

HCR

19

<TARGET><BILL>HCR 19</BILL><SUBJECT>HCR
19</SUBJECT><COMM>SCRA30</COMM></TARGET>

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ

Alaska State Legislature / Ketchikan, Saxman, Wrangell, Hydaburg, Metlakatla, Hyder, Loring and Meyers Chuck

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Sponsor Statement

HCR 19, Governor Walker: AK Native Languages Emergency

The state has moved in the right direction by acknowledging and recognizing the 20 Alaska Native languages as official languages of the state; however, recognition is just the first step. The intent of this resolution is to heed the suggestions put forth by the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC).

The Council strongly urges that the Governor issue an Administrative Order, recognizing the linguistic emergency that exists, and state that it is the policy of the State of Alaska to actively promote the survival and continued use of all of Alaska's 20 Native languages.

In their 2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature, ANLPAC warned that all 20 Alaska Native languages are in crisis, and most are predicted to become extinct or dormant by the end of the 21st century. The State of Alaska can no longer sustain these rates of language loss unless policy changes are enacted that support people who are learning and speaking Alaska Native languages throughout the state.

The loss of language represents the loss of a critical piece of our history, culture, and a traditional way of life. I respectfully request the Legislature join me in support of ANLPAC and the languages that represent intergenerational knowledge.

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 3/21/18

FURTHER: State Affairs

DATE TURNED
IN TO OFFICE: 4/10/18

Community and Regional Affairs Committee considered CS FOR HCR NO. 19(CRA) am

HCR 19-GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY

Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

and recommends:

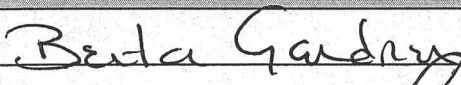
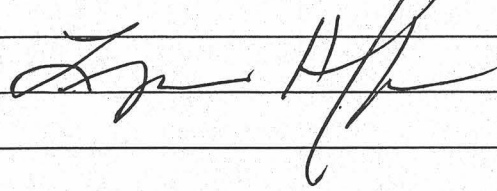
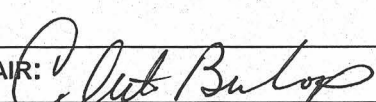
- be replaced with SCS _____ (_____) Same Title Technical Title Change
 New Title/SCR No. _____
- adopt previous SCS _____ (_____) Same Title Technical Title Change
 New Title/SCR No. _____
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt _____ Letter of Intent
- further referral to _____ Committee

Dept Abbr.	
ADM	LWF
CED	LAW
COR	LEG
EED	MVA
DEC	DNR
DFG	DPS
GOV	REV
DHS	DOT
AJS	UA

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #
LEG			✓	1

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
	Gardner	X			
	HOFFMAN	✓			
CHAIR: 	Bishop	✓			

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2018 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	CSHCR 19(CRA)
Fiscal Note Number:	1
(H) Publish Date:	3/9/2018

Identifier: HCR19-LEG-SESS-03-02-18
 Title: GOVERNOR: AK NATIVE LANGUAGES
 EMERGENCY
 Sponsor: ORTIZ
 Requester: HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Department:
 Appropriation:
 Allocation:
 OMB Component Number: 0

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2019	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2019 Request	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2019	FY 2019					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2018) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2019) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency?
 If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

INITIAL VERSION. ONE PAGE, ZERO NOTE.

Prepared By:	SANTE LESH, ADMIN OPERATIONS MGR	Phone: (907)465-4824
Division:	LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY	Date: 03/02/2018 09:01 AM
Approved By:	JESSICA GEARY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Date: 03/02/2018
Agency:	LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY	

February 27, 2018

Governor Bill Walker
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Bill Walker,

I'm writing in support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 and to urge you to recognize the linguistic emergency that exists in the State of Alaska. As a member of the Haida Nation and a Haida Language Learner I cannot express enough the need for language revitalization for my tribe and the 19 others tribes that are at extreme risk of losing their languages.

As our elders continue to pass on, so does our language. With fewer and fewer fluent speakers left, what will our people do? How else will we carry on our traditions without this vital part of our culture?

It is our duty to work together to prioritize the survival and continuation of Alaska Native Languages. We must develop immersion and restoration programs within our state in order to build a platform for sustainability.

Háw'aa, Thank you,



Michelle Eakman
2417 Tongass Ave Ste 111-213
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-220-6946

"Wáayaat hl kílång sk'at'áa. Kíilång sk'at'géik uu kílgånggang."
Learn your language now. It is important to learn your language.

The hearing for HCR 19

in House Community and Regional Affairs

March 6th at 8am.

Honorable legislators,

Paglagivsi!

My name is Ronald Hopson Brower Sr. I am in support of HCR 19.

