

HB

254

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254</SUBJECT><COMM>HF IN27</COMM></TARGET>

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau

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Representative Alan Dick

House District 6

Witness List

House Bill 254: Alaska Native Language Council

Representative Alan Dick

Annette Kreitzer, Staff to Representative Alan Dick, Sponsor

Rosita Worl, Sealaska Corp. (JNU)

Patrick Anderson, Executive Director, Chugachmiut Native Corp. (offnet 748-3261)

Annette Evans Smith, Alaska Native Heritage Center (offnet 330-8000)

Scott Ruby, Director Community & Regional Affairs (DCC&ED)

Denise Morris, First Alaskans (offnet 952-7990)

Alaska Native Language Revitalization

Prepared for the
Alaska State Legislature
HB 254 Alaska Native Language and Advisory Council

By

Rosita Kaahani Worl, Ph.D.
Sealaska Heritage Institute
Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 16, 2012

In honor of my ancestors and in respect to this committee, I am privileged to tell you who I am:

Lingít x'eináx Yéideiklats'ok ka Kaahani ax saayi.

Shangukeidi ka Cháak' naa xat sitee.

Kawdliyaayi Hit áyá xát.

Lukaax.adi yádi áyá xát.

My Tlingit names are Yéideilats'ok and Kaahani

I am of the Thunderbird Clan and the Eagle Moiety.

I am from the House Lowered from the Sun of Klukwan.

I am a Child of the Sockeye Clan.

My Tlingit names embody my social identity and cultural values. They establish a bond between me and my ancestors, and they create a responsibility to our future generations. My social identity reflects our world view and our relationship to our land and environment.

My English name is Rosita Worl, and I serve as President of the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), whose mission is to perpetuate and enhance the cultures of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshians. SHI has been engaged in language restoration efforts for the last twelve years.

I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 254, "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the

Preservation, Restoration, and Revitalization of Alaska Native languages.” I would also like to commend you in this noble effort to support the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of this State.

I will not dwell on the historical reasons and circumstances as to why Native languages are on the verge of extinction. Rather, I will focus on the positive results that the adoption of this bill and language revitalization can bring to Alaska Natives and to the State of Alaska.

First, it is important to briefly outline the status of Alaska Native languages today. Unless remedial action is initiated, most all of Alaska Native languages will join their already extinct linguistic relative, the Eyak, within a few short decades. According to a UNESCO report on endangered languages, Inupiaq in the North Slope and Kotzebue and the Gwich'in Athabaskan languages are “severely endangered,” meaning that the languages are spoken by grandparents and older generations. While the parent generations may understand Inupiaq and Gwich'in Athabaskan, they do not generally speak these languages to children or among themselves. Aleut and the Southeast Alaska Native languages are “critically endangered” meaning that the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently. Yup'ik, which is the healthiest indigenous language in Alaska, is classified as “vulnerable.” This means that most children speak the

language; but it may be restricted to certain domains such as in the home. I note with deep regret that Eyak is extinct.

In the 1990s, Alaska Natives began to advocate in earnest for the revitalization of indigenous languages. Sealaska was successful in advancing an amendment to the Native American Languages Esther Martinez Act of 1992 that provided for language revitalization programs in Alaska based on the status of our language restoration efforts at that time. I am enclosing a report prepared by the Sealaska Heritage Institute that provides an overview of the language programs administered by Alaska Native organizations today. We apologize that it may be an incomplete record, but it should provide for you the range and the limitations of the programs that are operating in the state. To my knowledge, state funding is not available for language restoration programs. The unfortunate reality is that the federal funding level has been woefully inadequate with something like \$4 million in competitive grants available annually for all tribes throughout the United States. The gains we made in federal funding through aggressive advocacy on our part have been offset by the shrinking federal appropriations in the last few years, and we are yet struggling to ensure that funding for the Alaska Native Education Equity Act continues. Thus, the state's effort to support the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages becomes even more critically imperative.

It is also important to briefly review the work of the Alaska Native Language Center in the event it might be suggested that its work may be duplicated by the proposed Alaska Native Language and Advisory Council. The ANLC was established by state legislation in 1972, and it has focused on the documentation of Alaska Native languages. While the study of Native languages is important, documentation, which has been the primary focus on the ANLC, does not by itself, lead to restoration of a language. Documentation does not include the development of curriculum or the training of teachers to provide instruction on Native languages. Native language curricula and Native language teachers are critical in language revitalization. Rather than documentation, the heart of the Council's work will be to "advise the governor and the legislature on programs, policies, and projects for cost effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages in the state." This work together with the necessary funding can ensure that one of our most significant resources in the state survives.

Native organizations have the capacity to implement language revitalization programs as reflected by the report I am submitting to you. Native Peoples have been staunch advocates of language revitalization efforts, and I would stress that it is essential that Native organizations be eligible recipients of state funds. Michael Krauss, the foremost linguist in the state, recognized the importance of Native American organizations and tribes as applicants for funding in his testimony supporting the Native American Languages Act of

1992. He stated “you cannot from outside inculcate into people the will to revive or maintain their languages” (Hinton 2001).

