

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

April 9, 2019

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair  
Representative Dan Ortiz  
Representative Chuck Kopp  
Representative Dave Talerico  
Representative Sarah Vance

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair  
Representative John Lincoln

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 6

Expressing support and appreciation for the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 126

"An Act establishing November as Alaska Native Heritage Month."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HR 6

SHORT TITLE: NAT'L. NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LINCOLN

03/18/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/18/19	(H)	TRB, MLV
04/09/19	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 126

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA NATIVE HERITAGE MONTH

SPONSOR(S): TRIBAL AFFAIRS

04/08/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/08/19	(H)	TRB

04/09/19

(H)

TRB AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ELIZABETH FERGUSON, Staff  
Representative John Lincoln  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced HR 6 on behalf of Representative Lincoln, the prime sponsor.

COLONEL WAYNE DON, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations  
Alaska Army National Guard  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HR 6.

JOE WILLIAMS, Grand President  
Alaska Native Brotherhood  
Saxman, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HR 6.

PAULETTE MORENO, Grand President  
Alaska Native Sisterhood  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HR 6.

IVAN M. IVAN  
Akiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HR 6.

GRACE RENEE SINGH, Staff  
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced HB 126 on behalf of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs, the prime sponsor.

ANASTASIA PLEASANT, Public Policy Fellow  
First Alaskans Institute  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced HB 126 on behalf of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs, the prime sponsor.

LIZ MEDICINE CROW, Director  
First Alaskans Institute  
Kake, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 126.

PAULETTE MORENO, Grand President  
Alaska Native Sisterhood  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 126.

JOE WILLIAMS, Grand President  
Alaska Native Brotherhood  
Saxman, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 126.

IVAN M. IVAN  
Akiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 126.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

8:03:05 AM

**CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY** called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Talerico, Kopp, Vance, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order. Representative Ortiz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HR 6-NAT'L. NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL**

8:03:38 AM

**CHAIR ZULKOSKY** announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.6, Expressing support and appreciation for the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

8:04:15 AM

**ELIZABETH FERGUSON**, Staff, Representative John Lincoln, Alaska State Legislature, said HR 6 expresses gratitude for and acknowledges the National Native American Veterans Memorial, titled "Warriors' Circle of Honor," to be constructed in Washington, D.C., at the National Museum of the American Indian. She said the memorial will honor Native American veterans who have "historically served in greater percentages than any other ethnicity in every major war since the Revolutionary War." Ms. Ferguson stated that the memorial would offer opportunities for museum visitors and the general public to learn more about Native American veterans and the distinguished honors received by them. She opined that this is a topic not adequately taught

or generally understood. She said the memorial would also "battle misperceptions" about the conflicts between being a proud Native American and a proud citizen of the United States of America. She spoke about the commitment made by Native American veterans to protect the United States of America and of their deep-seated patriotism.

8:06:51 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP thanked Ms. Ferguson for presenting HR 6 and commended Representative Lincoln for sponsoring the resolution. He recognized that the drafting of HR 6 tells the story of the proud history of Native American military service. He shared that he is glad to see such history recognized and honored.

8:07:27 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened invited testimony on HR 6.

8:07:49 AM

COLONEL WAYNE DON, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Alaska Army National Guard, stated that he is "a member of of the National Native American Veterans Memorial." He commended Representative Lincoln for sponsoring HR 6. He identified himself as a 25-year veteran of the United States Army and the Alaska Army National Guard. He said he has been deployed three times and served in both Bosnia and Afghanistan. He stated that he supports HR 6 not just because of his affiliation with the armed forces, but because many members of his family have also served in the armed forces, from World War II to present. He said he is proud to be part of the National Native American Veterans Memorial project because it recognizes the contributions of all Native Americans from the American Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism.

COLONEL DON explained that the United States Congress authorized the National Museum of the American Indian to create a monument on its grounds to allow Americans to recognize and learn about "the courageous traditions" of Native Americans in the United States armed forces. He said the museum's board of trustees created an advisory committee of Native American veterans to provide insight about military service. He stated that the board is co-chaired by former United States Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel. He said the board is composed of

American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian veterans and family members from across the country.