As we speak of Alaska Native languages, and in support of HCR 19. I am reminded of a time, of a fellow Inuk, The Honorable Mary Simon, who served her people as the National President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. She had such an impact on me when she spoke in Tromso Norway in 2008. I quote: "We who are of the circumpolar world are facing many challenging issues relating to our environment our economies and the social conditions in our communities. But I do not think there is an issue that speaks more to who we are and how we are doing than the state of our indigenous languages." I think there are many here, and in the villages, who feel the same way about the health of Alaska Native Languages but feel helpless in their desire to know their own cultural language and be able to speak it.

In 2010, I was invited to speak at Sivutmuutilugu Uqapaiqput. It is a vision to stabilize, even revitalize the health of our Iñupiaq language with a further goal that it will empower our communities to excel in our Inupiat heritage and culture through the use of Iñupiaq as our first language. And we have over the years had many meetings and conferences to seek ways to preserve, and perpetuate the Iñupiaq language so it remains our first language and not a heritage language. Even though we have set goals with good intentions, to enhance uqapiaqniq, speaking our language, the resulting experiences show we are moving in the opposite direction. Iñupiaq as a first language is declining. Today in many villages Inuit under the age of 50 are not able to converse in Iñupiaq at all. I am sure Inuit are not the only ones who feel this way

I did some research in regard to the Northwest Arctic Borough from 2010 Census statistics. Records showed: There was a population of about 7,300 residents. About 83% are Iñupiaq people. That would be around 6,060 Inuit, who should be speakers of the Iñupiaq language. Out of that number, about 55% or 3,332 are children under the age of 18. That leaves us with 2728 adults of whom about 40% speak Iñupiaq at home. This suggests that out of 6060 Iñupiaq in the Northwest Arctic Borough there are now about 1090, or less, fluent Iñupiaq first language speakers.

The North Slope Census statistics recorded the same trend with about 13% fluent speakers remaining. and other Inuit regions in Canada are also going through a similar trend.

As we experience language shift to English today, our traditional first language is rapidly becoming a heritage language. Today, we need assistance to see what needs to be done to reverse this situation for many Alaska Native languages. HCR 19 Would help us to consider ways to reverse this trend.

In 2008 the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues published an 'Expert Paper' on "Indigenous Children's Education and Languages". The main conclusion of the UN Expert Panel after examining all the research was this (and I quote): "the greatest predictor of long-term success in school for indigenous children is how long they receive instruction through their first language. The length of time students receive education in their mother tongue is more important than any other factor (including socio-economic status) in predicting the educational success of bilingual students. The worst results are with students in programs where the student's mother tongues are not supported at all or where they are only taught as subjects". The UN Expert Panel is making it clear to us that unless our

children grow up speaking a first language first then adding English later is very important to the educational success of children as bilingual Alaska Native students. We should implement that advice.

Not so long ago. A hunter decorated his equipment made from ivory, bone and wood with the animals he would hunt and was filled with ritual to ensure that the spirits of the animals were not offended but enchanted to willingly give themselves to the hunter. The engravings embodied in the art forms are one of the most unique in the world and is comparable to the art of other societies thriving around the same time, the Maya, the Egyptians, and of course those high cultures that developed agricultural societies. While these cultures developed writing systems, Inuit developed an oral tradition to pass on historical knowledge which was incorporated into the engravings but in language that could be spoken. It should be noted that in the magical character of artistic carvings, many sculptural and graphic compositions appear as encrypted illustrations of myths. Therefore, the markings on these tools have greater significance than just a design. They carry engraved information that allowed the storyteller to remember the messages to be repeated like coded text for generations until the hunting tool completed its service to the community. In this way traditional knowledge could be used to pass on Iñupiaq cultural history as a part of "a unique ethno-cultural language tradition". The role of the Iñupiaq language was significant because it helped people in communities pass darkest days of winter through story telling gatherings. The oratorical skills of story tellers which we hear on radio today are preserved accounts of such historical events. They reveal ancient cultural encounters and connect events of a time past to the modern age. From the mythical tinjmiapqak (Giant eagle) to tinjnutiqpak (jet plane).

Just as our art forms have changed to meet the changing conditions of the time, our Iñupiaq language has also evolved to meet the challenges we as Inuit face life in modern and western society. However, in our case, the application for support of our government, through HCR 19 to support the full perpetuation of our Alaska Native languages opens the way to hope for positive change.

As the statistics show, we have come to a time where we strongly want to revitalize our Iñupiaq and Alaska Native languages. Community People who know the language must be included as resources in any implementation program that will look at the health of our Alaska Native languages as a measure of our well-being. I support the legislation to take the first step to go beyond good intentions at home to move our language from a heritage language back to a first language. If mother speaks Iñupiaq to her child during its newborn years then it becomes the child's first language. This can become a reality with your support. If father tells Iñupiaq stories to the child, the health of our Iñupiaq language will be reinforced and allow our children to excel in school. Yes, with your help. I would encourage a vision where children of school age are praised for speaking their Alaska Native Language in school and on school grounds. We must help a new generation of school administrators and teachers who are willing to implement a bold vision of bilingualism for our schools with Alaska languages as the first language.

