

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

March 4, 2024

3:37 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative CJ McCormick, Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Sarah Vance  
Representative Maxine Dibert

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Thomas Baker  
Representative Jamie Allard  
Representative Ashley Carrick

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Rebecca Himschoot

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17

Urging the United States Congress to pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HJR 17

SHORT TITLE: SUPPORT FED TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MCCORMICK

01/18/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/24	(H)	TRB
03/04/24	(H)	TRB AT 3:30 PM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff  
Representative CJ McCormick  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 17 "Urging The United States Congress to Pass The Truth and Healing Commission On Indian Boarding School Policies Act," on behalf of Representative McCormick, prime sponsor.

DR. ROSITA/ YEIDIKLAS'AKW KAAHANI WORL, President  
Sealaska Heritage Institute  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HJR 17.

DR. WALKIE CHARLES, Director  
Alaska Native Language Center;  
Faculty Fellow  
Indigenous Language Revitalization  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HJR 17.

BENJAMIN A. JACUK, Indigenous Researcher  
Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "HJR 17 Hearing Lach'qu Sukdu."

EMILY EDINSHAW, President  
Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-Provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "HJR 17 Hearing Lach'qu Sukdu."

AARON LEGGETT, President  
Native Village of Eklutna;  
Curator  
Alaska History and Indigenous Cultures  
Anchorage Museum  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony during the hearing on HJR 17.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:37:00 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 3:37 p.m. Representatives Vance,

Carpenter, Dibert, and McCormick were present at the call to order.

**HJR 17-SUPPORT FED TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION**

[3:39:11 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that the only order of business would be HJR 17, HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17, Urging the United States Congress to pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

[3:39:32 PM](#)

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff, Representative CJ McCormick, Alaska State Legislature, provided a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of Representative McCormick, prime sponsor, titled "HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 17 "Urging the United States Congress to Pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She began on slide 2, titled "HJR17," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Support US Senate Bill 1723
- Federal Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act
- 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report findings
- Alaska Native Heritage Center Lach'qu Sukdu Research Program database/research
- Alaska Federation of Natives Resolution 23-14 in support of S.1723

[3:41:16 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 3, titled "HJR17 INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- o 521 recorded boarding schools (408 federal government-funded)
- o History of abuse & trauma
- o Living survivors
- o Primary source records & documents
- o Mission schools & infrastructure existing today
- o Modern presence (i.e. Sheldon Jackson)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF explained that the era of Indian boarding schools is often not spoken of and has been effectively erased from state history. She noted the difficulty of adequately documenting the era due to a significant lack of primary sources and records. There are structures still in existence today that represent the era, for example the Sheldon Jackson School.

[3:43:07 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 4, titled "Indian Boarding Schools," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Systemic Institutional Practices

- Prohibition of indigenous language •  
Cultural elimination & forced assimilation
- Pedophilia
- Unmarked graves & undocumented deaths
- Displaced children & families
- Damaging experiences of abuse Trauma
- Beating, torture, humiliation, punishments
- Disruption of self, family, community, identity
- Life-long & multi-generational trauma
- Lack of recognition of experiences
- Loss of people, families, communities, history & cultures
- Irreversible harms committed

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF mentioned that today's presentation would also include first-hand accounts of abuse in Indian boarding schools from her elders. She noted the lack of recognition of the struggles and abuse faced by Indian children during the boarding school era. She listed the systemic institutional practices of Indian boarding schools.

[3:46:51 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 5, titled "Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies Act," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Acknowledging harm, forced assimilation & elimination of culture
- o Database volume of cases
  - o Source record collection
  - o Document experiences of abuse
  - o Inter-generational impacts
  - o Investigate & report findings

- o First step

[3:48:32 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 6, titled "SENATE BILL 1723," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

29 BI-PARTISAN CO-SPONSORS

Sen. Lisa Murkowski

- Co-Chair, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
- Co-sponsor and Senate Champion
- Vocal advocate

Sen. Deb Haalaand

- Secretary of Interior
- 2020 bill first introduced as Senator
- Introduced Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF explained that U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski and U.S. Senator Debra Haaland are vocal advocates of the necessity of recognizing the Indian boarding school era.

[3:49:08 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 7 and showed photographs of Alaska boarding schools in Southeast Alaska, including Wrangle Institute, Sheldon Jackson College, Presbyterian Mission School, and Haines House. She also mentioned the Aleknagik Mission School is in her hometown, and many of her elder family members attended. Many of the mission schools are still standing today.

[3:50:25 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF concluded her presentation and expressed her gratitude to the upcoming presenters.

[3:50:44 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK thanked Ms. Chythlook-Sifsof and invited the next presenter.

[3:51:43 PM](#)

DR. ROSITA/YEIDIKLAS'AKW KAAHÁNI WORL, President, Sealaska Heritage Institute, read from prepared remarks [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Honorable State of Alaska Representatives and Mr. Chair,

Thank you for sponsoring this legislation and hearing on a topic that has and continues to traumatize generations of Native Americans and Alaska Natives. I wholeheartedly support the passage of Senate Bill 1723—the federal Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

If I may, I would like to introduce myself in accordance with our cultural protocols. However, I would also like to do so as a means of outlining my cultural identity that the missionaries at Haines House, a Presbyterian boarding school, attempted to eradicate.

Yeidiklas'akw ka Kaa.háni yóo xát duwasáak  
Cháak' naa áyá xát  
Shungukeidí naax xát sitee  
Kaawdliyaayí Hit dâx áyá xát  
Jilkaat kwáan áyá xát  
Lukaax.ádi dachxán áyá xát

My Tlingit name is Yeidiklas'akw. It is an ancient name whose meaning has been lost in antiquity.

