

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 8, 2018

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Justin Parish, Co-Chair
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative John Lincoln
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins (alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Zach Fansler
Representative David Talerico
Representative DeLena Johnson (alternate)

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Charisse Millett

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 19
Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order
recognizing a linguistic emergency.

- MOVED CSHCR 19(CRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HCR 19

SHORT TITLE: GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) ORTIZ

02/16/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/16/18	(H)	CRA
03/06/18	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
03/06/18	(H)	Heard & Held
03/06/18	(H)	MINUTE(CRA)
03/08/18	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

SIDNEY HARTLEY

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 19.

DAVID ROBERT BOXLEY, Co-Chair

Haayk Foundation

Metlakatla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 19.

EVON PETER

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HCR 19.

ALICE TAFF, Ph.D.

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HCR 19.

PAUL MARLES

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of [HCR] 19.

GAVIN HUDSON, Chair

Haayk Foundation

Metlakatla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HCR 19.

HATTIE KELLER

Kawerak Inc

City & State

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 19.

DAVID NEES

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HCR 19.

ALLAN HAYTON, Director

Language Revitalization Program

Doyon Foundation

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 19.

LACEY WILSON

Metlakatla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified regarding the marginalization of languages during the hearing on HCR 19.

JODIE GATTI, Staff

Representative Dan Ortiz
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered a question on behalf of Representative Ortiz, prime sponsor of HCR 19.

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor of HCR 19, offered feedback on proposed amendments.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN PARISH called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Lincoln, Rauscher, Kreiss-Tomkins (alternate), and Parish were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HCR 19-GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY

[8:03:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 19, Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced that the committee would [continue] public testimony [which had been left open from the 3/6/18 House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting].

[8:04:28 AM](#)

SIDNEY HARTLEY testified in Tlingit and English. She related that she is learning Tlingit. She thanked proponents of HCR 19 and expressed gratitude for the privilege of learning Tlingit at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). She continued as follows:

This coastal sanctuary I've come to call my home for the last eight years is overflowing with opportunity and resources to sustain the languages and cultures of its very soul - the people.

MS. HARTLEY said she is Swiss. Her great-grandfather, who immigrated to the United States in 1910, could not speak English, and "it was his journey to learn a new language, a new custom, in a place not his own." She opined that those who are non-Native must "dive into the lush ocean of languages that surround us before we can call this place our home."

MS. HARTLEY said currently Alaska legislation defines what Native Alaskans can "sustain themselves with," where they can build their homes, and what they can learn in school. She continued:

The so-called New World has been branded with profitable opportunities since its first introduction to European explorers. Stumbling upon aboriginal settlers, however, presented no obstacle and inspired no moral code amid discovery of a presently claimed land. Subsequently, colonization of the Nineteenth Century orchestrated mass invasions of Europeans where they embezzled American soil by changing the label and since then have taken it upon themselves to define what it means to be an American. Alaska, likewise, has been the foster child of such broken systems, bounced back and forth between the hands not of its ancestors but the intruder, that is: white culture.

MS. HARTLEY stated that Alaska legislation has maintained a façade "by dangling a white flag in the form of money and false promises." She cited an article in the Anchorage Daily News, written by Erica Martinson, which reports that "Alaska Native children account for 55 percent of the state's out-of-home foster care placements." She added, "A tool in which the government sought to eliminate indigenous languages in the first place." She stated that forty years after the establishment of the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, the needs of Alaska Native children are still not being met because legislators refuse to address the underlying issues that uprooted the ancestors of those children.

MS. HARTLEY said her language teacher reiterates that "knowledge is embedded in the language." She proffered that to understand concepts in history, art, and familial values, it is necessary to understand the words upon which they were built. She said historical trauma "evidences a brutal misconception" of Native Alaska cultures, and she questioned how, if people continue to ignore this devastation, society is any different from how it

was prior to 1976 "when we punished pride and ripped children from their mothers in exchange for English words and a boarding school education. Ms. Hartley stated that unlike English, indigenous languages have words that represent entire phrases and "provide a meaningful, emotional context." She shared that learning the Tlingit language has brought her a more profound understanding and appreciation of the Tlingit culture. The language has benefited other areas of her studies; it allows her different perspectives and the ability to "make connections in previously taught concepts."

MS. HARTLEY said studies have shown that children who grow up in bilingual households have improved cognitive, social, and emotional development. She said she sees no evidence that suggests a negative outcome in passing HCR 19. Further, she said, "The need for an official apology is an understatement" She again urged passage of HCR 19 as "one step of many in the right direction."