This is a huge challenge and it will take the whole community to make the vision of moving the Alaska Native languages from a heritage language back to a first language. I believe it is our responsibility to honor our parents and elders of Alaska leaders to lead a new era in Alaska Native language revitalization expressed in HCR 19.

Tavra,

Ronald H, Brower Sr.

Inupiaq Language Instructor - UAF



3600 Denali Street
Anchorage, AK 99503
Telephone (907) 343-2975
Fax (907) 343-2930
www.anchoragelibrary.org

February 26, 2018

To: State of Alaska Legislature
Re: HCR No. 19, a resolution urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic 2 emergency.

Dear Governor Walker,

The Anchorage Public Library is in support of the proposed resolution to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency and initiating and strengthening, legislative and policy measures that prioritize the survival and continued use of Alaska Native languages.

Our Library is also concerned about this issue and over the past year we have been working with the Alaska Native Heritage Center, First Alaskans Institute, the Native Village of Eklutna and other partners to determine how the Anchorage Public Library can play a stronger role in the preservation, education and celebration of Alaska Native languages.

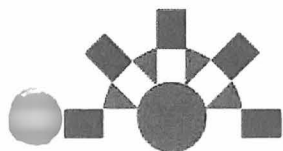
We welcome any efforts from the State of Alaska to further prioritize this important cause and will gladly become a partner in any future efforts.

Thank you,

Mary Jo Torgeson
Director
907-343-2892
torgesonmj@muni.org



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



ALASKA
NATIVE
HERITAGE
CENTER

March 1, 2018

Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HCR 19 Urging Governor Walker to Issue an Administrative Order Recognizing Linguistic Emergency

Dear Legislators,

Thank you for this opportunity to connect with you regarding the Alaska Native linguistic emergency we face. I write to endorse HCR 19, a measure that supports the survival and continued use of all twenty of the state's Alaska Native languages. Every Alaska Native language has suffered an ongoing loss in the number of speakers over the years. If current rates of decline continue, all Alaska Native languages may lose their fluent speakers within decades.

Carefully-planned language programs can make a big impact on reversing language loss. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), states:

"It is estimated that, if nothing is done, half of 6000 plus languages spoken today will disappear by the end of this century. However, this process is neither inevitable nor irreversible: well-planned and implemented language policies can bolster the ongoing efforts of speaker communities to maintain or revitalize their mother tongues and pass them on to younger generations."

With HCR 19, the State of Alaska can influence and align language policy and planning through state departments to support the hard work of many Alaskans around the state who work to save these precious and renewable cultural resources. Particularly, languages are an incredible investment in closing the achievement gap for Alaska Native youth.

The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is one of many organizations working to strengthen and protect the languages of Alaska's Native communities. Our focus is on building capacity for developing and implementing language immersion programs. For the past four years, ANHC built its language immersion programs, and in 2017 through a groundbreaking partnership with Cook Inlet Native Head Start, Anchorage's first pre-K Yup'ik immersion option opened in Anchorage. We continue to explore new ways to use language to support Alaskans, from school-age children building self-confidence and cultural identity to Elders rediscovering their language and heritage after years of discrimination and isolation.

This work has only just begun. Development of innovative, transformative, and community-focused approaches is vital to reversing the trend of language loss.

Thank you for your commitment to empowering our Alaska Native community to address this serious issue of language loss. The Alaska Native Heritage Center proudly supports HCR 19, and we urge you to join us in our efforts to preserve, restore, and revitalize Alaska Native languages in the state.

Sincerely,

Annette Evans Smith
President & CEO

Dear Representative Ortiz,

Quyana for recognizing how important our Native languages are in today's world. I am fifty percent Yup'ik yet I was born and raised in the lower Forty-eight. My Yup'ik mother knew how to speak Central Yup'ik; however she committed suicide in February 1996, the year I entered kindergarten. I believe my mother committed suicide due to what the Army did to her and my brother in 1993. My brother is no longer alive. My father still has the records of what happened then. Nonetheless, since she passed away I have not had the chance to learn Yup'ik fully myself. I have spent my whole life trying to learn what I can of the language; especially after I discovered in high school 2009 that a dialect of Siberian Yup'ik went extinct in the mid-late 1990's. I have been having trouble learning Yup'ik but I must say that the internet is far more helpful now than it was when I was growing up.

My husband and I plan to learn Yup'ik before we start trying to have children. We both want our future children to grow up learning Yup'ik, as well as English and Spanish, for our children will be mixed race. With all of my heart quyana for recognizing the importance our Native languages in today's world.