My ceremonial name is Ƙaaháni, which refers to the stature or status of an individual. In the ceremony in which I received this name, our clan leader said that my stature was "Woman Who Stands in the Place of a Man."

I am an Eagle of the Thunderbird Clan and the House Lowered from the Sun from Klukwan in the Chilkat region.

I am also a child of the Sockeye Clan.

[3:53:41 PM](#)

DR. WORL continued her testimony as follows:

My identity is also intertwined with our clan crests—the Eagle, Thunderbird, and Sun.

We, of our clan, are also spiritually strengthened by our White Bear, Shark, and Killer Whale spirits.

In addition, our clan is entitled to wear the U.S. Naval uniform and to use the name Schwatga as payment for the failure of Lt. Schwatga, of the U.S. Navy, to pay a debt to my great, great clan grandfather during the Klondike Gold Rush era.

For the record, in English, I am also known as Rosita Worl.

Kidnapped

I remember that day as if it were only yesterday. A woman got out of a car in front of our house in Petersburg, where I lived with my grandparents, and asked, "Do you want to see your brother?" My brother was living in Juneau. At age the age of six, I didn't think to ask any questions and, in my excitement, I eagerly got into the taxi with her.

We were driving past Ohmer's Cannery, where my grandparents were working, when the cab driver asked Mrs. McGilton, as I remember her name, "Don't you want to tell her grandparents that you are taking her away?" She responded immediately and emphatically, "No, keep driving." It was at that moment that I realized something was dreadfully wrong.

When we stopped, I jumped out of the car and tried to run away from the three adults, to no avail. I was thrown into the back of a small float plane like I was a piece of luggage.

I started to cry and couldn't stop. Even when we arrived in Juneau and boarded the Princeton Hall, a "mission boat," I continued to cry.

[3:56:15 PM](#)

DR. WORL continued her testimony as follows:

Several years ago, while attending the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in Fairbanks, a gentleman approached me and asked if I knew him. I didn't know that he was Del Howard of Metlakatla. He told me that he saw me when I was brought aboard the Princeton Hall. He said I was sobbing uncontrollably and that I was struggling to catch my breath. He said

that a missionary came and told me stop crying, then slapped me.

When we arrived in Haines, I was taken to Haines House. You might be aware that the federal government paid for "contract schools" in Alaska, which were run by various Christian denominations that had established mission schools. The Christians and the federal government shared the same policy—to suppress Native cultures and to civilize and Christianize Alaska Natives.

My next memories are of being in bed, still crying, and looking out the window and seeing the moon over a mountain.

I kept wondering—why am I here? I learned that Haines House was an orphanage, which made no sense since I had a large extended family who had cared for me after my mother died. The man who was listed on my birth certificate was not my father. He had been sentenced to prison for trying to burn our house down with me and my mother in it.

The days were horrific, but the nights were also difficult. I would weep silently so as not to be punished for crying. It was made worse as I would wet my bed. Lest I get in trouble, I would lie in my urine until the sheets dried. On weekends, I would wait until all the other girls in the dorm had pulled off their sheets and stacked them in the middle of the room. I would then pull off my sheets and run and put them into the middle of the pile.

[3:58:39 PM](#)

DR. WORL continued her testimony as follows:

The chores were difficult and would violate today's child labor laws. As a six or seven year old, I was required to make toast in large ovens. I would crawl onto the open oven door and lay the bread on the shelves which I had pulled out from the heated oven. After a few moments, I would have to then turn the bread over to toast the other side.



I also had to iron sheets in the large commercial mangles. I would have to stand on a chair to put the sheets on the large rollers and pull the heated mangle down. Fortunately, my aunt who was living in Haines later came to work at Haines House and was assigned to the laundry. After that, I no longer had to iron sheets but could instead play in the basement laundry room.

Children at Haines House were also rented out for various jobs. On some wonderful occasions, my grandparent would rent me. Instead of working, we would go blueberry picking.

Another painful memory is the evenings when all the students would gather in a hall, sitting on the floor while I stood in the front, facing them. I would say things to them, and they would all start laughing. I could never understand why they were laughing at me. This was one of the methods the Christians had devised to manipulate students into shaming other students as a means of suppressing Native language and culture.

One of the missionaries' forms of punishment was having children run through a gauntlet of two rows of older students facing each other. Each student held boards with holes drilled into them. The child who was to be punished was required to run through the gauntlet while the older students would hit them with the boards. To ensure that the older students were hitting the punished student severely, older students would be required to run the gauntlet if it appeared that they weren't hitting hard enough.

[4:01:11 PM](#)

DR. WORL continued her testimony as follows:

At night, the older girls would hold me and ask, "Why don't you listen?" I have to say I don't know why I didn't always follow the rules despite knowing that I would be punished for my misdeeds. I used to think that I must have imagined these sorts of punishments, but later I heard others confirm the stories of having to run through these gauntlets.

I would prefer not to discuss the sexual abuse except to say that it did happen.

Another memory that haunts me is seeing girls who were almost comatose. They would walk without ever talking or smiling. They would walk like they were zombies. I often wondered what happened to them, for one day I would see them and the next day I wouldn't. I note that several months ago, a young child's skull was found on the Haines House grounds. To this date, the skull has not been identified.

One of the most degrading memories I recall was being filmed as I was bathing completely in the nude. Even at that young age, I had a sense of modesty. Another girl, who looked white and who had been brought to Haines House, was also required to bathe in the same tub. After we got out of the tub, I would be given a plain, cotton dress while she was given a frilly organza dress.

I understood that these films were used to raise funds for the mission and, I imagine, to symbolically convey the cleansing away of Native culture. However, I never quite understood the rationale for contrasting a Native girl with a non-Native looking girl except to point to a difference in status between Natives and non-Natives, as signified by the plain cotton dress I got while she received the frilly organza dress.