[8:09:38 AM](#)

DAVID ROBERT BOXLEY, Co-Chair, Haayk Foundation, introduced himself first in the Tsimshian language and then in English. He said his Tsimshian name means Wolf of the Sky; he is of the Wolf clan of Metlakatla; his father is David Albert Boxley of the Eagle clan. He said being Tsimshian in Southeast Alaska has come with some misunderstandings. He explained that there is an historical false narrative that Tsimshian people entered Southeast Alaska in 1887, with William Duncan. He said this is not the case, and the proof of that is in the place names in many areas in Southeast Alaska "that are much older than our move to Alaska." He offered some examples.

[8:12:12 AM](#)

MR. BOXLEY mentioned ethnogenetics and talked about the trauma that can result from loss of land, language, and identity. He said the trauma can damage deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and the damage can be passed down through generations. He said studies show that learning one's culture and language can help to heal the damage. He said he has seen that healing occur. He said the missionaries did not discourage the Tsimshian people from using their language; the Tsimshian still spoke their language in 1887. He relayed that at the time, the government asked how much of the island the Tsimshian people wanted. Only one councilman spoke English, and that councilman stated that the people wanted the whole island. When told the people would not

know what to do with the whole island, the councilman countered that they may not, but their grandchildren would. He said support of HCR 19 would begin the process of healing the damage of the past 100 years. He said learning one's language and being proud of one's culture results in lower suicide rates, less substance abuse, and increased health. He said there used to be signs in Ketchikan that read "No Dogs or Indians Allowed," and he said it is shocking that people think that kind of trauma goes away.

[8:14:41 AM](#)

MR. BOXLEY said he thinks this is the state's responsibility. He said when the U.S. government school was built in Metlakatla, in the early 1900s, it became against the rules to speak the Tsimshian language. He said he has heard people of his father's generation state that they always heard their parents speak the Native language but tell them not to do so. He stated it is known now that children who are bilingual do better in school. He advised that support of HCR 19 would improve the lives of all children, not only indigenous children. He indicated he is not blaming those currently in power for the crimes of the past; however, those in power run the same system that [committed those wrongs] and thus have the opportunity to "fix it."

MR. BOXLEY stated that this is an emergency. He imparted that there are five fluent speakers of the Tsimshian language in his village and less than 100 in the entire world. He said all the legislature has to do is say yes. He stated, "We're the ones that have to spend the hours and hours of work it takes to become fluent in the language that everyday is becoming harder and harder to be immersed in." He quoted First Alaskans Institute as saying, "What's good for Native people is good for everyone." He said this is not just about languages; it is about stewardship of the land from which languages come. He said, "If our languages die, the voice of our land die[s]."

MR. BOXLEY thanked the bill sponsor, Representative Ortiz, and thanked Representative Kreiss-Tomkins for being an advocate. He said language makes people who they are. He said the legislature has the choice to help [Native Alaskans] continue to be who they are or, by ignoring the issue, "contribute to the continual disappointing history of what's been done to our people." He expressed thanks for the opportunity to be heard through testimony.

[8:18:28 AM](#)

EVON PETER, introduced himself in his Native language and then translated to English. He said he comes from Arctic Village and now lives in Fairbanks. He works at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) but is calling on behalf of himself and as a tribal member of the Gwich'in nation. He said the community has heard testifiers talk about the correlation of language and the healing and well-being of people in their communities. He said he has worked for many years with young people in the area of suicide prevention and other forms of prevention. He said most of the work involves utilizing language and culture, taking people out on the land, and allowing them the opportunity to heal, connect to the land and their identity, and to develop healthful relationships with one another. He said the language is always an integral part of that work. He said in the twenty years he has done this work, he has seen consistent outcomes. When the younger generation can be taught local, indigenous knowledge in the Native language, "it's like a fire lights up inside of them," and they not only choose a more healthful path in life but also improve academically.

[8:21:02 AM](#)

MR. PETER stated that now is a critical time in terms of languages and Native Alaskans. He invited [the legislature] to be a part of the great change that is occurring, which will heal communities and people and benefit the entire state. He said now is the time to act, both for those learning and teaching the languages and for those who are looking for ways to support the effort. He said, "I believe that this transition will increase in our educational institutions from preschool all the way up to Ph.D., and we need to be working collaboratively and finding ways that our institutions can support to make that change happen." He expressed his hope that the legislature would continue in the direction of "acknowledging, recognizing, and then acting in ways that puts the resources behind the initiatives and enacting policies that will help us to move forward in this direction." He posited that it is in everyone's best interest.

[8:23:05 AM](#)

ALICE TAFF, Ph.D., stated that she is an affiliate professor with UAF and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) but is speaking on her own behalf today. She said many cultures value personal accounts more highly than other forms of information while others value statistics and numbers more highly. She said

she was present to "comfort the numbers people." She said she would speak about the relationship between indigenous ancestral language use and physical health. She relayed that two studies in Canada looked at health issues and why there were discrepancies among First Nations communities. The first study in British Columbia looked at the discrepancy in suicide rates in First Nations communities in that province and found that youth suicide rates dropped to zero from high rates when "at least half of the band members in the community reported a conversational knowledge of their own Native language." She said she hoped committee members would agree that suicide is a health issue. She said that study looked at a variety of factors for suicide and language was the only one that was substantial.