I would further recommend that the legislature and administration adopt interim measures to immediately support revitalization language projects for the most critically endangered languages. However, I also want to assure you that I am of the firm opinion that the legislation to establish the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council must be adopted if we are to ensure the survival of Native languages. The Council must formulate policies that support the revitalization of Native languages and identify barriers that threaten the survival of Native language.

Significantly, one of the most immediate effects of the legislation is that it would serve to reverse the perception that the State of Alaska is adverse to linguistic diversity. It would further send a powerful message that Alaska sees indigenous languages as a part of its heritage to be protected. Unfortunately, the adoption of the English-Only legislation in 1998¹ was interpreted by many, and certainly by the Alaska Native population, as an effort to suppress Native languages. Although this may not have been the intent, I would hope that one

¹ The legislation restricted the state from conducting business in any language other than English with limited exceptions. In 2002, a superior court ruled that the law violates free speech rights, striking the law down. In 2007, the state Supreme Court issued a 4-1 split decision, ruling that the first section of the law (requiring English to be the only language used for government functions) is unconstitutional, and the second part (requiring English for all government documents and records) is constitutional as long as duplicates can be made in other languages.

of the first recommendations that the Council advances is a proposal to the legislature and the governor that Alaska join Hawaii in declaring that the state is officially multi-lingual.

The adoption of this legislation could also send a powerful message that indigenous languages are not evil or inferior to English. Children growing up with the perception that their language and culture are inferior more often develop low self-esteem, and studies have revealed that low self-esteem is a major factor in failure at school.

Conversely, a positive self-identity is a prerequisite to academic achievement. However, the emotional benefit of a positive self-identity must be accompanied by real changes in the classroom that provide for the teaching of Native language and culture. This will require considerable work and funding.

Sealaska Heritage Institute has consistently conducted evaluations of our programs in which Native language and culture are taught in schools. The curricula we have developed and the professional development workshops we have offered to teachers are oriented towards the instruction of Native language and culture. Equally important, our objectives have been to improve the academic status of our students by advancing critical thinking, knowledge and science. Our evaluations reveal that students do better academically when they are taught Native language and culture. We are preparing a longitudinal

study of students who have participated in the demonstration project we initiated in the Juneau schools, and we will be pleased to share the report with the committee when it is complete. We are confident that the study will demonstrate the academic achievement which results from the incorporation of Native language and cultural studies into the classroom. However, we have grave concerns that the school district will not be able to sustain their minimal efforts they have provided in teaching Native languages.

I believe that the legislature understands the social and economic costs to a society and to the state when a significant percent of the population has a poor education. It is my hope that our society will come to accept and understand that the incorporation of Native language and culture into our schools leads to improved academic success that ultimately benefits the individual students as well as our state and society.

Native languages contain intellectual wealth accumulated through thousands upon thousands of years. They have conveyed how Native people see and use the land. The difference in world views among different Alaska Native cultural groups was readily apparent to me when I was conducting field work in the North Slope studying whale hunting. I absolutely could not see the grey patches on the horizon that my companion hunters saw that signified open water. Neither did I know the over eighty terms they had in their language to distinguish the different types of ice (Nelson 1969). Knowledge of ice is critical

to the survival of the hunters who harvest whale, marine mammals and fowl on the sea ice. The 3,300 Tlingit place names that Sealaska Heritage will be publishing in a cultural geographic atlas provide knowledge about our environment and land in Southeast Alaska. Interestingly, these names may also provide information about climate change through thousands of years. Language is a uniquely a human gift central to our experience of being human and Alaska Natives. This knowledge and the differing world views are worthy of protection and transmittal to future generations. Linguistic and cultural diversity is a benefit to society.

Unfortunately Native languages are on the road to extinction unless we initiate immediate efforts to rectify this trend. I urge that the legislature act immediately to adopt HB 254, "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the Preservation, Restoration, and Revitalization of Alaska Native languages."

I would like to dedicate my testimony to the late Dr. Bill Demmert of Klawock, who served as a Professor of Education at the University of Alaska Southeast. He was the first and only Native to serve as Commissioner of the State of Alaska Department of Education. He was an educator with national prominence and was instrumental in the passage of the Indian Education Act. He was also a staunch advocate of Native language restoration and studied how Native language contributes to academic success. We were fortunate to

have him serve on the Board of Trustees of the Sealaska Heritage Institute. I would also like to respectfully recommend that the state legislature consider incorporating his name into the title of HB 254 "The Bill Demmert Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council." It would be a tribute to all who have worked tirelessly to revitalize Alaska Native languages.

Gunulchéesh

References

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Sealaska Heritage Institute
Alaska Native Language Programs

January 2012

Alaska Natives are comprised of seven linguistic groups including the Inupiat, Yup'ik, Aleut, Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian. Each has or had its own indigenous language. But today, no group is producing new speakers with Native as their first language. Many have language revitalization efforts in which students learn many nouns, some verbs, some greetings and introductions. None are producing fluent or even proficient speakers. Most programs are for beginners and a few are for intermediate learners. Very few programs are for advanced learners. Many communities have singing and dancing groups where individuals learn songs in their Native language and may or may not know the meaning of the words they are singing. At this time, many young Native individuals have expressed great interest in learning their language. Native language acquisition formerly occurred in the homes. Because of many factors, parents today do not know their Native language and are unable to teach the language to their children. The challenge of teaching Native languages has largely been left to schools and community organizations. This paper provides a brief summary of programs offered around the state. Not all regions responded to the request from Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) for information about their language programs. We received responses from seven regions. The Arctic Slope and Aleutian Pribiloff provided SHI the most detailed information. Other language revitalization programs may exist in Alaska of which we are not aware.