Decades later, I met the non-Native-looking girl and we soon discovered that we were the two girls in that film. It never occurred to me that she had found the experience as humiliating and traumatic as I did. We spent the evening crying together over those sad memories.

[4:03:58 PM](#)

DR. WORL continued her testimony as follows:

In Tlingit culture, children of sisters are viewed as brothers and sisters. The mothers of these brothers and sisters are viewed as mothers to all the children, so we called our maternal aunts "mother."

My mother, Bessie Quinto, tried for three years to get me out of Haines House. Unbeknownst to her, I had been released into the custody of the man who tried to kill me and my mother. He had used the excuse that he needed to care for me and was released from prison on these grounds. He was an evil man, and it took my mom time to get me away from him.

Of the ten types of trauma recognized as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) studied in 1998, I experienced all ten. From what is publicly known of my life, it may appear that I have been resilient. I have tried to suppress my memories of those three years and have been fairly successful. However, in reality and in all truthfulness, I know that those three traumatic years took their toll on me in ways that have not been apparent to others.

More recently, I have found that I am becoming increasingly emotional in remembering those years. At a recent event in which the Northern Lights Presbyterian Church in Juneau offered reparations for their discriminatory acts toward Dr. Walter Soboleff in closing his popular church, we had a panel discussion. I wanted to share my Haines House experience with the Presbyterian leaders in the hopes of persuading them to acknowledge the wrongs they committed against generations of Native students who were held in these boarding schools. I was surprised at how emotional I became.

Even in preparing for this testimony, I had periods of emotional stress. I called one of my close friends, who had also endured the pains of a boarding school. He told me that he also continues to experience similar periods of emotional stress.

I am but one of the multitude of survivors of the boarding schools that have caused generations of trauma. At Sealaska Heritage Institute, along with colleagues from the University of Illinois, we have conducted epigenetic studies that demonstrate that intergenerational trauma is a reality reflected by changes in one's DNA.

With the lack of funding for education here in Alaska, I am fearful that a return to boarding schools will be

proposed. We cannot afford to make the same mistakes with a return to boarding schools and boarding home programs. We cannot condemn further generations to ongoing trauma.

Thank you for listening to my story.

Gunalchéesh.

[4:07:58 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK thanked Dr. Worl for sharing her story as a piece of history.

[4:08:38 PM](#)

DR. WALKIE CHARLES, Director of Alaska Native Language Center; Faculty Fellow, Indigenous Language Revitalization, University of Alaska Fairbanks, read from prepared remarks [included in the committee packet], which read as follows:

Quyana, Representative McCormick, Callan-aaq, allatllu ikayurteten una resolution-aaq piurtevkangnaqluku tamaitnun yugnun ellam ilaunelngurnun taringesqumaluku mikelnguut cakviullrat ayaumallratni allanun nunanun apqiitnek boarding school-anun.

Arriving on a plane into an unknown island, taken on a long bus ride along dark, gloomy spruce trees - coming from a space where groves of trees were unknown. Upon arrival we are queued and received by whom-we-learned-to-call dorm aides. I'm told to strip down in front of other boys - naked - and I place all my belongings on a table where a dorm aide labels my clothes either with a magic marker - the smell I could still remember - or an engraver for those of us fortunate to have a watch. My clothes and belongings were branded with the Number 12. My new identity for the entirety of my tenure at Wrangell Institute. I was twelve years old, 89 lbs., skinny, with horn-rimmed eyeglasses too big for my tiny face that kept sliding down my nose. I was already labeled a skinny kid.

We were led to a communal shower, marched down the hall into a door that was split in half where we were issued a towel, a washcloth, a toothbrush, tooth powder, and Dixie Peach hair gel. Then we were marched

into our dorm rooms - four boys to a room which held to government-issued metal bunk beds. The three roommates were strangers to me; I was a stranger to them.

We get clothed and again we are ordered to get ready to eat at the dining hall. More lines. One side was the girls' line; the opposite was the boys' line. We stood with our arms along the side. No touching. No talking. Mrs. Krepps would make sure that our shirt tails were tucked. We ate out of trays with metal utensils. We seemed to walk in lines wherever we went.

[4:13:15 PM](#)

DR. CHARLES continued his testimony as follows:

Institutional ivory soap, four-foot by four-foot square talcum powder box to dip our feet into after showering, the smell of institutional government-issued floor wax, government-issued laundry soap, the smell of government-issued wool blankets, the putrid smell of starched bed sheets, multiple voices simultaneously wanting to be heard yet silenced, myriad of music from the big boys' transistor radios who can afford to blare American music from the local radio station, the muffled cries of younger boys while trying to sleep, one audibly muttering, "Mama, Mama, Mama," between sobs. These lasted for at least the first two weeks after arrival.

We were left disconnected not only by our souls, but by distance - without any form of communication - some of our parents, like mine, had not gone to formal schooling to make sense of where their children had been taken.

One Saturday, I was issued a white shirt to iron in the basement. The shirt was to be worn by me the following day for church. I went down to basement and began pressing the iron several times onto my new shirt. When I was done, I brought it two flights up to present it to the dorm aide. It wasn't good enough; I was told to redo it. This happened two more times, then on the third try I realized that I had to plug the cord onto an outlet to smooth out the wrinkles.

Decades later, after purchasing my new home I got a washer and dryer. When the clothes were done washing, I put them in the dryer. When they were done, I pulled them out. They were wrinkled. I stood staring at them, and even as an adult, I began sobbing. A trigger from the time I was told to iron out the wrinkles of my Sunday shirt.

We were the last bunch of students to experience the old BIA boarding school era. We lived cloistered, followed rules, punished, and worked off our punishments, which in most cases, were minor. The punishments were scrubbing toilets, dusting ledges off dorm partitions, picking up trash in the rain, folding laundry. When boys got into a fight, they were punished with a week to two weeks of chores and couldn't participate in afterschool and weekend activities, movies, dances, etc.