DR. TAFF said the second study out of Alberta looked at diabetes and found that there was a 53 percent reduction in diabetes prevalence in those communities where the First People's languages were flourishing versus those communities where they were not in use. She noted that Mr. Boxley had touched upon genetically transferred trauma and its symptoms, and she said she would be willing to delve into that subject at another time.

[8:27:24 AM](#)

DR. TAFF offered her understanding that there is no fiscal note for HCR 19. Notwithstanding that, she opined that every dime spent on Alaska language continuity equal dollars spent on health. She proffered that in the practice of feng shui, boxes of junk stuck in a corner prevent money from coming into a house. She said, "When we clean up our junk, money flows into the house." She suggested metaphorically that the eradication of Alaska language is a box that the State of Alaska has stuck into a corner. She said one of the earliest places visited by the federal government was the Pribilof Islands in 1867. She said the profits made there in seal fur within the first ten years equaled the price Seward transferred to Russia. She said at that time, the federal agents who came to the Pribilof Islands burned everything that was written in Cyrillic, not realizing that it was not only Russian but was also the alphabet of the islanders. She said for 150 years languages from there and elsewhere have been "stuck into a messy box in the corner." [A recorded voice was heard], and Dr. Taff explained the voice had said, in Dutch, that the time was now 8:30 a.m. She then thanked the committee, with "Gunalchéesh." She signed off in a variety of other languages.

8:30:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS thanked Dr. Taff for her work on related issues throughout the years.

8:30:51 AM

The committee took an at-ease from 8:31 a.m. to 8:33 a.m.

8:33:21 AM

CO-CHAIR PARISH asked the remaining testifiers to limit their time to two minutes, if possible, with the exception of [elders], for whom he indicated he would allow more time.

8:34:53 AM

PAUL MARLES testified in Tlingit and translated to English. He said this is a difficult issue to talk about. He expressed that testifiers have cried for help. He stated that it is difficult to see children not know who they or their ancestors are and not know their language and culture. He said the legislature is being asked for help because "the work that we are doing isn't enough anymore" and [Native languages are] in a state of emergency. He said he works with the school district and does not see the interest in Tlingit among his own people. He relayed his brother has always said that when the governing body shows interest in what is going on then children will take interest. He said children watch television and do not listen to their elders any more. He asked the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee to support [HCR] 19, because "any little bit helps." He ended with "Gunalchéesh."

8:39:25 AM

GAVIN HUDSON, Chair, Haayk Foundation, read his written testimony [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Honorable Members of the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee, and to all the members of the Alaskan Legislature, I am compelled to testify to you this morning because we need the elected leadership of Alaska to admit that we have A Linguistic Emergency on our hands. We are losing what might be the last generation of Tsimshian fluent speakers. Sm'algyax, the beautiful language of the Tsimshian people, is

dying. In the entire world, there are less than 100 fluent speakers of our language. In Alaska, there are only six. Every living fluent speaker is over the age of 65, many in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. Many with poor health. I have heard that some Alaskan languages could be gone within 100 years. I am here to tell you, that our language, one of the official languages of the State of Alaska, could be gone in 20 years. That, ladies and gentlemen, is within my own lifetime, and within yours. We all could may very well be the witnesses of the death of our last fluent speaker. If and when that day comes, what will history say about you? Did you do everything you can do to stop it? Did you even admit there was a problem? Did you at least acknowledge the emergency? In our language, we have an ancient and positive expression, sa'aaml waan, it means make good what you do and make your name good. Our names, the quality of them, is determined by our actions. Did we behave with integrity and compassion? Did we answer the call to serve? Do we hold others up when they need our support? No one can save a language on their own. But languages can be saved, if we do it together. Whether you are indigenous or not, we are all in the same canoe, and we have to pull together. We need you, all of you, to help us. I am asking for your support in the effort to save the Tsimshian language, I am asking you to vote yes in declaring a linguistic emergency. We have all sworn oaths to do what is best for our peoples. And I am telling you, having living and vibrant indigenous languages is what is best for our State. Learning our grandparents' language, and then passing it down to our grandchildren, is an act of overcoming colonialism and historical trauma. Bilingual children do better in math, science, reading, art and music. As Mr. Boxley and Dr. Alice Taff have both testified, when an indigenous language is healthy, rates of suicide and drug abuse drop significantly. So this is not just a matter of health, but literally of life and death. At a time of division and animosity, we can decide to move forward together toward the beautiful and noble goal of saving our mother tongues. We Tsimshian have another ancient, positive expression, Wayi Wah! Wayi Wah means, Let's go! So I say to you today, Wayi Wah, because this is an emergency, and we have no time to waste. Thank you for your time.