Quyana,

Virginia Silva, Jing'laq
Granddaughter of Mary Kawaglia
804-432-6076
622 Montauk Hwy
East Moriches, NY 11940
virginiaeskimo@aol.com
coastieskimo@gmail.com

03/02/2018

Legislature of the State Of Alaska
Governor Bill Walker
Topic: Recognition of Linguistic Alaskan HCR19
Languages or Xaah kíí, (Haida Language)

I am very concerned about the State passing a bill to keep the Native tongue alive with all the Tribes. Please represent this to the state to pass without this, AK has no culture, it's what makes the state great in my heart. I am learning Haida on line with UAS Ketchikan. I have enjoyed it completely. Words I never could recognize I now have a meaning to go with how to pronounce the words. It needs to be pushed more into the school system if possible. There are so Many grants out there, not just having to rely solely on the State. We need the Legislator's help to push a Bill to move on teaching our young and old the value of this great language. The Old times Linguistic were White of different races that I have learned about in this online class, thanks to these men, women who have taking notes, writings to keep a record of the old languages. It's so important. Without Culture/Languages who are we as a State!
Háw'aa, Thank you. Jim Brown

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Office of the President • Edward K. Thomas Building
9097 Glacier Highway • Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 28, 2018

The Honorable Justin Parish
House Community & Regional Affairs
120 4th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HCR 19: Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency

Representative Parish and members of the Community & Regional Affairs:

Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) is the State's largest federally recognized tribe, representing over thirty thousand (30,000) tribal citizens. Tlingit & Haida fully supports and urges the House Community & Regional Affairs committee to support HCR 19: Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

In the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council 2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature, all three of Southeast Alaska Native languages are listed as critically endangered as measured by UNESCO Scale of Language Endangerment. The survival and revitalization of our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages is of the highest priorities for Tlingit & Haida. Great efforts by elders, students, tribes, Alaska Native organizations, and communities have occurred to reverse language loss. After forty years (40) of limitless efforts, signs of language revitalization are emerging for Alaska Native languages. Even with these efforts, on the current trajectory, and with partial action by the State of Alaska, we stand to lose our languages by the end of the 21st century.

The State of Alaska has twenty one (21) official languages. Twenty (20) of these languages are Alaska Native. These languages have existed on this land for over ten thousand (10,000) years. Declaring a linguistic emergency will allow for necessary measures and initiatives to preserve, revitalize, and advance the equal status of the twenty (20) Alaska Native languages to their sister official language English.

In closing, Tlingit & Haida applauds efforts of the sponsoring Representatives that acknowledge the state of our Alaska Native languages and urges the members of this committee and legislature to support the issuance of an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency for the State of Alaska. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at (907) 463-7379 or rpeterson@ccthita.org.

Gunalchéesh / Haw'aa,

Richard J. Peterson
President

Dear Ms. Gatti and Rep Ortiz,
I'd like to express my support for House Concurrent Resolution 19 that asks Governor Walker to declare a linguistic emergency in the state of Alaska.

As Chair of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I represent the efforts of our faculty and students to document and conserve the world's endangered and threatened languages. As you know, many of the indigenous languages of Alaska are threatened, endangered or extinct, and this represents a loss to humanity that cannot be calculated. But the losses are significant and tangible, and I urge the passing of this bill. The languages of Alaska are unique and represent a history and culture that teaches Alaskans, and indeed everyone across the world, something about humanity. I thank you for this effort, and the opportunity to be heard. Sincerely,

Kamil Deen

--

Kamil Deen
Professor and Chair
Department of Linguistics
University of Hawaii at Manoa

March 6, 2018

The Honorable Justin Parish
House Community & Regional Affairs
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HCR 19 – Urging Governor Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

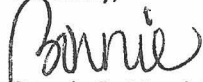
Dear Representative Parish and members of the Community & Regional Affairs:

As an apprentice of Xaad Kil – Haida Language, and a mother and grandmother of Haida children, I am writing to encourage you to support HCR 19. Since I started my journey on learning my native language I found how much I have missed out in knowing and learning my heritage tongue, and my children and grandchildren have been deprived learning their native heritage language. Our language is a beautiful one, as it links us to the environment around us. It teaches respect and reverence. It teaches us about the world and ties us to our families and community.

My mother was sent off to boarding school and there she lost her connection to the language. Therefore, as a child growing up I didn't hear or practice in my home. I learned a little from classes at school but it wasn't enough and we lacked resources and consistency. What I have learned is that it has affected my mother physically and emotionally, and she has had to deal with the loss her entire 70 years. When I speak what little Haida I know to her, it makes her feel good.

I'd like to thank you for your time and ask that you support HCR 19 and ask that you please understand the significance to me, my family and our people and people of Alaska. My heritage language has made a difference in my life. And with your support it will make a difference in Hydaburg, to our children and grand children, and even to those who it was taken from. If you have further questions, you may contact me at P.O. Box 1049, Craig, AK 99921 or eagle_one69@hotmail.com. Ja haw'aa – thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Bonnie R. Morris
Xaad Kil Apprentice



Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments

PO Box 33
Fort Yukon, Alaska 99740
Phone: 907-662-2587
Fax: 907-662-3333
www.catg.org

March 5, 2018

Via Email: house.community.and.regional.affairs@akleg.gov.

