

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

February 6, 2025
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Maxine Dibert, Chair
Representative Ashley Carrick
Representative Andi Story
Representative Rebecca Schwanke
Representative Jubilee Underwood
Representative Elexie Moore
Representative Robyn Niayuq Burke

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present.

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: STATE TRIBAL EDUCATION COMPACTING PILOT UPDATE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MISCHA JACKSON, Tribal Education Liaison
Education Development
Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "STEC Tribal Partners."

JOEL ISAAK, PhD, Compacting Consultant
Department of Education and Early Development
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation.

KIMINAQ MADDY ALVANNA-STIMPFLE
King Island Native Community
Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the PowerPoint presentation, titled "STEC Tribal Partners."

CARL CHAMBLEE, Education Director
Knik Tribe
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the PowerPoint presentation, titled "STEC Tribal Partners."

MARK ROSEBERRY, Director of Education
Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope
Barrow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the PowerPoint presentation, titled "STEC Tribal Partners."

SONYA SKAN, Education and Training Director
Ketchikan Indian Community
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the PowerPoint presentation, titled "STEC Tribal Partners."

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Carrick, Schwanke, Underwood, Moore, and Story were present at the call to order. Representative Dibert arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: State Tribal Education Compacting Pilot Update

[Contains discussion of HB 59.]

[8:05:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY announced that the only order of business would be an update on the State-Tribal Education Compact pilot.

[8:07:07 AM](#)

MISCHA JACKSON, Tribal Education Liaison, Education Development, Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit and Haida), introduced the PowerPoint, titled "STEC Tribal Partners" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She introduced herself to the committee, gave her Tlingit name,

and made a land and people acknowledgement of Áak'w Kwáan. She stated that the Tlingit and Haida "are nothing without our cultural structures." She pointed out that the five tribes selected for the State-Tribal Education compact (STEC) pilot are partners and each will be a part of the presentation, as seen on slide 1. She discussed the STEC process, stating that the tribes have been working together to create a vision.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 2, titled "What Success in education looks like when operated by Tribes." She stated that the tribes have been providing their own education since time immemorial, as education is the root of all culture. She presented a video made by the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, titled "Our Future Ancestors: A Story of Education in Alaska" [link provided on slide 2 of the presentation]. She stated that the video provides an overview of the historical context of Native education in Alaska, as well as setting the stage for tribal compacting in education.

[8:23:15 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON, in response to a committee question, stated that the Cook Inlet Tribal Council created a website which not only has a link to the video, but it also provides testimonials the tribe collected in making the video.

MS. JACKSON remarked that the history shown in the video is still present in the current generation. She expressed the importance of stating that she is the granddaughter of a Native boarding school survivor, and her goal is to raise her children in a traditional and educational setting. She spoke about the importance of partnerships in education.

[8:26:18 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON expressed the opinion that the video speaks to what parents and community members want, and this includes having Native language and Elders in the schools. She noted that in the 1990s and 2000s the state had adopted standards for culturally responsive education; however, now they exist as only a supplemental in the conventional education system.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 3 and explained tribal education compacting. She stated that since 2013, Washington State has had a framework for STEC schools, and the state has eight compact schools, with some federally funded. She pointed out that this model is being used in Alaska; however, Alaska tribes

are restricted from using federal funds in education because of appropriations language. She gave details on the federal funding mechanism.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 4 and discussed the history of STEC legislation in the state. She pointed out that tribal compacting in education had met one of the five strategic goals in Alaska's Education Challenge [developed in 2016], and this had led to Senate Bill 34 [passed during the Thirty-Second Alaska State Legislature]. She explained that this legislation directed the negotiations between the five tribes and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). She added that during these negotiations, the five tribes were speaking on behalf of all Alaska Native tribes. She stated that the [State-Tribal Education Compact Schools Demonstration Legislative Report] resulted from these negotiations.

MS. JACKSON, on slide 5, explained that [HB 59] resulted from this legislative report. She stated that the proposed legislation would create equitable funding for compact schools through the base student allocation. It would also address teacher certification, as this would help communities with a high rate of teacher turnover. She stated that STEC governance structures would be similar to school boards, but local tribal bodies would be used, as this would be consistent with tribal self-determination. She stated that the proposed legislation would create a stand-alone demonstration project with the five tribes that participated in the negotiations. The demonstration project would last five-to-seven years, and through a collaboration with DEED, reports on the project would be produced, and this would create an education service compact agreement.