[8:44:05 AM](#)

HATTIE KELLER, Director, Inupiaq, Kawerak, Inc., spoke first in Inupiaq and then English. She shared her Inupiaq name. She said she is from Nome and her family is from Shishmareff. Ms. Keller read an excerpt of something written by an elder from Shishmareff, in which the elder describes learning English in school, being punished for speaking Inupiaq but speaking it at home, and the old Inupiaq dialect that died. Ms. Keller said because of colonization "there are 13.6 percent of Inupiaq speakers," which she said is a stark comparison to the 71 percent of St. Lawrence Islanders [who speak] Yupik and "41.6 percent central Yupik speakers today." She said the majority of the 13.6 percent are elders. She said studies have shown that without [Alaska Native] language, culture, and tradition, there is a higher rate of suicides, alcoholism, and [recidivism] and "low rates of attendance." Ms. Keller asked for "a key change for future generations" and for "healing together." She classified [the state of Alaska Native languages] as an emergency. She urged passage of HCR 19. She concluded, "This next step in healing is for future generations." She thanked Representative Ortiz in Inupiaq for sponsoring HCR 19.

[8:46:36 AM](#)

DAVID NEES testified that he is a teacher but is testifying on his own behalf. He said he is functionally illiterate in almost every Alaska Native language, as are most of his fellow teachers. He agreed that the state of Alaska Native languages is an emergency. He offered his understanding that Representative Saddler would present an amendment to "continue it." He pointed out that one missing element to consider is that there are no provisions within the education system to give "a license of a mastery in a Native language" to people so they can teach the language in a school. He said of the Indian education tutors with whom he worked, some could speak their own Native language but did not have any students in the classroom [who spoke that language]. He said the Alaska Cultural Native Charter School in Anchorage, Alaska, immerses everybody in every language. Mr. Nees stated that if there is a localized language emergency in Southeast, Alaska, for example, there must be provisions in the school system to ensure "the children that are from that culture have an exposure to it while they are inside the school system."

MR. NEES said the Russians showing up, the Spanish and English showing up and settling the country, Seward buying [Alaska] from

the Russians, and the segregation of the education system in Alaska is not "our fault," because "that's the way it was." He continued, "It is our fault that we haven't decided that this is an emergency and we haven't applied resources." He said HCR 19 is a good resolution, but the legislature should figure out what will be done after the state says there is an emergency. He asked, "Are you going to give it to the governor to come up with a policy or are you going to give it to the State Department of Education [& Early Development] to come up with a policy or are you going to let communities in Alaska decide our language is important enough that we're going to have master speakers in our classrooms at school immersing people in the language? And I think that's probably the best system to do. So, any barrier you have between master speakers and passing that knowledge on through your public education system is a barrier that needs to be taken a look at."

[8:49:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he thinks what Mr. Nees is talking about is "the next step." He said HCR 19 is an incremental step that accomplishes little but sets the ground work for future steps. He said the question to ask is how to preserve Native languages. He said Mr. Nees' suggestion is an interesting one that he hopes will be brought forward.

[8:50:09 AM](#)

ALLAN HAYTON, Director, Language Revitalization Program, Doyon Foundation, spoke in Gwich'in Athabascan and then translated to English. He gave his Athabascan name and related that he grew up in Arctic Village. He said he has been in his current position since 2015. The program has existed for six years. He said there are 10 languages in the region, all of which are endangered. Some of the languages are down to their last speaker; the majority of the speakers are known by first name only. He said he considers that an emergency. He said there is a long, historical path that has lead to this situation with languages and cultures; official policies of the past have created this emergency. He stated support of HCR 19 and said any and all support is appreciated. He said there are many benefits to supporting languages for future generations.

MR. HAYTON said Tanacross just hired a [Native language] teacher in the last year. He indicated named some places where Gwich'in is taught but said he does not know if there are teachers in Arctic Village or Fort Yukon or other communities in that school

district. He said there is one teacher serving 10 communities in the Yukon-Koyukuk School District via video and she teaches the Lower Tanana language in Minto. He said he does not know whether any other languages in the region are taught in schools.

[8:55:34 AM](#)

LACEY WILSON testified regarding the marginalization of languages. She said language impacts how people understand their relationship to the world, the structure of society, and "the ability to see the possibility of the future." She continued:

Without our original indigenous language, our people cannot relate themselves to the world and to our people in a healthy way. As in the case of nurturing children and also in the case of nurturing ourselves, neglect is tantamount to murder by inaction, and it is paramount that we take action today to try to save our languages. The loss of our language is directly impacted by our people being marginalized by English speaking society and colonial law. We are marginalized in that [in] this society we are allotted limited resources to address our societal struggles, which is poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence. This has left little or no resources for language revitalization in many of our communities. Having to put our language on the back burner for so long has resulted in waning status of an important component to the health of our people.

