolving work group is made up of people affiliated with a wide range of organizations and interests from the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, the Alaska State Parks and the Alaska State Parks Citizen Advisory Board, the Museum of the Aleutians, the Friends of Admiralty Island, the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, the Juneau Public Libraries, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government, the University of Alaska Southeast, Tlingit Haida Central Council, Sealaska Heritage Institute, and a representative from the offices’ of Senator Kiehl, Representative Hannan, and Representative Story. The group is both advisory and actively working on three initiatives which are to:

- establish protections in perpetuity around Aleut gravesites that are located on Tlingit Aaní on Admiralty Island and is currently managed by the State Department of Natural Resources;
- develop and install interpretive panels at the cemetery site and for use locally for educational and outreach purposes through State Parks and;
- mount an exhibit on the Aleut Internment at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum in summer 2020.

While the working group has gained momentum to bring these initiatives to bear, this work has been decades in the making. Since the U.S. Government removed the Aleut people “for their safety” and interned them in Funter Bay in 1942, these loyal Americans who experienced the death of their loved ones due primarily to deplorable living conditions, and the loss of their traditional homes and culture have sought reparations and to have their story and voices heard. Now more than 75 years later, you, the members of the House Resources Committee and the Legislature at large, have the opportunity to say this place, these gravesites, this story matters. With the passage of HB 10 the Aleut people and their descendants can seek healing, build a stronger community, and restore dignity and respect for those who are buried at Funter Bay.

As written by Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand President, Roy Peratrovich, at the time of internment, “It is our patriotic duty to offer every aid and comfort to these our fellow countrymen...”

Sincerely,

Beth A. Weigel, PhD
Director, Juneau-Douglas City Museum