[8:37:01 AM](#)

JOEL ISAAK, PhD, Compacting Consultant, Department of Education and Early Development, in response to a question from Representative Story, stated that currently the tribe would not directly receive the base student allotment (BSA) appropriation, as this funding would be funneled through a local school district. He explained that with compacting, the tribe would operate as a school district, and then it would receive the funding directly. He pointed out that funding for some of the teachers could be through grants. In response to a follow-up question concerning school districts retaining 4 percent of BSA, he explained that the tribe would function as the school district, so no other entity would retain any of the funding.

He stated that the bill is modeled after the Mount Edgecumbe High School, and its process, which receives the full amount of funding through the state's education foundation formula. He stated that this is the structure of equitable funding.

MS. JACKSON, in response to a follow-up question, stated that mechanisms relevant to culture and Indigenous language are already in place through the Type M teacher certificate, but it would be up to the local school district to make the recommendation to DEED to provide the certificate. She stated that currently tribes are not part of this process, but with compacting, tribes would have more of a voice. She deferred to Dr. Isaak.

DR. ISAAK stated that Title 14 of the Alaska Statutes governs teacher certification, and compact schools would follow these guidelines. He stated that HB 59 would be anchored in this existing law, and the commissioner of DEED would need to verify that the skillsets for teacher certification would match the existing law. He explained that the proposed legislation would not be changing the types of skills needed for teachers; rather, it would allow the tribes to articulate their needs in relation to this. He added that the process would resemble the current teacher certification process; however, the government-to-government partnership would recognize that tribes may have a different way of communicating this.

[8:45:25 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK, in response to a question from Representative Carrick, stated that as school districts, the tribes would be eligible for budget funding for infrastructure and maintenance for compact schools. He acknowledged that there would be no funding to build a new school because HB 59 is written as uncodified law, and it would only set up a five-year pilot program. He maintained that the proposed bill would not change any existing law concerning major maintenance and construction.

DR. ISAAK, in response to a question from Representative Story, stated that the pilot project timeline has not yet started. He explained the timeline up to this point, clarifying that Senate Bill 34 had called for a compacting project demonstration and the tribes to "be at the table drafting this." After these negotiations, the legislative report was filed; therefore, the timeframe would start when HB 59 passes. He explained that tribes would have up to two years to start a school, with the pilot running for five years.

DR. ISAAK, in response to a question from Representative Schwanke concerning support systems for the compact schools, stated that the subject had been discussed. He pointed out that existing school districts have support systems, and these would support STEC schools. He indicated there was a suggestion in the legislative report that DEED form a tribal advisory commission. He discussed the negotiation process that created the legislative report, stating that after the bill passes, there would be another negotiation process to finalize the compact framework. He added that this would allow DEED and the tribes to negotiate. He noted that the proposed legislation would require the tribes to make an annual report to DEED on the progress of the compact schools. He stated that also there have been discussions with the existing school districts on the available support.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE discussed the importance of place-based education in the state, and Representative Story concurred.

[8:54:59 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON, in response to a question from Representative Underwood concerning local teacher recruitment in compact schools, remarked that since her involvement with the tribes in Southeast Alaska, she has been "growing the seeds" for young adults to become educators. She noted that Natives are "natural born educators, it just has not been communicated right and effectively." She pointed out that there are already young Native educators working in the Juneau School District, and more local teachers are becoming interested in STEC schools. She stated that the tribes have created bonds over tribal school compacting, so they would not be isolated. She pointed out that there has also been communication with tribes on a national level.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 6 and pointed out the key highlights in the proposed legislation. She stated that the main issue would be sovereignty in education, as tribes would be able to determine their own educational system. Concerning language and culture, she stated that the creation of a language task force has already been written into statute, and a priority would be to ensure this is done. She addressed the following highlights of the proposed legislation: family and community engagement, values-based success, innovation and collaboration, equitable funding, and holistic impact.

[9:01:25 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON, in response to a question from Representative Carrick concerning equitable funding, stated that tribal schools would be funded through the BSA formula as a regional attendance area, like in other local school districts. Under the proposed legislation, STEC schools would be considered local education agencies, and she said this would improve access to state and federal grants.