Our language is the root of our identity; it is a part of the land where we grow. Moving it from this land is like moving oxygen from our soil; it causes our structure toxicity where nothing will grow. We cannot hope to grow and to be a healthy people if we lose our language.

I'm calling today to ask the members of the committee to please vote in recognizing the linguistic emergency already taking place in Alaska so that we may hope to have the resources allocated to bring back the roots of our identity.

[8:58:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HCR 19.

8:58:44 AM

CO-CHAIR PARISH, in response to Representative Saddler, named the following four individuals who were on the list for invited testimony on March 6, 2018: Annette Evans Smith, Xh'unei Lance Twitchell, Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle, and Liz Medicine Crow.

8:59:42 AM

JODIE GATTI, Staff, Representative Dan Ortiz, on behalf of Representative Ortiz, prime sponsor, confirmed invited testimony on March 6, 2018, comprised those four named individuals.

9:00:18 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment 1, labeled 30-LS1402\U.1, Martin, 3/6/18, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 12, following "learning;":

Insert "and

WHEREAS language is an important element of culture, and the use of Alaska Native languages can strengthen Alaska Native culture in a mutually reinforcing cycle;"

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND objected for purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER spoke to Amendment 1. He said, "I think it's important to make the point that the goal of this effort is not necessarily Alaska language per se, but ... is an integral element of Alaska Native culture." He talked about the purpose of whereas clauses to justify the need for the action clauses. He said he has heard people testify as to the importance of Alaska Native culture to Alaska Native people, the greater Alaska community, and the global community, and to the importance of language to culture. He observed there is no language in HCR 19 that specifically links language to culture; therefore, he thinks it needs to be included. He said, "Language and culture are mutually reinforcing; the more people use a language ... [the more] it reinforces it and gives credence and prominence and integrity to the culture." He asked for member's support of Amendment 1.

[9:02:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of HCR 19, stated support of Amendment 1.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND removed her objection to Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[9:03:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment 2, labeled 30-LS1402\U.2, Martin, 3/6/18, which read as follows:

Page 2, following line 20:

Insert new material to read:

"FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages Alaska Natives to support Alaska Native culture by learning, teaching, and practicing Alaska Native languages in daily life and affairs; and be it"

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND objected for purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER spoke to Amendment 2. He recollected that Mr. Hudson had testified today that HCR 19 would help repair intergenerational trauma; using Alaska Native language is a way of healing the culture. He said the effort to preserve language can be hindered by government, which often is heavy-handed. He said he would not place his faith solely in government action "to maintain and sustain and perpetuate a language." He recollected that Mr. Stepetin had brought his three children with him when he testified [on March 6, 2018], and he had told Mr. Stepetin that "this effort and this battle will truly be won at the family and intergenerational level." He said family passing down their language through generations is "the ultimate guarantor of the health of the culture and the language." He said government can do certain things and "we" can try to atone for or repair damage that government has done, but "government cannot do for a language and culture anywhere near as well as they can do for themselves." He said as a student of language and an observer of the process, it is clear to him that the effort to sustain a language and culture is most effective when children and adults are given the chance to learn them. He expressed admiration for those who learn languages as an adult. He concluded, "The actual employment of language by Alaska Natives is an important part of this, and the government

cannot do it all itself." He asked members to support Amendment 2.

[9:05:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ said he does not disagree with the statements Representative Saddler made in regard to the proposed amendment; however, he said Amendment 2 would change the nature of HCR 19. He explained that [Amendment 2] is a directive to a group of people to take an action. He said he does not oppose those people taking that action but questions giving such a directive in HCR 19. He said HCR 19 is not calling for the government to be the solution to the issue; it just asks the government to recognize a state of emergency on the issue. He stated opposition to Amendment 2.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER countered that the language in the "**BE IT RESOLVED**" clause, on page 2, [lines 13-16], does call on state agencies to work actively with the legislature; the "**FURTHER RESOLVED**" clause, on page 2, [lines 17-20], calls on the legislature and governor "to work with Alaska native organizations to initiate and strengthen, as appropriate, legislative and policy measures" ["that prioritize the survival and continued use of Alaska Native languages"]. He reiterated that he thinks government should have a roll to play, but it should not be the sole roll. He noted the concurrent resolution title read "a linguistic emergency" not "a linguistic emergency solely addressing government solutions." He said if there is interest in results and solutions as opposed to a specific, government-only approach, it is appropriate to include "effective and long-lasting solutions" to the linguistic emergency.

[9:08:49 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:08 a.m. to 9:09 a.m.

[9:09:07 AM](#)

MS. GATTI said Amendment 2 points to a particular race while HCR 19 seeks actions by government agencies and organizations through state policy to advance languages.

[9:09:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that Alaska Native languages are referenced throughout the HCR 19. He said testifiers had

expressed that the language, culture, and race are "inextricably [and] mutually independent." He reiterated that if the goal is to ensure the survival of language, then "we should be willing to support efforts" toward whichever method is "most effective at perpetuating those languages."