Later in life, my mother, after a moment of silence, with her head bowed, says to me in her heart language, "Remember the time you were taken away to Wrangell when you were a little boy?"

NOTE: At that time, a single airplane would fly into our community to drop off mail and pick up passengers/patients to be brought to the nearest medical facility - Bethel - 200 air miles away, or to other bigger communities for meetings, workshops, etc.

My mother continues, "When I hear the drone of the plane in the distance approaching our village, I would hope you were in the plane to return home, but you never did."

This is just one comment from one mother whose child left for one school year. Imagine those mothers whose children left at ages younger than me and the torture both the child and mother felt, that with each moment of separation, the stronger the hurt, harm, and loneliness that they and the family members endured

[4:18:39 PM](#)

DR. CHARLES continued his testimony as follows:

Learning terms like: Nationalism is a frame of mind in which an individual feels loyalty to his nation, yet not knowing what it meant. It was one of the many terms to memorize to receive a socially constructed passing grade by the system. Everything we learned was rote, whether we internalized them or not; it was just the way the system was established.

Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and even news (weeks later) of deaths in the community added scars to our separation. I remember Mrs. Bird from my village died in a house fire. Her son, Duke - age 14 - couldn't go home to bury his mother. Imagine what Duke was feeling: no mother, no home to go to when he returned home in the spring. No one consoled him. It was just another day at Wrangell Institute.

Weeks and months passed and then there was news that a traveling physician was on campus to do physical examinations. I don't know whether there was one separate for the girls, but we had Dr. X. This was my first-ever physical with a medical doctor. He was very kind and gentle. He asked me to strip down and lay on the examination table in the clinic. I acquiesced, and then he began to touch different areas of my body with a metal and rubber object, then set that object down and began using his whole arm to rub all over my chest and groin. When he reached my groin area, he began to fondle my genitals. Assuming that this was a procedure, I didn't react, but it seemed that he spent a lot of time in that area until I forced myself not to get aroused. I don't remember what happened next. I left. I never told anyone.

The same doctor arrived about three months later, and we went through the same procedure. When he proceeded to "examine" my groin area, I think I made some move or facial expression that made him say, "You don't want to play?" That is when he stopped, and I think I left quickly thereafter. I don't remember. I hope that was an isolated moment, but I doubt it. In hindsight, imagine what he might have done with boys younger than me, let alone older boys who didn't know much about these kinds of things.

I learned decades later that Dr. X still practiced his field somewhere in southeast Alaska, but I hope to God we were last of his victims!

My nine months at Wrangell Institute stopped my Yup'ik clock. In those lonely, dark months I missed learning about being a Yup'ik boy. In fact, decades later, as a new professor at the University, one of my students asked what would happen to the streams in which the 'can'giiq' - a type of small winter fish - swam, if the waters were to suddenly freeze. This caught me offguard, but I mustered a response saying, "I don't know, because at the time I should have learned about his, I was taken away to boarding school."

[4:23:09 PM](#)

DR. CHARLES continued his testimony as follows:

I consider my time at Wrangell Institute, although painful, lonely, rigorous, and structured. The students and relatives before me had a more challenging experience. I came to Wrangell already knowing English enough to get by. My cousins, however, who went to Wrangell 15 years before I was born, left home when one of them was five years old! The second year after that he was able to make sense of English to write my mother the enclosed letter [which read as follows]:

Wrangell Institute  
Wrangell, Alaska  
November, 14, 1956

Dear Maggie Charlie

How are you? I am five and you send me some racked and I am happy and how big is Billy and please send me some dry fish and I want some gum and Tell billy I said Hello To him and

Five more day be for we go home and please SENATOR me some writing tablet and tell her da ddx To send some candy bar And some big boxes make me cry and I thing of you and Billy and Thomas Hello to you and I don't like Wrangell alaska because They always rain and I like to go home and me and Thomas Kamevof will play and tell my Daddy I said Hello to you and my brother said Hello to you and I like Billy and wrangell is not



snow yet and please answer my letter back I  
[unreadable] your letter god Bless you All Frm Albert  
Waiska Wrangell Institute Wrangell Alask

The tone of the letter from Albert to my mother is, "I miss food from home and writes 'I want pilot bread, and please send me some dried fish. I want to go home. It rains here a lot. I miss snow. I miss my family. Say hello to Baby Billy who was born a year ago that I wasn't able to be there for."

Whether my mother had someone assist her in writing to Albert, I don't know. Whether Albert received any care packages, I don't know either.

I'm sure there were many, many children with the same sentiments in their letters home to their loved ones. I had my share of letters that I wrote home in between tears. I know a girl who drew a circle around her dried tears in her letter to her parents at the time I was at Wrangell.

[4:26:04 PM](#)

DR. CHARLES showed a photo from Wrangell and continued with his testimony as follows:

Ten of these boys have since died. The eldest of these is 84 today. Their parents didn't speak English, and if they did it was school English. I'm sure some of them have left this world without sharing a story of their own abuse, but I'll leave it to them to tell what I don't know.

Leaving home and the comforts of hunting, gathering, collecting wood for the winter, eating familiar food growing up attempted to break us during our times away from home. Like the system forcing us not to use our heart language but using English instead molded our little minds to think, speak and write in the language of the dominant culture. It was a struggle for all of us, and the kids the generation before me were so beat up that upon their return home to their communities either couldn't speak their heart language anymore or refused to, because they were shamed enough to choose the language of our oppressors.