DR. ISAAK, in response to a follow-up question, reiterated that currently tribes are eligible as local education agencies to apply for state or federal grants; furthermore, he explained that because tribes are governments, they already have staff to support schools, and this would reduce funding needs. He reiterated that this creates efficiency. He clarified that HB 59 has not been structured to reduce state funding.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK expressed appreciation for the answer, as there was concern that creating tribally compacted schools might reduce funding to existing school districts.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 7 and stated that there has been an agreement to call the schools, "Tribally Compacted Public Schools (TCPS)." She voiced that this expresses local control centered around tribes and communities together. She moved to slide 8, titled "Why This Matters to Tribes." She explained that during the remainder of the presentation, each of the five tribes would speak to this question, explaining each education program currently offered and HB 59's effect.

[9:06:44 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 9, and she spoke as the Tribal Education Liaison of Tlingit and Haida. She stated that a high priority for Tlingit and Haida is education and preserving sovereignty. She noted that the tribes are developing an education campus in Juneau. She explained that the actual land is being developed because land-based education is an important element of tribal education.

MS. JACKSON moved to slide 10 and addressed the current Tlingit and Haida education programs, which include early education with Head Start, childcare, and language immersion nests. She discussed the language nest in Juneau for young children, as there are young teachers who are language speakers at this school. She discussed youth engagement and the Generations

Southeast program. She stated that the goal with educational programming would be to offer "cradle to grave" services and intergenerational services. She listed the many services offered. On slide 11, she reiterated the importance of community and family engagement and intergenerational learning. She noted the emphasis on academic, cultural, and social-emotional support. She added that this opportunity would create a holistic impact. She played a short video on local education [link provided on slide 11 of the presentation].

MS. JACKSON pointed out that Tlingit and Haida is not currently operating a public school, but a team has been created, as seen on slide 12. She maintained that there is not a shortage of education expertise in the tribes, and she expressed the understanding that often there is a "deficit mindset" on whether tribes could operate their own schools. She argued that the tribes' educators are "primed and ready." She moved to slide 13, stating that the opportunity to create a tribal school represents a transformation in the education system. She stated that Tlingit and Haida's focus is on culture, land-based teaching, learning, and support. She discussed the benefits of being able to start these schools "fresh," from the ground up. She moved to slide 14 and discussed TCPS as an opportunity to create pathways for student and family choice in schools. She noted that the following programs would be available: language immersion, service-based learning, career and technical education, pre-apprenticeship, college preparation, and dual-credit apprenticeship.

[9:17:59 AM](#)

KIMINAQ MADDY ALVANNA-STIMPFLE, King Island Native Community, stated that the King Island Native Community is working together with the Native Village of Soloman. She noted that currently these communities do not have a tribal school. She shared that she has been a public-school teacher for nine years and an immersion teacher for the past four years; however, she has now left this position. She expressed the hope that TCPS would bring life back to the Inuit language, which is the tribe's identity.

MS. ALVANNA-STIMPFLE moved to slide 16 and pointed out that the goal is to start small, with the "grow as we go" approach. She stated that the main goal is to revitalize the Inuit language, adding that immersion schools are a proven, successful approach as they instill identity and pride in students. She noted that the Elders, as first-language speakers, would be in the school

teaching traditional knowledge. She emphasized that time is important, as the youngest fluent speakers are around 60 years old. She discussed place-based learning, asserting that the environment should shape curriculum. She stated that the school would be taught in Inuit and English, fostering relationships between students, Elders, and parents to create a strong community of learners and leaders. She explained that teachers would be trained in the Indigenous worldview and value system. She described the education system as "holistic," creating mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing rooted in Inupiat values. She stated that this would ensure self-determination and tribal sovereignty.

MS. ALVANNA-STIMPFLER, in response to a question from Representative Story, stated that the immersion program that she worked in was not cut; however, there was not enough support within the public school for two teachers, so she decided to move to Qargi Academy. She added that doing this has allowed her to create more language resources, which could be used in building the tribal school program.