[9:10:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LINCOLN stated, "There's a difference between Alaska Native language and culture ... [and] some race-based ... Alaska Native person." He relayed that in his region, some of the most celebrated members of the community and tribe are not Alaska Native in blood quantum but are people who have integrated into the region and practice the lifestyle; they are hunters and providers who have learned the language. He said he strongly objects to the idea that "these things ... are fully intertwined with race; it's way beyond that."

[9:11:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND maintained her objection.

[9:12:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked for clarification on the argument related to Amendment 2.

[9:13:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said she thinks Amendment 2 is stating the obvious. She said she thinks the committee can see how hard everyone who testified is working to reinstate their languages in their families and communities. She continued:

To tell them that we are encouraging them is simply patting them on the heads and saying, "Now, you know that this is how to do it." They clearly know how to do it. And I don't think we ... white people have any right to tell them how to do it. Coming from a bilingual family myself, my family knew from the get-go how to do this. The issue here ... is that entire generations' mouths were washed out in soap or other chemicals and told not to speak their languages. When you lose the native speakers of your language you cannot simply start speaking to your children in your native language. This takes a whole lot more support and encouragement. And I appreciate ... the thought

behind the amendment, but I ... cannot support it, because I know our Alaska Native people know exactly what needs to be done; they're simply looking for our support and encouragement.

[9:15:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER responded that nobody is patting anyone on the head. He said HCR 19 specifically expresses the call of the legislature to request the governor to tell government agencies and Alaska Native organizations what to do to preserve Alaska culture and language. He said whereas clauses state the obvious: there is a linguistic emergency in which Alaska is in danger of losing Alaska Native languages. He said, "I'm not sure why there's resistance to the obvious, that encouragement of Alaska Natives to speak and practice and pass on their language is antithetical to the ultimate goal of this resolution." He said if the objection is maintained, he could "water the amendment down to a point where I hope it would be more successful." He asked the bill sponsor if it would make a difference if Amendment 2 were changed to read "Alaskans" instead of "Alaska Natives".

[9:17:04 AM](#)

MS. GATTI said the spirit behind the amendment is appreciated. Further, she indicated that the bill sponsor would support the change because it would put the burden on everyone in Alaska rather than just on Alaska Natives.

CO-CHAIR PARISH questioned whether resolutions have, historically, moved members of the general public to a course of particular action.

[9:18:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER pointed to language in the "**WHEREAS**" clause beginning on page 2, line 10, of HCR 19, [which read as follows]:

WHEREAS indigenous peoples should be able to provide education in the peoples' own languages in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and learning;

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER said he thinks the language is "stating what Representative Saddler is stating."

[9:18:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH said an upcoming amendment would address that language.

[9:19:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ told Representative Rauscher that he thinks that particular line, rather than being instructive or directive toward a group of people, is a recognition of where in the past indigenous people have been prevented from pursuing that [education and teaching]. Speaking to Amendment 2, he confirmed the comment of Ms. Gatti that he would not oppose Amendment 2 if it was amended to change "Alaska Native" to "Alaskans".

[9:21:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER, in response to Co-Chair Parish's query, stated that resolutions often call on all Alaskans to support a cause. To Representative Rauscher's remark, Representative Saddler said the language on page 2, line 10, states that indigenous peoples "should be able to provide education"; therefore, he said he thinks HCR 19 does "call on people - not a government organization - to do thus and such/this or that." He said he sees Amendment 2 as having no inconsistency with other elements of the resolution. He said if the intent is that HCR 19 be directed solely at government, then the language [on page 2, lines 10-12] should be removed. Finally, he said if the goal of HCR 19 is to support Alaska Native languages, then he does not understand why there would be any objection to a resolve clause that calls on everybody, including Alaska Natives, to support culture. He said, "If I have to water it down to get it through, I'm certainly willing to do that, but I still really don't understand the basis of the objection."

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ responded that he would not use the phrase "watering it down" but that changing to include all Alaskans would remove the specificity toward Alaska Natives. He then stated, "And later on, when you referred to some other areas, again, those are examples where the resolution is calling out, it's bringing reference to where ... Alaska Native cultures in the past - and you've heard about this in the testimony - where they have been prevented from putting forward these particular actions. And so, that's the difference."

[9:24:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2, to change [the first occurrence of] "Alaska Native" [following "encourages"] to "Alaskans" and to delete the word "indigenous" on page 2, line 10.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked if Representative Saddler would be amenable to using the phrase "all Alaskans".

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER answered that he would let the bill drafter decide whether "Alaskans" implies "all Alaskans".

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND objected to Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2.