8:10:04 AM

COLONEL DON said the museum held consultations across the country to gather feedback from Native American veterans, tribal leaders, and community members to guide the direction of the project and the design of the memorial. He discussed the design competition and the selection of a design submitted by Harvey Pratt, an artist from the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes who is a United States Marine Corps veteran and recognized as a Cheyenne Peace Chief. Colonel Don described Mr. Pratt's design for the memorial and said it would be located on the northeast corner of the museum grounds. He discussed fundraising and outreach efforts undertaken by the museum and the advisory board. He noted that the United States Congress included in its authorization the caveat that no federal funds be used to construct the memorial. He reported that the museum has raised \$7.8 million from pledges across the country. He noted that there has been considerable support from Indian Country and private industry. He said the goal is to continue raising funds for a groundbreaking in fall 2019 and an unveiling currently scheduled for Veteran's Day in 2020. He stated that the memorial has received widespread support and financial pledges from the following Alaska Native corporations: Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC); Calista Corporation; Doyon, Limited; Bristol Bay Native Corporation; Sealaska Corporation; Chugach Alaska Corporation; Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI); and Afognak Native Corporation.

COLONEL DON summarized the project timeline. He said the total budget for the project, including outreach and construction, is \$15 million. He said the goal for the September 2019 groundbreaking is \$8 million; he added that this goal is nearly met. He shared his excitement for the project and his surprise at the support from across the country.

8:14:24 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP thanked Colonel Don for his testimony and asked him if he feels a house resolution from the Alaska State Legislature would help with fundraising efforts.

COLONEL DON answered "absolutely." He opined that a resolution in support of the memorial would help with fundraising efforts.

8:14:53 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY thanked Colonel Don for his service and his testimony.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened public testimony on HR 6.

8:15:27 AM

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:15 a.m.

8:15:55 AM

JOE WILLIAMS, Grand President, Alaska Native Brotherhood, stated that he is testifying in support of HR 6. He thanked Representative Lincoln for creating an opportunity to honor "our veterans." He opined that it is something that is desperately needed and is very honorable to be done.

8:16:32 AM

PAULETTE MORENO, Grand President, Alaska Native Sisterhood, expressed her strong support for HR 6. She said many Alaska Native and American Indian veterans have defended their ancestral homelands. She said a structural memorial is "more than just physical," but a spiritual recognition of "our Native people and the land that we have occupied and continue to occupy along with the peoples of today." She relayed that members of her family, including three uncles and some cousins, served in the United States armed forces. She discussed the dignity and importance of paying tribute to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian service. She continued: "Not only have we, for time immemorial, defended our people, our rights, our way of life, and our land, but we have defended this country." She said the Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANS) and the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) recognizes the significance of honoring Native veterans in a profound and beautiful way.

8:18:31 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY thanked Mr. Williams and Ms. Moreno for their testimony.

8:18:55 AM

IVAN M. IVAN said he is visiting Juneau as part of a fly-in with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). He discussed

efforts to secure education funding. He noted that he was a member of the Alaska House of Representatives during the 1990s. Mr. Ivan expressed his appreciation for the establishment of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs, which he described as an important committee and "a very positive step forward for the State of Alaska." He said the committee is important to Alaska Natives. He discussed the acceptance and recognition of Native languages, something he said has allowed Native children and villages a line of communication to the legislature.

MR. IVAN expressed his appreciation for HR 6 and the National Native American Veterans Memorial. He shared that he served in the Alaska Army National Guard. He mused on the tradition of Alaska Natives from across the state answering the call of duty to serve the country. He said Alaska Native servicemembers were called "the eyes and ears" because of their contributions to intelligence-gathering. He noted that there is a small memorial in Bethel dedicated to members of the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG), but stated he has not seen a memorial recognizing Alaska Natives for their service. He expressed hope that children can learn about the history of their parents defending the nation. He expressed that he would like to see those people recognized for their participation.