[9:26:20 AM](#)

CARL CHAMBLEE, Education Director, Knik Tribe, explained that the tribe is an Upper Cook Inlet tribe, located in Wasilla. He stated that the education program started five years ago. He stated that a mission and a vision was developed, and a charter school was opened through the Matanuska-Susitna School District. On slide 18, he pointed out that the Knik Tribe's mission is to prepare students for success by providing an excellent education through Native culture and value-based learning. He continued that the tribe's vision is for students to become lifelong learners and successful in their chosen paths. He played a video, titled "Knik Charter School" [link provided on slide 18 of the presentation]. The video emphasized that many different tribes are represented in this area of Alaska, and it gave an overview of Knik Charter School. He stated that opening the school had taken over 40 community meetings in over two years. He stated that people in the community came together and created the goals for the school, as seen on slide 19. He spoke about the funding, as the charter school has blended into the tribal education department, which was already receiving several million dollars in federal grants for supplemental learning programs. He moved to slide 20 and stated that the school currently serves over 200 students, which is up from the first-year enrollment of 80 students. He discussed the connection between the STEAM Academy and the charter school campus.

MR. CHAMBLEE, in response to a question from Representative Story, stated that there is a waitlist for the kindergarten and first grade class. He moved to slide 21, which shows the organization of the Knik Tribe and the path to creating a tribal education agency. He expressed the opinion that it would be "seamless" to go from being a charter school to a compact school. He discussed the organization of a compact school, as seen on slide 22. He stated that having STEC would allow the school more autonomy in how it spends its money, staff certification, and curriculum development, and this would be the difference.

[9:37:34 AM](#)

MR. CHAMBLEE, in response to a question from Representative Schwanke concerning the difference between a compact and charter school, pointed out that the school district currently controls transportation routes. He expressed the opinion that a compact school would provide better transportation for its students, such as for field trips. He added that staff development is a "huge" issue with the charter school, as instructing students in a tribal school is "so far outside the box" compared with the school district's focus. He discussed the problems with money for staff development, as funding for a charter school is not tailored to the needs of a tribal school. He expressed the understanding that a compact school would be able to hire staff who meet the cultural needs of the students. He noted that the tribe owns the school facility, so the tribe controls the maintenance, as the school district provides "zero" support. In conclusion, he stated that the difference is about local control.

MR. CHAMBLEE, in response to a question from Representative Underwood concerning the charter school's 10-year contract, stated that the transition to a compact school would need to be determined. He stated that the governing board of the charter school would make the decision whether it would pursue compacting.

MR. CHAMBLEE, in response to a question from Representative Story concerning state funds for student transportation, expressed the belief that funds could be allocated within the charter school budget. He noted that this budget is "tight." He expressed the understanding that a compact school would be able to work more seamlessly with the funds from the tribe.

9:43:01 AM

MARK ROSEBERRY, Director of Education, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS), noted that he is also the administrator for Qargi Academy Tribal School. On slide 23, he pointed out the legal authority of ICAS to provide educational services, and he noted that each tribe has created education systems differently. He explained that Qargi Academy is not a charter school, but a tribal school that does not receive state funding. He stated that ICAS had used funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to start the school. In relation to school test scores, he addressed the idea that Native people do not care about education. He argued that Native people do care, and he discussed ICAS's problem with state funding, emphasizing the tribe's self-determination. He reiterated ICAS's authority as a sovereign Indian tribe, stating that it has the right to preserve its tribal language and culture and provide its people with the skills to fulfill potential. He stated that ICAS's tribal council had a vision and went forward without funding, and "now things are coming together."

MR. ROSEBERRY moved to slide 25 and stated that Qargi Academy Tribal School started almost four years ago as a charter school with 20 students. He discussed the process of starting the school and pointed out the importance of having local educators. He explained that when Native students go to public schools, they are stepping into a different community, which causes stress. To solve this problem, he said that the tribal school had contracted with virtual teachers to work with the teachers in the community. From this effort, the students had the same experience in the classroom as they had in their community, and he noted that within four years there were no serious discipline issues.