[9:25:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH clarified that with Conceptual Amendment 1, Amendment 2 would read as follows:

Page 2, following line 20:

Insert new material to read:

"FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages all Alaskans to support Alaska Native culture by learning, teaching, and practicing Alaska Native languages in daily life and affairs; and be it"

Page 2, line 10:

Delete "indigenous"

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND restated her objection.

[9:26:41 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:26 a.m. to 9:27 a.m.

[9:27:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ said he opposes the deletion of the word "indigenous".

[9:27:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND spoke to her objection. She stated, "This is a misplaced modifier in which we are encouraging all Alaskans to learn, teach, and practice Alaska Native languages."

She posited that the committee should leave the language to the bill drafter; however, she said she objects to both Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2, as well as to Amendment 2 as a whole.

[9:28:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER, speaking to Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2, said he thinks there is a necessity for consistency. He said he had asked Ms. Medicine Crow and others off the record whether it is beneficial to Alaska Natives and their culture for non-Alaska Natives to speak, use, and pass on Alaska Native language. He said the answer he got was an emphatic yes. He said to be consistent there should be no limitation on the ability of people to provide education in their own language. He explained, "It should not be limited to indigenous people; it should be all peoples." He said, "If you're going to support the amendment to Amendment 2 to encourage all Alaskans, then I think of necessity you have to support the conceptual amendment, which would call on all people to be able to provide education in their people's own language."

[9:30:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ offered his understanding that English speaking people have never experienced a problem providing English education in the state of Alaska; however, indigenous people have experienced problems when trying to provide education in their languages. He said the removal of "indigenous" would "dilute the whole purpose of the resolution itself"; therefore, he opposed Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2.

[9:31:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER said he wished that in voting out the second part of Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2 [to delete "indigenous"] he didn't have to also fail the first part [changing "Alaska Native" to "all Alaskans"].

[9:32:34 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:32 a.m.

[9:32:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said, "I call the previous question."

[9:33:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND maintained her objection.

[9:33:19 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:33 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. to address a technical issue.

[9:40:38 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representative Saddler voted in favor of Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2. Representatives Lincoln, Drummond, Rauscher, and Parish voted against it. Therefore, Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2 failed by a vote of 1-4.

[9:42:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER moved to adopt [Conceptual Amendment 2] to Amendment 2, to replace [the first occurrence of] "Alaska Natives" [in Amendment 2] with "all Alaskans".

[9:42:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND objected. She reiterated that what is being proposed is not good English and would be encouraging all Alaskans to learn, teach, and practice Alaska Native languages. She stated that [HCR 19] is about supporting Alaska's indigenous peoples in their emergency effort to save their languages.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER withdrew his motion to adopt Conceptual Amendment 2 to Amendment 2.

[9:44:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND maintained her objection to Amendment 2.

[9:44:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER called the question.

[9:45:09 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:45 a.m.

[9:45:32 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Saddler and Rauscher voted in favor of Amendment 2. Representatives Lincoln, Drummond, and Parish voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 2 failed by a vote of 2-3.

[9:46:26 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:46 a.m.

[9:46:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment 3, labeled 30-LS1402\U.3, Martin, 3/6/18, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 19:
Delete "prioritize"
Insert "emphasize"

CO-CHAIR PARISH objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER spoke to Amendment 3. He said "prioritize" connotes ranking or hierarchy - the putting of some things above or below others. He said he heard no one testify that any one language was better than others, while he said he heard several people testify that there should be parity. He mentioned again that he had spoken with Ms. Medicine Crow. He said he thinks Amendment 3 would "clearly express the need for an emphasis on Alaska Native language." He specified the difference between prioritizing and emphasizing Alaska Native languages. He said Amendment 3 does not say there should not be efforts made to preserve Alaska Native language and culture; it simply relays "they should not be prioritized over others."

[9:49:01 AM](#)

MS. GATTI indicated that the word "prioritize" was used as a contrast to "how it was not a priority in prior years." To Representative Saddler, she said, "The level to which we celebrate and strengthen and support Alaska's co-official languages does not diminish other languages as a whole; however, the loss of a language diminishes all of us."

[9:49:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND moved to adopt Amendment 1 to Amendment 3 such that instead of deleting "prioritize" the words "and emphasize" would be inserted following "prioritize".

[9:50:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER reiterated that to prioritize explicitly describes ordination. He added, "If something is in the top rank of order, it is obviously being emphasized." He said as currently written, the use of "prioritize" in HCR 19 could mean to prioritize over economic development, public safety, or public health issues. He said he does not believe it is the intent of HCR 19 to hold Alaska Native languages above everything else. Representative Saddler, based on notes he had taken during testimony, offered his understanding that Ms. Dybdahl had said that [the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska] is asking for equal access - not prioritization; Ms. Barnes had indicated she could or would not say "prioritize" was the right word and perhaps the committee could wordsmith; and Ms. Gatti said HCR 19 does not seek to prioritize Alaska Native languages. He said he thinks the word "emphasize" expresses the need to do something, while "prioritize" means not doing anything else at all "until this is done."