MR. IVAN relayed his support for the resolution and shared his desire to contribute as much as he can. He expressed how proud is he is as a former state legislator to be before the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

[8:26:41 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY, after ascertaining that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on HR 6.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that HR 6 would be held for further review.

**HB 126-ALASKA NATIVE HERITAGE MONTH**

[8:27:00 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 126, "An Act establishing November as Alaska Native Heritage Month."

[8:27:07 AM](#)

GRACE RENEE SINGH, Staff, Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Alaska State Legislature, introduced herself as the committee aide for the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs.

8:27:16 AM

ANASTASIA PLEASANT, Public Policy Fellow, First Alaskans Institute, introduced herself as a participant in the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program at the University of Alaska.

8:27:27 AM

MS. SINGH said HB 126 would establish the month of November each year as Alaska Native Heritage Month, which she explained may be observed by schools, community groups, and other public and private agencies and individuals. She continued that Alaska Native Heritage Month may be observed with appropriate activities to honor and recognize statewide and national contributions made by Alaska Natives.

8:27:53 AM

MS. PLEASANT said the purpose of HB 126 is to celebrate and recognize the rich cultures of Alaska Natives throughout the state. She stated that Alaska Native people have occupied the land now known as the State of Alaska for thousands of years.

8:28:13 AM

MS. SINGH stated that Alaska Native cultures, languages, and traditions significantly contribute to Alaska's history, economy, and diverse identity. She said HB 126 would recognize Alaska's unique heritage, its cultural appreciation, and the community relationships that help unify all Alaskans.

8:28:31 AM

MS. PLEASANT said HB 126 would formally acknowledge the many contributions and sacrifices, as well as the resilience, of Alaska Natives. She added that this is something every community, culture, and tradition in Alaska can celebrate.

8:28:51 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO commended Ms. Singh and Ms. Pleasant on their presentation.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened invited testimony on HB 126.

8:29:22 AM

LIZ MEDICINE CROW, Director, First Alaskans Institute, introduced herself in both English and Tlingit, as well as offered information about her family and background. She said it was an honor to testify before the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs. She expressed her appreciation for the establishment of the committee and shared that she looks forward to its continued work. She said she also looks forward to the committee being made permanent. She echoed Mr. Ivan's previous testimony about the committee being a medium through which the voices of Alaska Native people can be heard.

MS. MEDICINE CROW said she supports HB 126 and offered her congratulations to the committee that HB 126 is the first bill to be introduced by the committee itself. On why HB 126 is important, she reflected on first learning about Native American Heritage Month upon graduating from high school in 1990. She recalled feeling that it was about time someone recognized the contributions of Native peoples. She said she was surprised to learn that Native American Heritage Month is not permanently established. She shared her appreciation that HB 126 would make Alaska Native Heritage Month a "permanent structure of celebration." She recalled having recently been in Sitka during a celebration of the return of the herring. She mused on the spiritual connection between Alaska Natives and their homeland. She said that connection has to be celebrated and honored. She opined that the creation of an opportunity for all Alaskans to celebrate Alaska Natives together would be a good way to honor and lift up Alaska Natives.

8:33:48 AM

MS. MEDICINE CROW shared that November is a fitting time to celebrate, as it is when fall and winter meet. She paused to acknowledge that the Juneau area is Auke Kwaan and Taku Kwaan territory. She explained that local "parties" and "doings" occur in the winter months after the completion of the harvest. She said this is why November is a good fit for celebrating and honoring Alaska Native peoples. She noted as well that it is a convenient time for schools, communities, and other entities to put effort into celebrating the legacy, leadership, and love of Alaska Native people.

8:35:33 AM

PAULETTE MORENO, Grand President, Alaska Native Sisterhood, introduced herself in Tlingit. She reminded the committee that she represents the Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANS) as Grand President. She noted that ANS and the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) are the oldest known civil rights organizations for Native people in the United States of America. She said ANS and ANB were among the first organizations to fight for Native civil, spiritual, and land rights, as well as for resources and ways of life. She expressed appreciation on behalf of ANB and ANS for the establishment of the committee. She commented that the committee room has been filled not just with English words, but also with words in Native languages. She said, "It is a reverent time, it is a beautiful time, it is a powerful time."