I was spared from losing my heart language because it was the only language through which my mother communicated to us in the home. She never went to school. I witnessed shaming of using our heart language, I refused to use my heart language during incarceration, but I fortunately returned to it albeit with some initial guilt. Almost 44 years ago I entered my first year at the University of Alaska Fairbanks as a freshman, wanting to become a teacher better than the teachers I had growing up. I wanted to become a teacher who cared and to show my students that learning can be positively transforming.

It was that first year that I was exposed to written Yup'ik, the language of my people, taught by a Caucasian. A language that I thought I could have lost was celebrated at a public school. I took it to heart to learn all that I can about my written language. Today I am professor of Yup'ik at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the process of becoming a full professor.

This is a story from one person who survived boarding school. Know that even though I experienced and survived my one year at Wrangell Institute, I do not represent everyone who had other experiences. I have heard of more terrible stories about sexual abuse, but I reserve the right to have those people share their own because these experiences are personal, and I want to only share mine in respect of others who were brutally abused. I hope they find their voices to be able share their own stories so that we can all heal.

[4:29:58 PM](#)

DR. CHARLES continued his testimony as follows:

Decades have come and gone, but I still have triggers. Words like: hey, hey you, you need to, I need for you to . . . and pointing of a finger toward me still scare me. Crowds with a lot of noise make me confused, and often, at the end of the day, I still retrieve into a dark, quiet room to calm myself down. For me, these words are accusatory. I feel like I've done something wrong. I want to someday feel okay about these words, but I feel that I haven't been apologized. Boarding schools have damaged young souls

in the past, and that damage still lingers into adult and elder years for so many of us. When and how will the system recognize the scars that were molded onto our souls be taken away. I want to forgive, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs ought to find a venue to recognize their fault and lead us to spaces for healing. I'm tired of reacting. I want to live a normal life. I want my soul to be happy not just on the outside, but mostly deep inside where the little boy in me is licking my wounds.

For those who had it worse, I wish I could share their stories verbatim, but I hope today is the beginning for more stories to be heard through the proper channels so that they, too, can begin healing. My heart goes out to those who suffer more than I do, those who fell into cracks of depression, despair, alienation, separation, confusion, alcoholism, drug abuse, and variations of mental illnesses, accidental deaths from overdose of alcohol or drugs, and even suicide. This information is from events witnessed and heard in my region growing up; I do not have the facts or numbers to share today.

Again, this is one story, and not even a story of what the churches might have done and damaged souls. I hope my attempts to recollect my story on behalf of my boarding school brothers and sisters reveals even an ounce of the pain, suffering, anxiety, worthlessness of each one effected as the system attempted to dehumanize these resilient souls who deep inside are stronger than the system attempted to create them to be in the name of assimilation. This is about my experience at Wrangell Institute 54 years ago.

[4:33:30 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK thanked Dr. Charles for having the strength to tell his story.

[4:33:59 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[4:34:48 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK introduced the next presenters.

[4:35:15 PM](#)

BENJAMIN A. JACUK, Indigenous Researcher, Alaska Native Heritage Center, introduced himself and provided his family background for the record.

[4:35:39 PM](#)

EMILY EDINSHAW, President, Alaska Native Heritage Center, introduced herself and provided her background for the record. She thanked the Dr. Charles and Dr. Worl for their testimony.

[4:36:57 PM](#)

MR. JACUK thanked Dr. Worl and Dr. Charles for their testimony. He said that assimilative boarding schools in Alaska were created by federal and territorial governments in partnership with ecclesial organizations.

[4:39:24 PM](#)

MS. EDINSHAW moved to slide 2, titled "Learning Objectives," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Alaska Boarding School History
- Historical/Source Criticism in conjunction with Alaska State History
- Structural Violence Model
- Recognizing the Structures of Violence that Impact Alaska Natives Today

MS. EDINSHAW said that Alaska history includes Alaska Native history. She noted the lack of primary source documents regarding the history of Alaska's boarding schools. She discussed the Structural Violence Model, which impacts Native Alaskans today, and includes symptoms of a root cause. She made note of the importance of discussing the trauma, which is within the DNA of Native peoples. She described her PhD dissertation, which was heavily focused on healing from the era of assimilative boarding schools.

[4:43:07 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 3, titled "Boarding School Facts," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Assimilation project meant to "domesticate" Native children of North America

- ~500 US Alaska Native/American Indian Boarding schools, day schools, boarding home schools, and asylums
- Government-funded while being church-run
- Alaska Native/American Indian children were
  - forcibly abducted by Indian Agents
  - sent hundreds of miles away
  - beaten, starved, or abused
- Holy Cross, Alaska
- 10,000s did not return

MR. JACUK said that Holy Cross has the highest number of incidences of abuse confirmed by the Catholic Church. He pointed out that there is not one Native person who is alive today who hasn't been directly or indirectly impacted by boarding schools.

[4:46:21 PM](#)

MS. EDINSHAW moved to slide 4, titled "Alaska History includes Alaska Native History," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Alaska Natives have been on these lands for 10,000 years
- Alaska is not the Last Frontier
- Indigenous knowledge and science is a whole knowledge system in and of itself, equal to all others
- The first Russian explorers didn't discover anything
- The words Alaska is an Unangax word
- When Alaska was sold from Russia to the US there ZERO Alaska Natives present
- Church- run Boarding Schools
- Federally-run Boarding Schools
- Boarding-home schools
- State Boarding Schools
- Unjust policies such as voting rights and 10-student minimum
- Alaska Natives make up 20 percent of our state's population
- 229 Federally Recognized Tribes in Alaska
- 12 Alaska Native Corporations
- More than 20 distinct Alaska Native Languages

MS. EDINSHAW argued that Indigenous knowledge systems make Alaska unique and should be acknowledged and celebrated. She emphasized the legacy of erasure and mistreatment of Native Alaska's throughout the state.

