

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

January 27, 2026

8:02 a.m.

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Maxine Dibert, Chair
Representative Ashley Carrick
Representative Robyn Niayuq Frier
Representative Andi Story
Representative Justin Ruffridge
Representative Rebecca Schwanke
Representative Jubilee Underwood

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: ILISAGVIK COLLEGE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JOEL ISAAK LIQ'A YES, PhD, Culture and Language Director
Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a presentation, titled "Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium."

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a presentation, titled "Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium."

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a presentation, titled "Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium."

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the "Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium" presentation.

JUSTINA WILHELM, President
Ilisagvik College
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a presentation, titled "Ilisagvik College."

FRIEDA NAGEAK, External Affairs Coordinator
Ilisagvik College
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a presentation, titled "Ilisagvik College."

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:32 AM](#)

CHAIR MAXINE DIBERT called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Carrick, Story, Frier, Underwood, and Dibert were present at the call to order. Representatives Schwanke and Ruffridge arrived while the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium

[8:04:18 AM](#)

CHAIR DIBERT announced that the first order of business would be the Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium presentation.

[8:07:56 AM](#)

JOEL ISAAK LIQ'A YES, PhD, Culture and Language Director, Kenaitze Indian Tribe, co-offered a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee file], titled "Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium." He began on slide 2, which provided an agenda for the presentation. He moved to slide 3, from which he read the mission statement for the Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium (ANTEC). He said that although ANTEC is very tribal focused, it's really about the success of all students. He continued to slide 4, from which he read the vision statement for ANTEC. He noted that this committee has done work on Alaska Native languages and promotes tribal governance. Dr. Isaak moved to slide 5, from which he read ANTEC's purpose statement. He explained that ANTEC seeks to amplify the tribal voice in various systems within Alaska. His work explores how tribes work together, particularly through governance. He said ANTEC students typically attend the public education system and the consortium advocates for those students on the federal level.

[8:13:31 AM](#)

SONYA SKAN, Education and Training Director, Ketchikan Indian Community, expressed ANTEC's goal to establish a single curriculum template that can be used statewide.

[8:14:37 AM](#)

DR.ISAAK continued on slide 5, which emphasized ANTEC's goal of improving the educational outcomes of Alaska Native students.

[8:15:27 AM](#)

MISCHA JACKSON, Tribal Education Liaison, Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, added that there are other regional tribal education consortiums across the country that have collaborated. She said that previous tribal education consortiums in Alaska were grant funded. Therefore, when funding ceased, only some communities were able to uphold the education curriculums established by consortiums. She said this is a time to empower tribal voice, especially during a time with very high teacher and administrator turnover. She emphasized the importance of shared knowledge between tribes and between tribal consortiums.

[8:18:36 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 6, which listed the remainder of ANTEC's purpose items. He distinguished tribal governments from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), noting that corporations are non-government organizations and that the test for a tribe is if they are asked to waive sovereignty. He said ANTEC wants to make space for tribal governments, NGOs, and educational communities. He highlighted that not all tribes have federal tribal education agencies. The consortium can provide templates to tribes looking to establish federal tribal education agencies. He emphasized the difficulty in maintaining continuity of language and cultural education amidst high educator turnovers.

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 7, from which he read a 1763 royal proclamation by King George III, providing a history of how tribal sovereignty has been recognized and established since. He moved to slide 8, from which he read United States law defining tribal sovereignty. He moved to slide 9, which clarified that authority of tribes is rooted in the United States Constitution, where tribes are treated as states for tax purposes. He continued to slide 10, which showed U.S. laws defining tribal sovereignty, including 1934 Indian Reorganization Act and the 1978 Federal Acknowledgement Process. Dr. Isaak moved to slide 11, which highlighted Public Law 103-454 of 1994, the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act. He emphasized that the neither the number of federally recognized tribes in Alaska nor in the United States is a static number. He moved to slide 12, which defined House Bill 123 from the Thirty-Second Alaska State Legislature, which provided state recognition of federally recognized tribes.

[8:28:27 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 14, which listed the eligibility requirements for ANTEC membership. He said that one goal of ANTEC is to bring different tribal entities together, recognizing the scarcity of many resources. He emphasized that ANTEC does work to make space for non-tribal voices as well.

[8:31:28 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK, in response to questions from Representative Story, provided examples of non-voting members of ANTEC. He said that smaller tribes will defer to their corporations to help filter information back to their councils. He said that university staff and educators have attended ANTEC meetings as non-tribal members and emphasized that allowing members who are not tribal

governments to vote would sacrifice ANTEC's ability to be incorporated under federal law. He then described how tribally sanctioned organizations can form.