From Barrow to Metlakatla, community organizations and school districts are offering language programs. In the Arctic Slope, the schools teach the four dialects of Iñupiaq throughout the 12 schools in the district. The Iñupiaq Education program has created VIVA (Visual Iñupiaq Vocabulary Acquisition) online language units. Each unit contains its own assessment and scoring—students' keep track of their own progress. Once a unit is completed, the students practice their verbal pronunciation with a fluent speaker—the district employs fourteen fluent Iñupiaq speakers. This program is noteworthy for several reasons: sequential units based on the Greymorning method, scoring contained within each unit; emphasis on hearing the language tied with images rather than words and pronunciation work with fluent speakers. Classes are held 3-5 times per week in the elementary school and are available as electives

in the middle and high schools. Production of the VIVA units requires a full-time curriculum developer. The units are recorded in four Iñupiaq dialects. The North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) is also working with cultural units and developing a math program based on the traditional Iñupiaq number system.

Nome is adapting its language program based on the NSBSD materials. They are receiving training from the curriculum developer on how to create their own programs using 'flash'. This region has a web-based vocabulary development game. They are recording fluent speakers of the different Iñupiaq dialects. Their record demonstrates the benefits of sharing resources, materials and staff knowledge to maximize the language revitalization efforts in our state.

In the northwest Arctic, 14% of residents are fluent in Iñupiaq. Of these speakers, 92% are over the age of 65.² Despite the disheartening statistics, communities are taking action to ensure the language survives. NANA Regional Corporation entered into a unique partnership with Rosetta Stone to produce an interactive computer learning program as part of the Rosetta Stone Endangered Language Program. Software for the two predominant dialects in the region was made available to the head of household for each family of shareholders and is available for sale. An additional effort to perpetuate the language in the region is the immersion school in Kotzebue, Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat. For 13 years, approximately 20 students age 3 through first grade have been learning all subjects solely in Iñupiatun. The Nikaitchuat staff hope to someday offer more grades at the school. The University of Alaska Fairbanks Chukchi Campus based in Kotzebue, offers an Iñupiaq A.A.S. degree and certificate program. Classes are available online so students in the villages are able to participate. Finally, the Aqqaluk Trust is a non-profit organization with the mission: "Empowering the Iñupiat people through language, culture and education." The Aqqaluk Trust coordinates the regional Iñupiaq Language Commission and conducts Camp Sivunniigvik each summer, at which children from across the region spend one week sessions on the banks of the Kobuk River enveloped in Iñupiaq traditions, values and the Iñupiaq language.

Bethel has operated an immersion school for more than 17 years. They have produced many materials including Big Books in their Yup'ik language.

Other regions are also making use of technology. The Kodiak area has produced an online audio dictionary and electronic Aluutiq flashcards. They

² Survey of Residents of the Northwest Arctic Borough conducted by the Aqqaluk Trust and the Native Village of Kotzebue in 2005.

also have a Stories and Lost Words project and are in a consortium with Port Lions and the Aluuttig Museum. Today there are only 45 fluent speakers of the Alutiiq language, the traditional language of the Native people of the Kodiak Archipelago, only 11 of which can speak the Northern Dialect, the traditional language of the *Ag'uanermiut* (people of Afognak). All the speakers are Elders. Alutiiq, like so many Alaska Native languages, struggles for survival. Afognak Native Corporation has funded a language program operated by the Native Village of Afognak and Native Village of Port Lions to create innovative language learning tools. See Alutiiq Language Website: <http://www.ktuu.com/features/assignmentak/learning-alutiiqonline-20120112,0,5807593.story> and Alutiiq iPhone Application: <http://www.ktuu.com/videobeta/80965544-341f-44e4-8e14-5210bac33c9b/News/Afognak-Alutiiq-Connect-iPhone-app-intro>. Through the joint efforts of the Alaska Native Corporations and Tribes in the Kodiak Archipelago and the Alutiiq Museum, language restoration efforts are underway.

The Chugach Region has produced many posters, videos and books. They also teach Aluuttig at Spirit Camp each summer.

The Aleutian Pribilof Islands region is the only one of the seven regions who reported that Native language still spoken in the home although we suspect this is also the case in Yup'ik villages. The village of Atka reports that Unangam Tunuu (Aleut) is still spoken in one-fourth of the homes. They report that there are 124 fluent speakers still living representing 3.5% of the enrolled tribal members. Two of the 12 schools in the region offer language and culture classes in the curriculum. Ten schools offer limited exposure to language and culture. In Atka, where ¼ of the homes still speak Unangam Tunuu (Aleut), a fluent speaker teaches language classes one hour/day. In St. Paul, a certified teacher is also a fluent Unangam Tunuu speaker. She teaches one language class, five days per week. There is an active singing and drumming group. Youth and elders collaborate to write lyrics for new songs. At community gatherings elders speak Unangam Tunuu. Three culture camps are held during the summer months. The region is seeking \$1,000,000 to create a Rosetta Stone product for Unangam Tunuu. The corporation board of directors has committed themselves to one hour of language lessons during each of the three annual meetings.