[4:51:08 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 5, titled "Definitions," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Definitions

-Missions

-Day School

-Boarding Schools

-1. Housing - The institution has been described as providing on-site housing or overnight lodging. This includes dormitory, orphanage, asylum, residential, boarding, home, jail, and quarters.

-2. Education - The institution has been described as providing formal academic or vocational training and instruction. This includes mission school, religious training,

-3. Federal Support - The institution has been described as receiving Federal Government funds or other Federal support. This includes agency, independent, contract, mission, contract with white schools, government, semi-government, under superintendency, and land or buildings or funds or supplies or services provided.

-4. Timeframe - The institution was operational before 1969 (prior to modern departmental Indian education programming including BIE).

MR. JACUK said that the definitions were provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

[4:52:44 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 6, titled "Those Who Came from the Sky" -Our Future," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Age of healing where our peoples can and will thrive

Revitalization Era (1945-Current)

- 1945-Elizabeth Peratrovich Anti-Discrimination Bill
- 1969-Boarding School Policy is Disassembled

- 1973-ANCSA
- 2024-Boarding School Truth and Healing Bill Comes to the Senate Floor

#### American Era/Boarding Schools and US Colonization (1867-Current)

- 1867-Alaska Purchased by the United States
- 1877-Ft. Wrangell school taken over by Sheldon Jackson (First off reservation boarding school)
- 1880-Comity Plan occurs in NYC
- 1885-Jackson becomes secretary of Education (language becomes restricted, children forced to attend, etc.)
- 1932-BIA Takes over education of the Alaska Native Population

#### Contact/The Russian Era

- 1732-Mikhail Gvozdev made contact with Alaska and Alaska Native People/Right to Discovery
- 1741-Right of Occupation Established by Vitas Bering
- Birth of Fur trade-Wrecked havoc on Alaska Native people, cultures, and traditions
- 1786-First School opened in Kodiak by Grigori Shelikhov, considered the "founder of the Russian Colonies" in AK

#### The Roots (Since Time and Memorial)

- Who we are and our history as Alaska Native stretching out for over 10,000 years of knowledge and being
  - Deeper than colonization or its effects
  - Defined by the land and our Ancestors

MR. JACUK moved to slide 6, titled "Sheldon Jackson," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

#### 1877: Sheldon Jackson's First Trip to Alaska:

- Presbyterian Missionary Sheldon Jackson's initial visit to Alaska
  - Accompanied Amanda McFarland, the first female teacher at Fort Wrangell
    - Jackson considered one of the first "educators" and "collectors" in Alaska (Carlton, 1999)
- Unauthorized Trip to Alaska:
  - Jackson did not have permission from the Board Home Missions for his first Alaska trip

- Research indicates the lack of approval to travel or establish a mission (Carlton, 1999)
- Establishment of First Boarding School:
  - Despite initial unauthorized journey, Jackson secured permission in 1877
  - First government-funded church-run boarding school opened in Sitka, run by Presbyterian Missionaries (Stewart, 1908)
- 1884: General Agent of Education in Alaska:
  - U.S. Secretary of the Interior appointed Jackson as the General Agent of Education in Alaska
  - During his tenure, Jackson advocated for government funds and urged Christian colleges to contribute to Alaska's "civilization" through missions (Williams, 2009)
- Church and State Connection:
  - Jackson's efforts, though violating the modern concept of "Church and State" separation, were common during that era (Williams, 2009)
- 1874: Missionization Blueprint:
  - The American Home Missionary Society published an article detailing a meeting in 1874
  - Resulted in a blueprint for a large-scale missionization plan for Alaska

[4:54:33 PM](#)

MS. EDINSHAW added that 1877 is a significant year and that tactics carried out in Alaska to assimilate Native children were spread more broadly across the country to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. She noted peer learning between Sheldon Jackson and Richard Henry Pratt.

[4:56:43 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 8, titled "Nationalism and the American Church," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Inter Caetera "Alexandrian Bulls"
- "Christian Princes" are responsible for education of Indigenous population
- American Church and Interpretation
- God's Chosen Nation (i.e. City on a Hill)
- Protestant Theology
  - Calvin vs. Charles Hodge/Alexander
  - Individual v. National Election
- Correlates to the 1819 Civilization Act



- Modern Day New Israel vs. New Canaanites

MR. JACUK said that education and conversion are used interchangeably in the context of the American Church. He discussed the doctrine of discovery and the "chosen nation" ideology. He noted the choice of assimilation or risking death.

[5:00:29 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 9, titled "Protestant Missions Organizations & Oklahoma," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Experimental Area
  - Foreign Board of Missions
- Union Boarding School/Osage
- Robert Loughridge
  - Creation of the Boarding School vs. Day School
- Sheldon Jackson
  - Board of Home Missions
    - Wisconsin, Minnesota, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado
    - US Indian Agent

MR. JACUK described Sheldon Jackson's start on the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, which provided access to many Western states where he established hundreds of assimilative boarding schools.

[5:05:16 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 11, which showed a map of Alaska Comity. He described the presence of boarding schools throughout Alaska and discussed primary source material.