Representative Ortiz, Kriess-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, Chenault, Tarr
State of Alaska House of Representatives
Juneau, Alaska
(toll free): 844-586-9085

Re: Testimony for the HCR 19 Governor: AK Native Languages Emergency

Dear Representative Ortiz, Kriess-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, Chenault,
Tarr;

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) is a tribal consortium founded in September of 1985 with the vision of self-sufficient communities with a shared commitment to promoting common goals and taking responsibility for a culturally integrated economy based on customary and traditional values in a contemporary setting. The ten remote villages Gwich'in and Koyukon Athabascan Tribes that form CATG are: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Canyon Village, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Rampart, Stevens Village, and Venetie.

The traditional lands are the upper Yukon Flats, a 55,000-square-mile area encompassing what is now the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (YFNWR) and part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Stretching from the White Mountains in the south to the Brooks Range in the north, from the western edge of the Yukon Flats near the Trans-Alaska Pipeline east to the United States-Canada border is of significant historic, cultural and geographic importance to the CATG Tribes. Since time immemorial the CATG Tribes and their tribal membership have lived in reciprocity with these lands and the numerous cultural and linguistic resources therein.

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments is actively involved in establishing self-governance in Alaska for our member tribes and supports the following statement: *The Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon recognize and value the fact that living on the land for many millennia has provided them with an extensive body of knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that many people today refer to as Indigenous knowledge. This knowledge, which has been passed down orally through personal experience and spiritual teachings, is the foundation of Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon identity and survival. It continues to have relevance today and draws its' strength from being used, revised and continuously updated to take into consideration new knowledge. The*

Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon hold this knowledge in trust for future generations in the belief that this knowledge is of benefit to themselves and all humanity. The Gwich'in/Upper Koyukon believe the best way to ensure its survival is to continue to use it and share it in a manner that respects this knowledge. Indigenous language is interwoven in all aspects of this statement.

The CATG member tribes are in the Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon languages within the larger Athabascan or Dene' language family. Both Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon are critically endangered and Gwich'in is linguistically classified as Level 7 – Shifting in *The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages* (Baker, 1996, p. 67) by Fishman. In 2006, Dr. Sikorski reported that Gwich'in had 272 remaining Gwich'in first language speakers. The declining numbers of fluent speakers is alarming and a few local efforts initiating language programs continue to reclaim and revitalize oral fluency in Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon. CATG staff, Doyon Foundation, Tanana Chiefs, and the CRCDC Vice-Chancellor, Evon Peter, ANL Professor Dr. Sikorski to develop a range of programs that work towards increasing opportunities for the transmission of language to occur naturally or in a formal school setting from one generation to the next.

CATG has obtained funding from the US Department of Education Office of Indian Education (OIE) Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) for a 3-year grant to develop curriculum and to gather Elders and fluent speakers in a 2-week Yukon Flats Indigenous Language Revitalization Institute. CATG staff are very thankful for this project but simply put, Indigenous language reclamation efforts require more than one grant.

The local REAA, the Yukon Flats School District has 3 Gwich'in Language Teachers that continue to teach 6-hour of language per day in the school setting. These dedicated professionals have tirelessly worked to teach Gwich'in Language for decades without a unified curriculum, textbooks, printed materials for Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon medium education, or supply budgets. For the local district to continue to fund the Gwich'in Language Teacher position, these professionals often have to work up to 4 hours as a regular classroom aide limiting their instructional time in Gwich'in. Upper Koyukon may be taught in Rampart distance delivery from Fairbanks as part of the Yukon Koyukuk School District but not in the other villages.

It is difficult for all involved in governance at the regional board level to adequately fund education in rural Alaska generally. It is difficult for administrators to balance budgets with shrinking enrollment and to meet the numerous Western academic mandates required, sports related extra-curricular activities, and ever-present energy costs and support a comprehensive language program for two unique languages. It is also difficult for the educators to properly prepare and instruct in Western academics and Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon Languages. Most importantly, it is more than difficult but completely unrealistic that any student achieves oral fluency or become literate in any language that is only offered in one-hour per day. Gwich'in medium and Upper Koyukon medium instruction must be the goal to have appropriate growth for oral fluency at more than a conversational level. I strongly support the development and formation of immersion schools.

This period of time is critical for language reclamation efforts in Alaska and a strong commitment by the State of Alaska with adequate funding for curriculum development and alignment, teacher preparation, material development and printing, and full-time salaries with benefits for Gwich'in and Upper Koyukon Language Teachers. Funding for immersion schools and mentor-apprenticeship programs will help those involved in Indigenous language reclamation efforts move forward as leaders to save our precious Indigenous languages for future generations. It is important that the tribes take leadership in administering schools through compacting, credentialing Indigenous Language Teachers, curriculum development, and teacher preparation and orientation.