Southeast Alaska has many and varied programs. Throughout the region, "language learners," who are teachers and who are yet learning their Native

language, teach with few exceptions all language classes in some cases in collaboration with fluent speakers. Yakutat has federal funding to write children's stories in Tlingit and develop learning materials for the stories. Local students and artists illustrate the stories. The core language staff work with fluent speakers on a weekly basis. Classes are taught outside the school system. Klukwan classes are taught in the school while in Haines, language classes are taught in the local museum. In Juneau, the Goldbelt Heritage Foundation is developing curriculum and working with teachers and fluent speakers to develop lessons using the Tlingit Verb Index. The region-wide entity, Sealaska Heritage Institute, produces curriculum and provides teacher training on a region-wide basis. SHI is concentrating on the Developmental Language Process (DLP) and has produced curriculum materials for academic content areas (math, science, social studies and literature), as well as Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian DLP units. SHI has also published Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian dictionaries and has highly popular interactive language programs on its website. SHI sponsors summer basketball camps in which Native language instruction is integrated into basketball training. Both Goldbelt Heritage and SHI sponsor summer camps for youth. The camps feature language classes but are not conducted in the language. Other communities in Southeast have Tlingit language classes in the schools (Hoonah, Sitka and Kake). Wrangell and Ketchikan have programs after school.

In addition to offering classes, Ketchikan Indian Community has devoted time and grant money to improve advanced learner skills. One Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit advanced learner is teamed with fluent speakers. They spend a significant amount of their week with the fluent speakers. The goal is to increase the learners' skills to proficiency. This is the only program in the state with that stated goal although others may be doing the same work.

University of Alaska Southeast has offered Tlingit classes at beginners and intermediate levels, as well as studies of oral literature and narratives. UAS also offers mentor-apprentice classes. The University of Alaska Anchorage and Fairbanks also offer Native language classes.

In summary, a significant effort is being expended in the state to revitalize Native languages. The programs focus on using technology to teach vocabulary. Most regions are recording fluent speakers. Some regions are sharing resources and adapting materials for their own dialects. None of the regions reported stability in their Native language. Fluent speakers are passing on with no new speakers replacing them. Hundreds of learners of all ages are

learning nouns, verbs, greetings and introductions. Few progress to proficiency.

The major expressed needs are:

- Programs to support teacher language learners to work with fluent speakers to increase their own language proficiency. Mentor apprentice programs appear to be very effective.
- Programs to recruit more language learners into the teaching of the language.
- Stable funding for these programs so that teacher/learners know they can count on their program continuing.
- Curriculum development at all levels and ongoing, teacher training workshops.



14 February 2012

The Honorable Bob Lynn, Chair
House State Affairs Committee
State Capitol, Rm 108
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 254, An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages

Dear Representative Lynn:

I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 254, "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the Preservation, Restoration, and Revitalization of Alaska Native languages." I would also like to commend you in this noble effort to support the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of this State.

I am Byron Mallott, a member of the Sealaska Corporation Board of Directors, and former President and CEO of First Alaskans Institute. My Tlingit names are *Dux da neik* and *K'oo del ta'*. I am the clan leader of the *Kwáashkl Kwáan* (Humpback Salmon) clan, Fort House from Dry Bay, near Yakutat.

Before I state my reasons for supporting HB 254, it is important to briefly outline the status of Alaska Native languages today. Unless remedial action is initiated, most all of Alaska Native languages will join their already extinct linguistic relative, the Eyak, within a few short decades. A UNESCO report on endangered languages classifies native languages as "vulnerable", definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct. In our state, the Yup'ik language is the healthiest, yet is still "vulnerable", meaning children still speak the language but in limited domains (home). The Inupiaq language spoken in the North Slope and Kotzebue and the Gwich'in Athabaskan languages are "severely endangered," meaning that the languages

are spoken by grandparents and older generations. While the parent generations may understand Inupiaq and Gwich'in Athabaskan, they do not generally speak these languages to children or among themselves. Aleut, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian languages are "critically endangered" meaning that the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently. This state has lost the Eyak language, which is now extinct.

The State of Alaska can stop this rapid progress towards language extinction by passing HB 254 "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the Preservation, Restoration, and Revitalization of Alaska Native languages." This is a historic and symbolic bill. For the first time, the highest office in our state is acknowledging the value of linguistic diversity. This is progress. We have moved from a time when our people had their mouths washed out with soap for speaking their language to a time when the Governor of our state will have an Advisory Council on Native Languages.

The Council won't solve all of our problems. There is much work to do. That work must be in language restoration. Languages that are severely and critically endangered must teach and nurture language learners so that they can teach the language to others. Sealaska Heritage Institute recently surveyed language teachers/learners in Southeast communities. When asked how long they had been learning and how long they had been teaching, the difference was very little, sometimes only one semester. Our language learners/teachers need support at all levels. Native language curricula and Native Language teachers are critical for language revitalization.