[8:35:49 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK, in response to a question from Representative Carrick, provided examples of tribal NGOs that have attended ANTEC meetings. He also provided examples of local education agencies that have attended ANTEC meetings.

[8:38:28 AM](#)

MS. JACKSON added that the representatives from local education agencies often depend on the size of the school district. She said that these representatives could be superintendents, teachers, or other staff members who attend ANTEC meetings.

[8:39:37 AM](#)

MS. SKAN emphasized that NGOs are tribal serving organizations and it would be a duplication of services to include both the entities and the tribes.

[8:40:42 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK, in response to questions from Representative Ruffridge, said that there are eight voting members from federally recognized tribes currently in ANTEC and that ANTEC represents about 50,000 tribal citizens and emphasized that this is grassroots work. He described the relationship between ANTEC and the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), which meet every other month to keep AFN updated on ANTEC's growth and discuss what works in these fields. He stated that AFN is eligible to become an ANTEC member. He noted that AFN does have an education committee, but they also engage in many other forms of advocacy, which distinguishes it from ANTEC's narrower focus.

[8:46:12 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 15, which described how to become a member of ANTEC. Tribal governments, NGOs, and other entities follow different processes for membership. He emphasized that membership requires contributing to the goals and purpose of ANTEC.

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 16, which listed ANTEC formation protocols. He explained that similar consortiums are being developed in the Great Plains region in the United States. Those consortiums are attempting to work across state borders and the Canadian border. He emphasized that tribal sovereignty should not be diminished or impaired by ANTEC. Dr. Isaak moved to slide 17, which continued listing ANTEC formation protocols. He emphasized that resources, both financial and human, are limited and therefore, collaboration between entities is essential.

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 18, from which he read a statement acknowledging the continued impact of boarding schools on the Alaska Native community. He moved to slide 19, from which he read a statement acknowledging that all students and communities benefit from understanding Alaska Native culture, peoples, and languages.

[8:52:24 AM](#)

MR. JACKSON added that these acknowledgements allow everybody to come to the table in a shared space, with the goal of moving forward.

[8:53:43 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK said that his team has created space for boarding school trauma in ANTEC meetings, in which non-Native people can see that they, and their schools, are also affected by boarding schools. He emphasized that ANTEC is focused on healing led by Alaska Natives. He said that the traditional value of family was removed by boarding schools, which affects the entire community and environment.

DR. ISAAK moved to slide 20, which provided the ANTEC formation timeline. He said that formation began with a meeting on April 10, 2025, and then described the growth of ANTEC from early 2025 to present day. He moved to slide 21, which offered a draft template resolution and contact information for new tribes to join ANTEC. He emphasized that educators want to better serve their students, and that is why they become involved with ANTEC.

[9:03:09 AM](#)

MARK ROSEBERRY, Director of Education, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, described his experience working with students through the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS). He

said that ICAS is more community focused than other schools and his students are more comfortable and experience less stress. He noted that although some of the older students that come to ICAS are behind in their proficiency levels, they often progress from that place at a rate that exceeds expectations.

[9:05:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the size of Mr. Roseberry's school community.

MR. ROSEBERRY responded that he serves a total of 44 students: 15 in Utqiagvik, 12 in Wainwright, and the rest are home schooled.

[9:06:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE stated that ANTEC provides one of the most transformative opportunities for parents across Alaska. She noted that there is often a disconnect in many small rural communities between families and education.

[9:08:21 AM](#)

DR. ISAAK provided wrap-up comments. He said the goal of ANTEC is to be additive and his hope is to include as many voices as possible in this work, including non-voting members' voices. He emphasized ANTEC's shared goals of culture and education. He provided the example that students cannot learn their native language, without also learning to read.

[9:10:30 AM](#)

MR. ROSEBERRY, in response to a question from Representative Ruffridge, stated that the biggest barrier to tribal education existing is funding. His school community does not have a stable source of funding. He said that tribal compacting and grants are the only options he has for operational funding.

DR. ISAAK added that in the 1980s, U.S. Congress transferred authority to meet tribal education needs to the State of Alaska, without providing a means to receive consistent operational funding. He distinguished the process of funding tribal education from funding tribal healthcare in Alaska, noting that the federal government cannot directly provide educational services in the way that it can provide healthcare services.