Thank you for your recognition of the magnitude of the seriousness of the potential of wide spread loss of the Indigenous languages of Alaska, please consider a financial commitment as well. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. If I can be any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. Mahsi' or thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,



Dr. Charleen Fisher
Executive Director
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments



Iñupiaq Language Commission

Iñupiaaraagupta ataramik naluruat Iitkisirut
Speak Iñupiaq and they will learn

P.O. Box 49 • Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 • 1-800-478-3301 • (907) 442-3301 • Fax: (907) 442-2863

March 5, 2018

Committee Chair
House Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801

Regarding: House Concurrent Resolution 19 Urging Governor Bill Walker to Issue a Linguistic Emergency for our Alaska Native Languages

Dear Co-Chair Parish and members of the Committee:

The Iñupiaq Language Commission strives to preserve and perpetuate the Iñupiaq language of Northwest Alaska. The Commission includes Iñupiaq language speakers from across Northwest Alaska who are appointed by the Regional Elders Council for their knowledge and experience in teaching and speaking the language. The Commission created the Iñupiaaraaqtaa app, updated the Iñupiaq language dictionary, and hosted elders and youth conferences in region to encourage the transmittal of our culture to the next generation. Despite our efforts, we continue to see many challenges that are preventing young people from learning and speaking our language.

The Northwest Arctic Borough Census area is 84 percent Alaska Native/American Indian according to the 2010 census. Yet, according to a survey of our region from 2005, only 14 percent of the people living in Northwest Alaska speak Iñupiaq fluently. Since the survey we have lost elders and members of the community who are fluent speakers. The Iñupiaq language, like other Alaska Native languages, contains knowledge and history of our traditional lifestyle. This knowledge and history cannot simply be translated into English without losing the connection to how our people survived in the Arctic for thousands of years.

The Commission has attempted to bring more of our language into schools in Northwest Alaska without success. The barriers to doing this are significant. Local School Boards are dealing with increased mandates, reduced funding, and no incentives to provide language learning or immersion programming.

Fluent speakers that would like to teach in school, but may not have the financial means to obtain a degree, are available but underutilized.

The Commission and other Elders in our region see every day how hungry our young people are for their language. It is central to the identity of our people. It is central to the well-being of individuals, communities, elders, youth, and adults. Every year, more fluent speakers pass away and a new generation that have parents who do not know their language are raising them. Time is of the essence and we believe House Concurrent Resolution 19 urging Governor Bill Walker to issue a linguistic emergency for our Alaska Native languages will create the sense of urgency needed to address this situation if it is followed up by legislative and administrative action.

In addition to the Commission's support for House Concurrent Resolution 19, we respectfully request that the legislature adopt statutes that create a requirement for School Districts in the State to implement Alaska Native language immersion programming to address this urgent situation. This curriculum should be directed at all levels from early childhood education through high school. These statutes should allow school districts to develop language immersion locally and use local experts and traditional knowledge holders. Though School Boards may be empowered to implement programming today, the path to implementation is challenging and often puts language programming at odds with other mandates.

We know that teaching our language will perpetuate our culture and way of life. We will strengthen the next generation of Alaska Native people, and all of Alaska, by recognizing the value of our languages and acting on the urgency of this situation.

Quyanuk for your time and consideration,



Christina Ugik Westlake, President

CC:

Representative John Lincoln

Senator Donny Olson

Governor Bill Walker

Annette Evans Smith, Chair, Alaska Native Languages Preservation Advisory Council



IŃUPIAT IĻITQUSIAT

Respect for Elders • Knowledge of Language • Love for Children • Knowledge of Family Tree • Respect for Others • Sharing • Responsibility to Tribe
Respect for Nature • Hunter Success • Domestic Skills • Family Roles • Cooperation • Humility • Avoid Conflict • Hard Work • Humor • Spirituality

Patrick Courtnage

From: LIO Sitka
Sent: Tuesday, March 6, 2018 9:26 AM
To: Rep. Justin Parish
Cc: House Community and Regional Affairs
Subject: Written Testimony on HCR19 for the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee

Dear Chairman Parish and the entire House Community and Regional Affairs Committee ,
Please accept this written public testimony for distribution to the committee from Sitka constituent Libby Stortz libbystortz@gci.net as submitted to the Sitka LIO. Thank you! Ken Fate, Sitka's Legislative Officer

1) Alaska Native languages: Dear committee members, I would like to add my voice of support for defining Alaska Native languages as a linguistic emergency. Years of attempted annihilation of the use of Alaska Native languages and assimilation have resulted in far fewer Native language speakers in Alaska. There are fewer speakers and for many of them, it has taken a very long time to remove the yoke of educational and cultural shaming they experienced throughout their youth, to give themselves permission to share their knowledge. The generation with the greatest linguistic knowledge and skill are aged and dying out without having had sufficient time and support to pass their traditional knowledge and languages to the younger generations. Please give support to this linguistic emergency.