The heart of the Council's work will be to "advise the governor and the legislature on programs, policies, and projects for cost effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages in the state." This work together with the necessary funding can ensure that one of our most significant resources in the state survives. The Council must formulate policies that support the revitalization of Native languages and identify barriers that threaten the survival of Native language. Significantly, one of the most immediate effects of the legislation is that it would serve to reverse the perception that the State of Alaska is adverse to linguistic diversity. It would further send a powerful message that Alaska sees indigenous languages as a part of its heritage to be protected.

Language is a uniquely human gift, central to our experience of being human and Alaska Native. Our cultural identity and traditional knowledge are embodied within our language. This knowledge and the differing world views are worthy of protection and transmittal to future generations. An example of worldview in the Tlingit language is kinship terms. In addition to terms for mother, father and grandparent, Tlingit kinship terms denote clan

relationships. Aunts and uncles are either the same clan as a child or the opposite clan—their titles tell him so. Siblings are differentiated by gender and age. Clans have clan in-laws—the opposite moiety who they traditionally married. All these very complex relationships are carried in kinship terms. Part of knowing who we are, which is critical for healthy development, is knowing who we are related to and how. All this is carried in language. Linguistic and cultural diversity is a benefit to society.

We are not going to save our indigenous languages through culture week, or guest lectures on language. Our state needs all of us to say this is a priority, advise the Governor and administration on systemic efforts that are most effective. Each of our language groups is working on language revitalization. Let's look at what is most effective for which groups. Even the Yup'ik, who have the healthiest of our Native languages, are vulnerable. A systemic approach will identify the needs of each language community and advise on what is needed to move that language one level safer.

Sincerely,

Byron Mallot
Sealaska Corporation
Board of Directors

First Alaskans Institute

February 15, 2012

Senator Donald Olson
State Capitol Room 508
Juneau AK 99501

Representative Alan Dick
State Capitol Room 104
Juneau AK 99801

Re: SB 130 & HB 254 Creating the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council

Dear Senator Olson and Representative Dick,

On behalf of First Alaskans Institute, we extend a sincere thank you (*Unangam Tunuu: Qajaalaku!* -- thank you) (*Inupiat: qutigipsi apai* - I thank you very much) to the sponsors and co-sponsors of SB 130 and HB 254 for your deep insight and commitment in moving the important topic of Alaska Native languages forward in this state; *it is critically needed.*

First Alaskans Institute is a statewide Alaska Native non-profit organization focused on advancing Alaska Natives for the next 10,000 years. We work to empower the indigenous peoples of this land to ensure that we are involved in, shaping, and making the decisions that impact our lives.

Revitalizing our Alaska Native languages is an important part of the restoration of healthy and well communities in Alaska -- for all Alaskans. We ask all legislators to support this bill and vote in the affirmative to create the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council. Some may ask why support Alaska Native languages when there are so many different languages from across the world spoken in Alaska? The answer is simple. All other world languages have a home, countries which speak them, nurture them, and grow their complexity and nuance over time but the only home the indigenous languages of Alaska have is right here.

Our languages contribute to the uniqueness of Alaska and the rich human diversity of this planet. Given an opportunity to blossom, they nourish and enrich lives, empower voices, grow cultural continuity, and strengthen identity. People who are strong in who they are and knowledgeable about their cultures are prepared for and work hard for individual and collective success.

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Mission

Advance Alaska
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community engagement,
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collaboration, and
leadership development.

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Most importantly, languages contain knowledge not available anywhere else in the world, especially in relationship to the land it has grown and developed on. If we, as Alaskans, are to steward Alaska and her resources into the future for her common good and for the benefit of all Alaskans, then the languages of Alaska Native peoples is crucial to this endeavor.

In reading through the most current version of the bills, we want to emphasize and acknowledge the importance of this legislation's purpose of working to preserve and revitalize our endangered Alaska Native languages and to advise the Governor and the Legislature on how to do so. In order for this Council to be successful it will need resources to implement initial and on-going activities. We also strongly support and request the Governor and the appropriate appropriations committees to accordingly allocate the needed state resources.

Again, it is with excitement over the promise contained in this bill – that our languages are vital to our success and that of our children, and to the health of Alaska overall, that we request full Legislative support of SB 130 and HB 254.


My Board Chair or I would be happy to provide testimony in support of this vital legislation if the need arises so please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ilisliix,



Denise R. Morris (Unangan)
President/CEO

Quyanaq,



Willie "Igglagruk" Hensley (Inupiaq)
Chair of the Board of Trustees



23 January 2012

Honorable Donny Olson, Senator
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol, Rm. 508
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Olson:

It brings me gratification to see the introduction of Senate Bill 130 - Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council, "An Act establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council and relating to the preservation, restoration and revitalization of Alaska Native Languages."

I have been working in the field of language preservation and perpetuation for nearly 40 years and have seen first hand the extreme decline of the Iñupiaq language. A handful of our people have devoted their lives to teaching it in the hopes of reversing this loss. Much remains to be done.

I write in support of the bill and urge passage. Having an Advisory Council whose responsibility would be to advocate for Native languages across the state will go a long ways towards creating an atmosphere where we can realize a shift in language priorities in Alaska. It is high time the state recognize the importance of perpetuating the languages of its indigenous peoples.

Quyanaq.