MS. MORENO said ANS, in equal partnership with ANB, is in total support of HB 126. She mused on the significance of the bill and its unique opportunity to recognize Alaska Native heritage. She referenced a piece of copper worn around her neck as a symbol of worth - a "tana." She said the symbol of worth of HB 126 would be a clear articulation by the State of Alaska of its recognition of Native peoples across Alaska. She said it would offer an opportunity for Alaskans and other Americans to celebrate the diverse culture of Alaska Natives. She mused on Alaska Natives as "caretakers of this land" and discussed the ways Alaska Natives preserve culture and resources. She opined that HB 126 would do more than just "recognize November." She said it would recognize the people who are "standing there silent no more." She stated, "We are not backing down on any of our current fights; we are standing up and standing strong."

MS. MORENO noted that 2020 will mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. She recognized the efforts of Elizabeth Wanamaker Peratrovich to secure passage of the act. Ms. Moreno said she is sure that Ms. Peratrovich and other organizers are "in this room spiritually watching us today." She connected HB 126 to the causes for which Ms. Peratrovich fought. She noted that the United States Mint will distribute coins to commemorate Ms. Peratrovich, and that the eyes of the nation will be on Alaska to see how far the state has come. She stressed that the legislature can "add worth" to the state by passing HB 126.

8:42:13 AM

JOE WILLIAMS, Grand President, Alaska Native Brotherhood, introduced himself. He mused on Ms. Moreno's discussion of Ms. Peratrovich and how far Alaska has come as a state. He recalled past times when there were signs that read, "no dogs or Indians allowed." He spoke about the power of the events that took place 75 years ago with the passage of the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. He expressed total support for HB 126 on behalf of ANS and ANB. He echoed the sentiments of previous speakers. He relayed that he is 75 years old. He said that, in those 75 years, he has worked diligently to speak the English language and to follow the laws of the State of Alaska and the United States of America. He said that, with the passage of HB 126, it would be the responsibility of committee members to learn to say "thank you" in all the Alaska Native languages. He taught committee members to say "thank you" in Tlingit by having them repeat "gunalcheesh." He asked committee members to learn to say "thank you" in other Alaska Native languages. He thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify.

[8:45:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ sought to recognize the individuals present in the room. He noted that Mr. Williams was formerly mayor of Ketchikan Gateway Borough. He commended Mr. Williams' ability to command a room. He relayed his appreciation and support for HB 126.

[8:47:01 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY thanked Ms. Moreno and Mr. Williams both for their testimony.

[8:47:32 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:47 a.m.

[8:47:54 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY opened public testimony on HB 126.

[8:48:11 AM](#)

IVAN M. IVAN introduced himself and expressed his support for HB 126. He asked that Chair Zulkosky permit him to present his testimony in the Yupik language.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY granted his request.

MR. IVAN, before delivering his prepared testimony, relayed that his testimony is dedicated to his grandchildren, so that they can watch the testimony in the future and be proud that their language was spoken in committee and was respected. He mused on how HB 126 would recognize and celebrate Alaska Native culture, heritage, and language. He said it is important that Alaska Native children be proud of themselves and not feel low or feel like failures in times when they do not achieve their goals. He spoke of the importance of Alaska Natives being confident in themselves. He reiterated his support for HB 126 because of the strength and opportunities it would create. He said it would give Alaska Native children an identity to be proud of and to be celebrated. He reiterated the importance of teaching young people strength and resilience.

MR. IVAN provided the rest of his testimony in Yupik.

[8:53:19 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY thanked Mr. Ivan for traveling to Juneau to speak about issues that are important to him and his community. She thanked him as well for "bringing our language into this building." She thanked him for his testimony.

[8:53:49 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY, after ascertaining that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 126.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that HB 126 would be held for further review.

[8:54:12 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 8:54 a.m.