Thank you,
Libby Stortz
Sitka

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF JULIE KITKA, PRESIDENT
ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
TO THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
March 5, 2018

Re: In support of HCR 19, Urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 186 federally recognized tribes, 177 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community on a wide array issues.

AFN strongly supports House Concurrent Resolution No. 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Alaska is home to 20 officially recognized Alaska Native languages, Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, UnangaꝔ Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. HB 216/SLA 2014, signed into law by Governor Sean Parnell, added the 20 Alaska Native languages to the official languages of the state.

Alaska Native languages embody our cultures, worldview, and the knowledge of our ancestors. Alaska Native languages exemplify the richness of our land and define our group orientation and kinship, personify our tangible and intangible relationship to our land, wildlife and universe. The wisdom of a people is embodied in their language, as it has been said: language carries the wisdom of Elders from one generation to the next. Solutions to the problems facing Native communities can be found within the culture and the language upon which it is based.

The state is in critical danger of losing those languages and, according to the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council – the creation of which was also signed into law by Governor Parnell in 2014 -- the state may lose the last fluent speakers of all 20 Alaska Native languages by the end of the 21st century.

AFN urges Governor Walker to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency.

Attachments:
AFN Resolution 14-44

Nazune Menka

2800 Peter's Lane Apt. B Juneau, AK 99801 (907) 465-9113 Nazune@outlook.com

March 5, 2018

House Committee on Rural and Community Development

Dear House Committee on Rural and Community Development:

Desaanh nezoonh. These two words are Denaak'ke (or Koyukon Athabascan) and mean "hello"; or "good day"; or "pretty day"; or "beautiful day." The point being that Denaak'ke language is multifaceted and words can have several meanings. The language enriches our understanding of the world around us and creates a greater knowledge of the place we collectively call home, Alaska. For example, "tloon' ne'elts'eeyhleyaah" means the wind waves the stars, and "a peculiar twinkling of the stars considered as a forerunner of windstorms." What a beautiful way to view the world.

The Denaak'ke language dictionary was printed for the first time in 2001 by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and until recently was out of print. Without this dictionary and the work of the people, Native and non-Native alike, I would not be able to continue to learn my indigenous language. I have assisted in naming my nieces and nephews through the use of this dictionary. Traditionally, an elder would name our youth. But as my sister's family lives in Hawai'i they were only going to be given Native Hawaiian or Kanaka Maoli traditional names from elders in my brother in law's family.

My name was given to me by Alaska Native Denaak'ke elder Catherine Minook. You can see it is spelled "Nazune," but in our dictionary it is spelled "Nezoonh." If our community were to learn how to say hello in Denaak'ke when they come to the Interior I would no longer be asked where my name is from or what it means because they would understand that it is part of the way to give warm greetings when we meet. In Hawai'i everyone knows what Aloha means and the words are part of what makes Hawai'i such a great place to visit. Imagine if we were to begin to recognize the worth of Alaska Native languages and share it with our visitors so that it becomes part of the unique visit to the great state Alaska. It would enrich us all.

For these reasons, I encourage the Committee to pass HCR 19.

Sincerely,

/s/Nazune Menka

Denaak'ke, J.D. Candidate 2018

University of Arizona James E. Rogers School of Law

Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy Program

For the Attention of
Governor Bill Walker of Alaska,

Greetings. I am a minister from a small church in Ketchikan Alaska where I am also a student of Haida language in pursuit of a B.A. in Alaskan Native Studies and Languages. Rarely have I seen people more determined to learn and preserve their mother tongue than the Haida people I am privileged to study with. It is difficult to put into words, ironically, the importance of preserving every threatened language we can. When we lose languages, we lose whole ways of viewing the world and perspectives on our shared human experience that cannot be recovered. I am not of Alaskan Native heritage, but when I am learning Haida I practice it with my 5-year-old son because he will need to understand the cultural history of the Alaska that will be his homeland. The preservation of Alaskan Native language is essential to the scholastic integrity of the State and thus is to the benefit of our populations as a whole; as a result, it is necessary for all of us to preserve Native Languages, and is not the responsibility of ethnic minorities alone.

There are 20 officially recognized Alaska Native Languages in the State the loss of which would adversely affect the spiritual, social, and regional well-being of Natives and Non-natives whose experience and identities are informed and inspired by the great history and tenacity of the peoples who have lived and thrived in this land before us. We do not only seek to preserve the language of an ethnic minority, but to save the cultural heritage of the land we inhabit.