Respectfully yours,

Jana Harcharek, Director
Iñupiaq Education

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COSPONSOR REQUEST

TO: CHIEF CLERK

Please add my name as co/cross sponsor
to the following:

HB 254
Bill or work order number

*Use one slip for each request.

2/28/2012
Date

Tammie Wilson
Member's printed name

Tammie Wilson
Member's signature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COSPONSOR REQUEST

TO: CHIEF CLERK

Please add my name as co/cross sponsor
to the following:

HB 254
Bill or work order number

*Use one slip for each request.

2/28/12
Date

[Signature]
Member's printed name

[Signature]
Member's signature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COSPONSOR REQUEST

TO: CHIEF CLERK

Please add my name as co/cross sponsor
to the following:

HB 254
Bill or work order number

*Use one slip for each request.

2.28.12
Date

Gara
Member's printed name

[Signature]
Member's signature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COSPONSOR REQUEST

TO: CHIEF CLERK

Please add my name as co/cross sponsor
to the following:

CS HB 254
Bill or work order number

*Use one slip for each request.

2/28/12
Date

MIKE Doogan
Member's printed name

[Signature]
Member's signature

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill Version HB 254
 Fiscal Note Number _____
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Identifier (file name) HB254-DCCED-ANLC-02-24-12 Dept. Affected DCCED
 Title Alaska Native Language Council Appropriation Community and Regional Affairs
 Allocation Community and Regional Affairs
 Sponsor Representatives Dick and Munoz
 Requester House Finance OMB Component Number 2879

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

	FY13 Appropriation Requested	included in Governor's FY13 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY13	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services	168.7		168.7	168.7	168.7	168.7	168.7	168.7
Travel	16.5		16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5
Services	30.0		30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Commodities	25.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Capital Outlay								
Grants, Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
TOTAL OPERATING	240.2	0.0	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2

FUND SOURCE		(Thousands of Dollars)						
1002	Federal Receipts							
1003	GF Match							
1004	GF	240.2		216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2
1005	GF/Prgm (DGF)							
1037	GF/MH (UGF)							
1178	temp code (UGF)							
TOTAL		240.2	0.0	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2	216.2

POSITIONS							
Full-time		2		2	2	2	2
Part-time							
Temporary							

CHANGE IN REVENUES

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY12) operating costs 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required;
 (discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY13) costs 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)
 (discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version (if initial version, please note as such)

This version updates the anlysis section to include additional information regarding the duties of the staff.

Prepared by Scott Ruby, Director
 Division Community and Regional Affairs
 Approved by JoEllen Hanrahan, Director Administrative Services
Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

Phone 269-4569
 Date/Time 2/25/12 9:30 AM
 Date 2/26/2012

FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA
2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

BILL NO. HB 254

Analysis

HB 254 will establish the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council for the purpose of preserving, restoring, and revitalizing Alaska Native languages.

The Council will consist of five voting members appointed by the Governor and two non-voting members, one from the State Senate and one from the House of Representatives. The Council must meet a minimum of twice a year and may meet telephonically.

Personal Services includes two full time staff, a Research Analyst range 18 and an Administrative Assistant III range 15. Staff for the council will need to identify programs throughout the state that work on similar programs with the goals of this bill. These include programs from elementary schools in rural school districts, high school, adult education, and university programs. There are also programs run by non-profits and native regional organizations that receive public money that will be included.

Each program will need to be analyzed and examined for financial cost and results (cost benefit). Once this is complete and documented, a report will be compiled and provided to the council for review. The council may direct further investigation into the potential for reorganization or combination of programs, and the exploration of further funding.

The Research Analyst will perform research, investigation, and report writing. The Administrative Assistant will perform information gathering, and report editing, finalization and distribution to the council. In addition, this position will coordinate meetings and travel for Council, and provide public information services for the program.

Travel includes airfare, per diem, hotel, and miscellaneous costs for seven members and the two support staff to have two face-to-face meetings annually. The estimate assumes one meeting will be in Fairbanks and the other in a rural hub such as Bethel. While the council may meet by teleconference, in-person meetings are generally more productive and the preferred option.

Services include support for core service costs, communications, advertising, and other costs for research and reporting.

Commodities include one-time start up costs for cubicle, equipment, desk, chair, shelving, and on-going supplies.

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Representative Alan Dick

House District 6

Sectional Analysis CS HB 254(STA) Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council

Section 1:

Legislative finding language explaining the importance and criticality of protecting Alaska Native Languages from further extinction.

Section 2:

Establishes the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council in the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Section 2 further defines the role of the Council to:

- (1) advise the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects to provide for the cost-effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages in the state;
- (2) meet at least twice a year to carry out the purposes of the council; and
- (3) prepare reports of its findings and recommendations for the governor's and the legislature's consideration in January of even-numbered years. However, the first report is due on or before July 1, 2014 (section 3).

Governor appoints five voting members. Two members will be fluent in an Alaska Native Language and three members will be Alaska Native Language experts and all represent diverse regions of the state. In addition, one member of the senate and one member of the house of representatives who are Bush Caucus members shall serve on the council as nonvoting members.

Section 3:

Appointments by the Governor are to be made on or before December 1, 2012.