MR. JACUK moved to slides 12-13, titled "Comity Plan," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

1880 Comity Plan vs. Various Comity Plans

- 10PM, January 19, 1880 @805 Broadway, New York,
- First Described in John Field's "Our Western Archipelago"
- Ecumenicalism and Structure
- Baptist- Morehouse
- Mining
- Presbyterian- Henry Kendall
- Lumber/Mines

- Episcopal Church- Dr. Twing (absent)
  - Gold
  - Methodist-John Reid
  - Mining
  - Later Inclusions (Moravian/Congregationalist)
- "He is glad that a bishop has been appointed for Alaska and that if he will take the valley of the Yukon, a valley two thousand miles long and into which settlers are pouring attracted by its gold mines, he will have a vast diocese..They will reach every heathen in the frozen North"

Special Congressional Committee

- Framework for future work
  - 1883 Board of Home Missions Report-Discussion of Resource Extraction and Locations to Do So: (Alaska's) great forests are yet unknown, its mines are undeveloped, its fisheries are hardly heard of, and its seal trade has only begun. What population may yet pour into the islands on its coast where the climate is mild and the means of subsistence easily obtained, no one can tell. Already there are here from thirty thousand to forty thousand Indians wholly dependent on our church for their education and religious advantages. (7)
  - Extensive plan for Alaska and future boarding schools: Also, much talk of mining rights, that the schools will be placed around "meeting places" of Native peoples and that the Presbyterians lay claim to the richest areas (26)
  - Recommendation and resolution to create a committee to sway the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Interior to create a government within Alaska and for them to support the creation of Industrial Schools (boarding schools) for Alaska Natives (133)
  - 1888 Board of Home Missions Annual Report-"Missionary Comity Guidelines"
  - 1903 "What Missionaries Have Done For Alaska"- Jackson Takes credit for Mining success in AK

MR. JACUK emphasized that different ecclesial groups met up to divide Alaska based on resource development opportunities. He said that meeting was more focused on mines and less on salvation and education. He said that the different churches

only agreed upon the forced assimilation of children for the sake of profit.

[5:11:26 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 14, titled "Comity Plan Continuation," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- BIA Period
  - Still Ecclesial Run
  - Resource Extraction Based
- Eklutna Industrial Indian School
  - Teaching Trades that correlate to industries the head of the school ran
    - Railroad
    - Mining
    - Fishing

[5:13:28 PM](#)

MS. EDINSHAW emphasized that the goal was never to just assimilate or educate Alaska's youth, the primary purpose was for future resource extraction.

MR. JACUK moved to slide 15, titled "Sheldon Jackson Boarding Schools in AK," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Located in Sitka, Alaska
- Founded in 1877 as the oldest institution US of higher learning in the state of Alaska
  - Sheldon Jackson fundraises both public & private (church) funds to start the school. He was successful in doing so
  - 1885 Sheldon Jackson becomes General Agent of Education in Alaska
  - Education for the missionaries means stripping Natives of all vestiges of their culture
    - Cultural Genocide

MR. JACUK pointed out the military garb children were wearing in the photo on slide 15 and mentioned that the photo predates the Carlisle Industrial School by two years. He explained the "stripping of culture" that took place at the boarding schools in Alaska.

[5:19:15 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 16, titled "Introduction of Women Protestant Societies," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Methodist's Involvement-1869
- Presbyterian-1877 Through Jackson
- Matrons For Schools
- Connection to Suppression of African American Vote

MR. JACUK moved to slide 17 and described photos of assimilation including the "Eskimo boy in a savage state" and "David Skuvinka, Eskimo Boy at School." Slide 18 showed a photo of a school matron in full regalia. He said that the photo signified that "the culture was something that was only evil in the hands of Alaska Native peoples."

[5:22:35 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 19, titled "Jackson and Alaska Native Culture," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Jackson's Relationship with AN Cultural Objects vs. Culture
  - Eradication of Culture
  - He and the Presbyterian Church referred to any indigenous culture as "heathen," or "savage."
  - Separation within Jackson's mind between the cultural objects, the culture, and the peoples
    - Culture/People=Evil
    - Cultural Objects in his possession= Tools for future ministry
  - Princeton Theological Seminary
    - Exhibitions for funders to show what Jackson was "saving" Alaska Natives from (paganism)
  - Grave Robber
  - Made Children create art after he was unable to grave rob and these objects became less accessible

MR. JACUK moved to slide 20, titled "Domestication of Alaska Natives," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Domestication through Farming & Ranching
  - Boarding School was never meant to prepare AN children for their futures, but to pacify the future generations for the acquisition of resources (i.e. mining)

- Comity Plan
- Much talk of the resources within Sheldon Jackson's/ Presbyterian General Assembly reports, especially within Sitka •

- Reindeer

- Food was needed within certain areas of Alaska, which became the rationalization for this form of domestication
- Different initiatives to promote farming amongst Alaska Native Families.
  - Attempts to change AN diet and
  - Breaking up the family/tribal structure meant breaking up the resistance/identity

MR. JACUK moved to slide 21, titled "Historical/Source Criticism"

- Sheldon Jackson's Representation in non-Native arenas
- Native Representation within these Histories
- Imperialism/Colonialism Romanticized at the Expense of Indigenous Identities
  - Resource Extraction
- Implications for Today

[5:23:30 PM](#)

MS. JACUK moved to slide 22, titled "P. & S. Abuse," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Designation of Civilization Based upon People groups
- Americanization & Nationalistic Religion
- Connection between levels of Civilization and Both Physical and Sexual Abuse
  - Belief that they would get away with the action
- Dog Collars (Primary Source)
- De-Humanization
- Often Associated with Canada, this is the first instance seen within the context of the United States and even the world
- Physical Abuse (Elder Testimonies)
- Connected to the use of language
- Fighting Rings
- Inmates

- Chains

MS. JACUK described that there is testimony from elders of physical abuse. Alaska has one of the earliest examples of children being given numbers to replace their Native names. He moved to slide 23, which showed a child's drawing of a child who was chained to a bed, titled "a prisoner."