DR. ISAAK, in response to a question from Representative Ruffridge, stated that ANTEC has been working with federal delegates to consider federal funding for staffing the consortium. He emphasized that ANTEC's goal is not to directly fund tribal schools. He said ANTEC advocates for more tribal funding, increasing tribal sovereignty to fund their own schools.

[9:21:04 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:21 a.m. to 9:26 a.m.

PRESENTATION(S): Ilisagvik College

[9:26:20 AM](#)

CHAIR DIBERT [announced that the final order of business would be the Ilisagvik College presentation.

[9:27:58 AM](#)

JUSTINA WILHELM, President, Ilisagvik College, gave a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet], titled " Ilisagvik College." She began on slide 2, from which she read a land acknowledgement. She read the Ilisagvik College vision statement from slide 3 and then the mission statement from slide 4. She moved to slide 5, which provided a history of Ilisagvik College, from the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory in 1947 to its thirtieth anniversary as a college in 2026.

MS. WILHELM moved to slide 6, titled "American Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)," and noted that Ilisagvik College is a member of AIHEC. She stated that AIHEC is composed of 37 tribal colleges and universities, with more than 80 sites in the U.S. and noted that Ilisagvik College is currently the only tribal college in Alaska. She moved to slide 7, which listed criteria of tribal attributes. She also described the breakdown of funding for Ilisagvik College.

[9:33:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked if federal cuts have affected Ilisagvik College.

MS. WILHELM responded that there has been no impact so far. She said that some grants are forward funding, ensuring funding over

at least the next few years. She said that future funding is still uncertain.

[9:34:36 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM, in response to questions from Representative Carrick, stated that Ilisagvik College has two funding sources from the state. She said Ilisagvik College receives no pass-through funds from the University of Alaska system.

[9:37:49 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM moved to slide 8, which listed institutional attributes and partnerships. Ilisagvik College's attributes include Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation, a cost of \$205 per credit hour, and tuition waivers to students from the North Slope Borough and for Alaska Native and Native American students. She listed some of Ilisagvik College's partnerships as well. Slide 9 showed a graph portraying the pathway of lifetime learning, from elementary school to college.

[9:42:46 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM, in response to a question from Representative Ruffridge, stated that Ilisagvik College partners with elementary, middle, and high schools to recruit students and share its mission.

[9:44:11 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM moved to slide 10, which listed the types of degrees offered at Ilisagvik College. She then moved to slide 11, titled "Enrollment 2024-2025," highlighting the work Ilisagvik College is doing to increase the number of students aged 18-25.

[9:45:57 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM, in response to a question from Representative Story, listed the workforce training courses that have been most popular and most needed at Ilisagvik College, including commercial driver's licenses (CDLs).

[9:47:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked about the average enrollment for the last 5-10 years.

MS. WILHELM responded that average enrollment has been between 1,100 and 1,200 students over the last few years, highlighting that 1,000 students in 2024-2025 showed a drop in enrollment. She noted that Ilisagvik College has already seen an increase for the fall 2025 semester.

[9:48:34 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM, in response to a question from Representative Story, stated that Ilisagvik College offers certificate programs and is moving toward offering more stacked and condensed courses, to accommodate the seasonal subsistence lifestyle.

[9:50:30 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM moved to slides 13 and 14 and discussed the efforts being made to indigenize the institution. She moved to slide 15, which displayed the fiscal year 2024 (FY 24) Alaska Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP) report.

[9:52:51 AM](#)

CHAIR CARRICK noted that the displayed chart did not contain the most recent TVEP data.

[9:53:29 AM](#)

MS. WILHELM moved to slide 16, which listed the workforce training courses that Ilisagvik College offers and then to slide 18, which displayed a chart of work force data from 2020 to 2025. She moved to slide 19, which showed the number of Ilisagvik College students that obtained different drivers licenses in 2024 and 2025.

MS. WILHELM moved to slide 20, which listed the different phases and costs of constructing a new college campus. She then moved to slides 21 and 22, which listed the unmet needs of Ilisagvik College.

[9:58:34 AM](#)

FRIEDA NAGEAK, External Affairs Coordinator, Ilisagvik College, described her experience as a student at Ilisagvik College, pursuing her dream of becoming a nurse. She emphasized how genuinely Ilisagvik College embraces tribal culture.

9:59:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FRIER said Ilisagvik College is home for her. She described her experience growing up on the campus and her professional experience working with the college.

10:01:42 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Tribal Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.