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Sponsor Statement

CS HB 254(STA)

Alaska Native Language & Advisory Council

Alaska Native Languages (ANL's) are threatened by extinction. The intent of HB 254 is to preserve and maintain these languages. Indigenous languages are the most critical components in preservation of cultural ideas and traditions and serve as the backbone of all cultural elements.

HB 254 establishes the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to assess the state of ANL's and re-evaluate programs within the state and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature to provide for the cost-effective continuity of ANL's.

According to the Alaska Native Language Center's *Population and Speaker Statistics* published in 2007, only 22 percent of Alaska Natives statewide can speak their native language. More specifically, only 29 percent of the Eskimo Aleut population, less than two percent of the Tsimshian and Haida, and less than five percent of the Athabascan and Tlingit communities combined are fluent speakers. The Eyak language recently lost its last native fluent speaker. (Krauss, Michael E. 2007. Native languages of Alaska. In: *The Vanishing Voices of the Pacific Rim*).

The preservation and restoration of Alaska's important cultural heritage of Native Languages is one important component of our collective history. We are all richer for maintaining this vital knowledge.

Annette Evans Smith Testimony in strong support of HB 254

Alaska State Legislature House State Affairs Committee – February 16, 2012

I. Introduction and Thank You

Representative Lynn and members of the committee, my name is Annette Evans Smith, and I serve as the President and CEO of the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

Quyana niicuniluqi. Nwiinga Picari owgua. Qinuyong ow ru gut. Ataam quiamci.

Thank you for listening to me. My Yup'ik name is Picari. Again, I thank you.

Dzaanh nezoonh. Nehoneło se'ooze, dehoon Gissakk kk'e helde Annette Evans Smith seznee. Enaa'e Carol Evans be'ooze. Eetaa'e Richard Evans be'ooze. Enaa'e bedelnekkaa Annie Zimin yeł Carvel Zimin heelanh. Eetaa'e bedelnekkaa Kitty Evans yeł Peter Evans gellea'. Dleł Taneets huts'aanh ts'adaanslet dehoon Anchorage lesdo.

Good Day. My name is Nehoneło in Koyukon Athabascan, while in English they call me Annette Evans Smith. My parents are Carol and Richard Evans. My maternal grandparents are Annie and Carvel Zimin, while my paternal grandparents were Kitty and Peter Evans. Rampart is the place I call home, while I live in Anchorage.

II. Indigenous language knowledge leads to strong cultural identity and higher self-esteem

- The DNA of our cultures lives within our languages; with loss of language, comes loss of vast amounts of traditional knowledge. Our languages make our state unique. They tell the story of our state.
- It is critical that we take proactive measures now to strengthen our languages while language speakers in each of the Alaska Native culture groups still exists and the interest and aspiration to revitalize our languages for future generations is strong.
- Compelling evidence exists that links indigenous children who have strong traditional cultural and linguistic backgrounds with academic success.
- Languages fill a vital role: strong cultural identity and knowledge leads to strong cultural identity, knowledge and self-esteem.
- Children taking language and culture classes benefit by gaining stronger identities and knowledge and appreciation of their heritage. The reverse is also true. AI/AN teenagers who are more conflicted about their culture are at greater risk of engaging in high risk activity like alcohol and drug problems and dropping out of school (Stiles 1997).
- The Alaska Native Heritage Center's nationally award winning after-school program and internship program have both reached their highest high school graduation rates ever, 83% and 86% respectively in 2010.
- At our core, we recognize that indigenous language learning promotes increased self-esteem and confidence for Alaska Natives, particularly youth, and a strong cultural identity and knowledge of self translates into a stronger person overall.

Annette Evans Smith Testimony in strong support of HB 254

III. Future Planning at the Alaska Native Heritage Center – Immersion Pilot Projects

- ANHC is working to develop programs on site at the Center to provide indigenous language learning opportunities in full immersion setting.
- Tribal groups that begin Native language instruction at an early age will be more effective than tribes that concentrate on teaching older students (Greymorning, 1997; 1999)
 - Several successful language nest immersion programs include Kōhanga Reo in New Zealand, ‘Aha Pūnana Leo in Hawaii, and Arapaho Immersion Grade School in Wyoming.

IV. Statewide linkages are urgently needed to connect language strengthening efforts

- Because government authorities have played such a powerful role in the decline of Native languages, it is reasonable to expect that they can play some role in restoring some of those languages.
- SB 130 / HB 254 will help provide the much-needed political infrastructure, as well as the resources both human and financial, to build and follow policies within and outside the state government, to promote sustainable Alaska Native languages efforts. This bill will help to unify our programs working to restore Alaska Native languages.
- Meaningful investment by the State of Alaska in the cultural strengthening of Alaska Native languages will not only contribute to a stronger Alaska Native society, but a stronger Alaska as a whole, and therefore warrants the highest legislative priority.

V. Again, thank you Representative Lynn and members of the House State Affairs Committee, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 254.

I would also like to thank Representatives Allan Dick and Kathy Muñoz for sponsoring this bill.

I am available for questions.