MR. ROSEBERRY explained what makes Qargi Academy different from conventional schools. He noted that the origins of conventional schools centered on efficiency, with the idea of moving people into factories. They had also centered on the idea that a child is a blank slate. He stated that Qargi Academy's model is not like this; rather, it is a constructivist model. This model lets the students develop themselves in an organized manner, and the teacher's responsibility would be to develop the environment. He stated that using this model, the school does not tell a student what to think, but it prepares an environment where the student would learn what to think by experience. He stated that this is the Inupiat way of educating. He pointed out that this has made a difference in the students and the

teachers, as there has been no teacher turnover in four years. He stated that the school is preparing its own teacher certification program based on the Inupiat way of educating, which looks different from conventional models. He discussed the similarities between the Montessori model of teaching and the Inupiat way of educating. He played a video of a parent discussing the success of her daughter as a student at Qargi Academy [link provided on slide 26 of the presentation].

[9:59:05 AM](#)

MR. ROSEBERRY, in response to a question from Representative Moore, stated that the school had three teachers, but one passed away, and now the borough is giving the school a grant to hire two more teachers. He noted that the school is outside of the mainstream system, and even being underfunded and understaffed, it is showing success. In response to a follow-up question from Representative Story, he stated that because community is important, the school's goal is to expand the classroom size. He explained that this is the difference in the model, as the Montessori example, along with research, shows that larger classrooms are better because students are directed to work together. He noted that Qargi Academy is lacking two teachers, and it has 31 students.

MR. ROSEBERRY, in response to a question from Representative Schwanke, addressed whether the school is working with higher education systems to train teachers to use this model. He expressed the understanding that these models do not necessarily work the same. He reasoned that if the compact school model works, then the teacher-training model would have to change.

[10:03:58 AM](#)

SONYA SKAN, Education and Training Director, Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC), displayed slide 31 and discussed KIC's [Tribal Scholars High School Program]. She pointed out that it concentrates on workforce development, language revitalization, and higher education. She noted that there is a high school after school program, and there are Native arts and culture programs. She expressed thanks to the tribal council, as it has made education a priority. She pointed out that the program was started with a Native Equity Education grant, and the high school has been open for 13 years. She emphasized that the school has a 100 percent graduation rate, noting that these students earn college credit while attending the program.

MS. SKAN directed attention to a quote on the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

It was my lifelong dream teaching in a program like this, being able to take open ended field trips and projects in science in the best way to help students become lifelong learners. I have seen students more engaged, with higher attendance and engagement in the Tribal Scholars program. Personally I think programs that [emphasize] individual learning is the education of the future.

Joey Fama, Tribal Scholars Math/ Science Secondary teacher 2014

[10:06:47 AM](#)

MS. SKAN, in response to a question from Representative Carrick, stated that the program does not have open enrollment because the school is funded by a grant for Native children only. She stated that Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District funds the teacher for the program, but everything else has other funding, including the language teacher in the high school. She added that the language and the art classes in the high school have open enrollment. She pointed out that compacting would allow open enrollment and expand capabilities. She stated that there is not a waitlist for the program, but there has been one in the past because of space issues. She added that currently there are around 16 students.

MS. SKAN stated that the program is located on the same campus as KIC social services, and this creates better access to services. On slide 32, she pointed out the goals for the Tribal Scholars Program, as follows: engage students through personalized learning, increase testing competencies, have a learning atmosphere where relationships, respect, and accountability are paramount, and correlate education to students' lives and future aspirations. She expressed the opinion that students learn better if they have a relationship with their teacher and feel like they belong. She discussed education "as a whole," as it would enrich future generations. She pointed out that having Native art in the classroom would help Native students feel welcome and have ownership of the space. She directed attention to the pictures on slide 33 and slide 34, showing students on fieldtrips, which are funded by grants. These trips have included a visit to a camp where the students were taught to fish and shrimp. She added that the students also found an old village site around the camp. She

moved through the photos and discussed some of the students shown. She expressed the expectation that programs would grow with compacting, because currently everything has limited funding.

MS. SKAN moved to slide 35, titled "What Works for Tribal Scholar Students." She pointed out the highlights, with one of the primary goals being to prepare students for success in both traditional and contemporary cultures. She expressed the opinion that education should add to what people already know, not take away from whom they are. She stated that teachers monitor students for academic, social, and emotional progress, as the teachers are in tune with this. She added that students often return to visit once they have left the program. She pointed out that each student receives an individualized learning plan every year, and after graduation, staff are still available to the students for career training support. She stated that the focus on the learning plans depends on each student, as this helps with a student's stability.

[10:17:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked the presenters and gave final comments.

[10:19:19 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Tribal Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:19 a.m.