[9:52:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND withdrew the motion to adopt Amendment 1 to Amendment 3 and objected to Amendment 3.

[9:53:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LINCOLN said he has a different understanding of the word "priority". He explained, "How high you prioritize something is a function of not just its importance but also its urgency." He offered an example. He said he does not think anyone is arguing that Alaska Native languages are more important than any other language, but they have "got their backs against the wall right now" and he said he thinks it makes sense to prioritize "supporting them in this ... really critical window we have to ensure their survival." He said he hears what [Representative Saddler] is saying and agrees to a large extent; however, he said he neither understands the word "prioritize" in the same way nor does he "have the same issues with it."

[9:54:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said the principle language of HCR 19 recognizes a linguistic emergency, and Amendment 3 seeks to replace the word "prioritize" with "emphasize". She said, "We're not talking about prioritizing the survival and continued use of German, Greek, Japanese, or Russian; we are talking about the survival and continued use of Alaska Native languages. ... Period. End of story." In response to a request for clarification from Representative Rauscher, she stated that she was objecting to Amendment 3.

[9:55:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ referred to all the comments that had been made and stated that he concurred with "the comments that had been made most recently." He said that "prioritize the survival and continued use of Native languages" is "part of a whole phrase" that does not speak to prioritizing over economic development or other languages. Echoing the comments of Representative Drummond, he said that prioritizing "brings back the notion of the emergency and the need to take action to preserve languages that are, right now, on the brink of extinction." Representative Ortiz stated opposition to Amendment 3.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said it is his wish to pass HCR 19 from committee, and he is just trying to make a good resolution better. He read the definition of "priority" from Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, Ninth Edition, as follows: "the quality of superiority in rank, position, or privilege." He said he does not dispute the idea that quick action is needed, and he said he has an amendment that would address that issue.

[9:58:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH said the State of Alaska has many priorities; therefore, he said he disagrees that "if something is a priority, it is the most important priority."

[9:58:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH maintained his objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 3.

[9:59:03 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Saddler voted in favor of Amendment 3. Representatives Rauscher, Lincoln,

Drummond, and Parish voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 3 failed by a vote of 1-4.

[9:59:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment 4, labeled 30-LS1402\U.4, Martin, 3/6/18, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 11:

Delete "in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and learning"

[9:59:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND and CO-CHAIR PARISH objected.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER spoke to Amendment 4. He said he has heard testimony about "the benefits important to Alaska Native language" but not as much evidence on the best way to achieve the continuation of the language[s]. He indicated that HCR 19 is a foundational block for continuing efforts; however, he opined that to say that "indigenous peoples should be able to provide education in the peoples' own languages in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and learning" is "about a half-step too far at this point."

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said she needs a minute to think about [Amendment 4] but something about it rubs her the wrong way.

[10:01:19 AM](#)

MS. GATTI said this "**WHEREAS**" clause was included in HCR 19 in recognition of the many unique people in the state. The reason for "in the manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and learning", she explained, is to recognize that there are many different ways of teaching and learning in the state.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND recollected she had once waited on a decision by the Department of Education & Early Development as to who would be a recipient of a certificate. She said, "But this is a linguistic emergency. We don't have time to wait for anybody to certify any method of ... teaching." She said children are open to learning, and she opined that the legislature needs to "get behind these folks and support them in any way we can and just get out of their way" rather than trying to determine "what is or is not appropriate." She said she

thinks the phrase needs to remain in HCR 19, because Alaska Native speakers know "exactly how they're going to do this." She said she wishes Dr. Twitchell was still present, because he could explain how it could be done. She recollected that Dr. Twitchell had gone to Hawai'i and learned to speak the language.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that under AS 14.30.420 there is a provision for school boards to establish a local Alaska Native language curriculum advisory board in communities with a majority of Alaska Natives. He reiterated his intent to improve upon the concurrent resolution while not impeding its progress.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER withdrew the motion to adopt Amendment 4.

[10:04:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment [5], labeled 30-LS1402\U.5, Martin, 3/7/18, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 14, following "work":
Insert "expeditiously and"

CO-CHAIR PARISH objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER spoke to Conceptual Amendment [5]. He said he thinks the title of HCR 19 speaks to the linguistic emergency. He said he thinks the addition of "expeditiously" would add to the sense of urgency.

[10:06:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ said he does not oppose Conceptual Amendment [5].

CO-CHAIR PARISH withdrew his objection to Conceptual Amendment [5]. There being no further objection, it was so ordered.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER expressed thanks to Ms. Medicine-Crow for her help in getting that language in HCR 19.

[10:07:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to report HCR 19, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHCR 19(CRA) was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

10:07:43 AM

The committee took an at-ease from 10:07 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.

10:10:22 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.