Annette Evans Smith Testimony in strong support of HB 254

Citations:

Greymorning, Stephen. (1997). "Going Beyond Words: The Arapaho Immersion Program." In *Teaching Indigenous Languages* edited by Jon Reyhner (pp. 22-30). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Greymorning, Stephen. (1999). "Running the Gauntlet of an Indigenous Language Program." In *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages*, edited by Jon Reyhner, Gina Cantoni, Robert N. St. Clair, and Evangeline Parsons Yazzie (pp.6-16). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

McIvor, Onowa. (2005). "The Contribution of Indigenous Heritage Language Immersion Programs to Healthy Early Childhood Development". In *Research Connections Canada, Supporting Children and Families*, edited by Judith Whitehead. Pp. 5-17. Ottawa: Canadian Child Care Federation.

Stiles, Dawn B. (1997). "Four Successful Indigenous Language Programs." In *Teaching Indigenous Languages* edited by Jon Reyhner (pp. 248-262). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Additional Sources on Identity Language and Culture:

(All online at <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/books-of-the-year>)

Bissett, Hallie. "I am Alaska Native." Recent UAA graduate and current MBA student, Dena'ina Athabascan Hallie Bissett discusses her struggle to understand her indigenous identity. She not only comes to terms with her culture, but also realizes how central it is to her life.

Breinig, Jeane. "Alaska Native Writers, Alaska Native Identities." Jeane Breinig, Ph.D., Haida, is currently a UAA Associate Professor of English. In this essay, Breinig discusses how four Alaska Natives writers portray aspects of their contemporary identities, while still maintaining connections to their respective cultural traditions.

Breinig, Jeane. "Inside the Circle of a Story." This family story written by Jeane Breinig, Ph.D., Haida professor of English at UAA, discusses the role of Haida oral traditions, storytelling, and language revitalization in Southeast Alaska. It includes links to writing by her mother Julie Coburn.

Bruchac, Joseph W. III. "We are the In-betweens: An Interview with Mary TallMountain." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Series 2, Vol. 1, Num.1 (Summer 1989). Interview with nationally renowned Koyukun-Athabascan writer (who was adopted into a white family at the age of six) about her life and writings.

Burch, Ernest S., Jr. "From Skeptic to Believer: The Making of an Oral Historian." Ernie Burch, Jr. Ph.D., social anthropologist, specializes in the early historic social organization of the Inupiaq. In this essay, he argues for the validity of using Native oral histories to truly understand the historical record. He contends that oral histories are often ignored or misunderstood by academics, and argues for their inclusion in research projects.

Fast, Phyllis. "Alaska Native Language, Culture and Identity." Essay, 2008. Phyllis Fast, Ph.D., Athabascan, is UAA Associate Professor of Anthropology. She is also an author and an artist. In this essay, Fast discusses the value of pre-colonial religious traditions and language, as well as the post-colonial impact of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 and the ANCSA 1991 Amendments of 1988.

Annette Evans Smith Testimony in strong support of HB 254

Hensley, Willie. "Speech at Bilingual Conference." Anchorage, 1981. William Hensley, Inupiaq, architect of ANCSA, reflects on key issues regarding the relationship between schooling, education and the future of Alaska Native cultures in a 1981 speech to the annual Bilingual/ MultiEducation Conference.

Jacobson, Steven A. "Central Yup'ik and the Schools." This handbook was designed to assist school districts in providing effective educational services to students from the Yup'ik language group. This is one of three handbooks developed to increase school districts' and school personnel's understanding of selected Alaska Native language groups.

Maclean, Edna Ahgeak. "Why Don't We Give Our Children to Our Native Languages?" Edna Maclean, Ph.D., Inupiaq, former president of Iligsavik College, provides an overview of the effects of education on Alaska Native languages, a discussion of the State of Alaska's approach to bilingual education, and suggestions for ways to revive and maintain Alaska Native languages.

Oquilluk, William. "People of Kauwerak: Legends of the Northern Eskimo." William Oquilluk, Inupiaq from Point Hope (1896-1972), wrote down these stories of his people when he was concerned they would be lost without written documentation. This excerpt from his book focuses on one of the disasters that befell the people.

TallMountain, Mary. "Indian Blood." Poem by nationally renowned Koyukon Athabascan writer.

Thompson, Chad. Athabaskan Languages and the Schools: A Handbook for Teachers. Jane McGary, Ed. Alaska Native Language Center, 1984. Chad Thompson, Ph.D., linguist, describes the job of a linguist and provides an overview of Athabascan languages.

Williams, Brad. "A Bridge Between Two Worlds: the term half breed gets a new definition." True North, Spring 1999. Brad Williams, reporter for True North, interviews several "mixed identity" Alaska Native citizens, including Jack Dalton, Tim Gilbert, and Priscilla Hensley, who describe their struggles to come to terms with who they are today.

Other Web sites of Interest Alaska Native Language Center: <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/>

Internationally recognized, the ANLC was established in 1972 by state legislation as a center for documentation and cultivation of the state's 20 Native languages. Housed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, ANLC publishes research in story collections, dictionaries, grammars, and research papers. ANLC also maintains an archival collection of more than 10,000 items.

Sealaska Heritage Institute. Online resources promoting language restoration of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages.

<http://www.tlingitlanguage.org/>

<http://www.haidalanguage.org/>

<http://www.tsimshianlanguage.org/>

Yukon Koyukuk School District – See "Native Language" Tab

<http://www.yksd.com/>