[5:25:50 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 24, titled "Historical Amnesia," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- No state-wide Curriculum that teaches about the atrocities and cultural genocide that took place at Sheldon Jackson Boarding School, Wrangell Institute, or any other Boarding School in Alaska.
- Most people do not know about or acknowledge the Boarding Schools in Alaska (especially the Churches)
- No real education about Sheldon Jackson
- Unable to connect structural violence w/ what has happened
  - Taking Children and cultural genocide is enough

MR. JACUK discussed how violence became normalized. He moved to slide 25, titled "Structural Violence Model," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Structural Violence- the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.
- Structural Violence & Historical Trauma
- Community vs. Individual
- Affects all Indigenous Peoples
- Recognizes the structures put into place that institutionalizes violence for Indigenous peoples
- Lets us know we are never alone

[5:27:33 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 26, titled "Structural Violence Model Applied," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- To be defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is..

- Violence that is "Psychological" and/or "Physical," which turns into a cycle
  - Violence that was "positively" or "negatively" influenced.
    - "At least we gave you..
- Violence if "there is a hurt object that exists."
  - Unseen Pain
- Visible "subject that acts"
  - Abuse of one vs. Many instances
- Whether this event was unintended or "intended" by the "subject."

MR. JACUK moved to slide 27, titled "Data Tells a Story," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women (84.3 percent) have experienced violence in their lifetime.
- One out of every two AI/AN women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime
- 40% Native Incarceration Rate - Alaska Native men and women are more likely to be arrested than any other race in Alaska. From a national perspective, AI/AN are more likely to be arrested than any other race.
- 60% Native children in Foster care
- Suicide rate 4 times the national average
- Homicides twice the national average, rape of Native women at a third higher than the national average, and underreported and accidental deaths by Natives disproportionate to their numbers.

MR. JACUK emphasized that the boarding school maps mirror the data for that Indigenous Justice has regarding missing and murdered Indigenous people.

[5:28:20 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 28, titled "Boarding Schools and MMIWG," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Destruction of Identity, inward and outward
  - Boarding Schools were meant to destroy the ways Native peoples not only see ourselves, but how society sees us as "less than" or "sub-human"
- S.A. as Institutional
  - Levels of civilization of Alaska Native children (societal worth) made sexual abuse

permissible, leading to a high percentage of abuse within these schools

- Boarding Schools also were a means for resource extraction, which led to a large amount of sexual abuse of Native Women
- Lasting Effects
- According several studies, the children of a parent who has been sexually abused are more likely to be the target for abuse, becoming a cycle that has become genetically embedded\*
- The factors of continued negative societal identity and resource extraction within Native communities with the study above, reveals how one of the many continued legacies of these institutions can be seen in the MMIWG crisis,
- These factors can also explain why it has continued to be allowed by governmental entities which do not see Native peoples on the same level of personhood, leaving way for abuse to be unchecked

MR. JACUK moved to slide 29, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

#### Boarding School Initiative

- In June 2021, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Interior (DOI) Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) issued a memorandum directing the DOI to coordinate an investigation into the Federal Indian boarding school system to examine the scope of the system, with a focus on the location of the schools, burial sites, and identification of children who attended these schools. This memorandum forged the DOI-led Boarding School Initiative.
- The DOI report was the first of its kind in our nation's history.
- It illustrated that between 1819 and 1979, the United States operated or supported more than 408 boarding schools across 37 states, including 25 schools in Alaska.
- DOI hosted 10 listening sessions across the country; One in Alaska at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in 2023.

#### Senate Bill 2907

- Purpose of Senate Bill 2907:



- Establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States
  - Define powers, duties, and membership of the Commission
  - Commission Duties:
    - Investigate impacts and ongoing effects of Indian Boarding School policies
    - Develop recommendations for:
      - Safeguarding unmarked graves and associated land protections
      - Supporting repatriation and identification of tribal nations from which children were taken
      - Ending removal of indigenous children from families and tribal communities by social service departments and agencies

[5:28:32 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 30 and explained that the research landscape on the topic of boarding schools is sparse. He emphasized the importance of continued research and data collection for the purpose of healing.

[5:29:02 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 31, titled "Historical Healing," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- The more we understand, the easier it is to bring healing to the next generation
- Recognizing how this has continued and how it has hurt our families, our people, make us more understanding and willing to help others who experience this pain and fight against these injustices
  - Building up and taking back what our ancestors passed down to us, our identity
  - Knowing that we our loved and that colonization is not what defines us
  - Our cultural identity is proof that we are never alone
  - When we know who we are, we begin to realize our purpose as Native peoples

[5:29:54 PM](#)

MR. JACUK concluded the presentation on slide 32, titled "Steps Taken By ANHC," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Identified over 40 locations that house religious primary source material pertaining to the Boarding Schools in North America, including contacts within said locations

- Convene a boarding school meeting at the Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Signed MOU with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition
- Creation of a "Healing Totem" honoring all former Alaska Native boarding school students - to be installed at the Alaska Native Heritage Center (Kawerak, Inc.)
- Discovered connections between churches, resource extraction, the structure of the boarding schools, and the lasting effects of the Boarding Schools.
- Five (5) Academic Journals concerning the Boarding Schools to be published over the next year
- Passed AFN Resolution 23-14
- Partnerships with various ecclesial institutions and Universities

[5:30:12 PM](#)

MS. EDINSHAW provided closing remarks and thanked the committee for its time and Dr. Worl and Dr. Charles for sharing their testimony. She urged the committee's support for HJR 17.

[5:31:08 PM](#)

AARON LEGGETT, President, Native Village of Eklutna; Curator, Alaska History and Indigenous Cultures, Anchorage Museum, remarked that in order to heal, it is important to fully understand the history and the impacts that it has had on Alaska Natives. He said, "We can't change the past." He said the committee has the power to impact today and the future. He emphasized the importance of telling the full history of the State of Alaska to create a better world that incorporates Indigenous voices and impacts how the state continues to grow and develop in the future.

[5:32:42 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK thanked the presenters, apologized for time constraints, and provided closing remarks.

[HJR 17 was held over.]

[5:34:15 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at [5:34] p.m.