As you may know, there has been a historic effort in the State of Alaska to strip cultural traditions, spirituality, and language from the indigenous peoples of the state by the enforcement of English only education. This policy has been the result of linguistic Darwinism that seeks to undermine and erase the importance and cultural significance of Alaskan Native language through the acculturative efforts of Sheldon Jackson, the damage he caused, and the precedents he set. It is imperative that we alleviate some of that damage. You have the power to rectify some of the mistakes made by the U.S. government, and the authority to uphold the American value of equality that empowers all Americans with self-determination. Our self-determination must include certain liberties such as freedom of religion, and by extension, certainly, the freedom to speak our own languages and to teach them to our children.

1) When, where, and by whom was the first bilingual school in Alaska opened?

Answer: 1824, in Unalaska, by Fr. John Veniaminov. The languages of instruction were Russian and Aleut.

2) When, where, and by whom was the last Aleut bilingual school closed?

Answer: About 1912, St. Paul Island, by the U.S. Government.

3) How many of you knew this?

4) Why not?

(p.2, Dauenhauer 1980)

Our state is in critical danger of losing its native languages, and as per Senate Bill No. 130 it is the responsibility of the state to reasonably respond to the advisement of the Alaskan Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council. By recognizing and validating the threats to these languages and the needs of our communities we prioritize their struggles in a way that has not yet been achieved in State history.

12 **WHEREAS** Senate Bill No. 130, enacted as ch. 48, SLA 2012, signed into law by
13 Governor Sean Parnell, established the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory
14 Council to advise both the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects to
15 provide for the cost-effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native
16 languages in the state; and

(Page 1 Line 12, House Concurrent Resolution No. 19)

Studies suggest that language immersion increases proficiency in both English and the immersive language studied. These studies and their resulting data is applicable to Alaskan Natives and Non-natives alike, who attend public schools.

Alaskan Natives have an inalienable right to educate their children in a culturally-appropriate way, in the languages of their ancestors. It would be inconceivable to an American English speaker to be required to send their child to a school that teaches only in a language foreign to the language spoken in the home. Why, therefore, do we impose this requirement on Alaskan Natives, when language immersion would be beneficial to all students regardless of age, race, class, or creed?

7 **WHEREAS** 50 years of research shows that early, total language immersion
8 education for English speakers increases academic proficiency in both English and the
9 immersion language, as well as in other academic subjects; and

10 **WHEREAS** indigenous peoples should be able to provide education in the peoples'
11 own languages in a manner that is appropriate to the peoples' cultural methods of teaching and
12 learning;

(Page 2 Line 7, House Concurrent Resolution No. 19)

It naturally follows from our understanding of the benefits of language immersion and the way literacy has been stripped from Alaskan students through the closure of bilingual schools that the solution to recovering Alaskan Native languages is to reinstate bilingual schooling in the State of Alaska.

If you would truly seek to prioritize the survival of Alaskan Native Languages as per the request of the Alaskan Native Language and Advisory Council then I request that you create a requirement or option to include bilingual and language immersive study of regionally specific Alaskan Native languages in all elementary, middle, and high schools in the state with direct emphasis on early childhood education.

What follows is a description of the result of English-only education in Alaska by an English teacher, and the effects of English-only education on students' literacy and mental health. The assumption that language immersion impairs literacy in English is wrong. It does not hold up to statistical study.

We have the ability to improve literacy in English by encouraging literacy in Alaskan Native Language.

The kind of pressure described above was put on all Alaska Native languages and peoples, with devastating results. The legacy has been one of linguistic insecurity. Generations of teachers have convinced parents that Native languages will result in stupidity and difficulty in learning English. Unfortunately, the battle still rages; we are fighting the same issues we fought 100 years ago. We have the results of English-only education in Alaska, and frankly I don't think the results are much to write home about. Irreparable damage has been done to the mental health of the Native community and individual. As a teacher, I have to deal with the impact of this every day, and it makes me angry.

(p.27, Dauenhauer 1980)

Not only do you have the opportunity to set right a historic injustice, but you have a duty to the educational integrity of all Alaskan children who are expected to compete internationally with people from foreign countries who absolutely benefit from years of multilingual education. We have a responsibility to train children in their own languages and to teach children to respect and appreciate the cultural significance of the languages of other cultures if we expect them to hold their own in an interdependent international society.

If we value any of the State's official languages, English or Alaskan Native, then we must not repeat the mistakes of our forebears.

operate in a very intricate language community. It is our responsibility to understand our own language and its interaction with other languages in the community. Unless we begin to do this, we will only recycle the frustrations of the last hundred years. Unless we really understand our language and how we use it in the cultural context, we will never really be teaching English--we will only be teaching a lot of prejudice about English, which is what I think we've been doing for a couple of hundred years.

(p.29, Dauenhauer 1980)

Governor Walker, you have the chance to set the tone for what education should be, and could be, to put your name down in history as a leader who worked to preserve justice and promote equality, and to protect the history of the State you govern.

I humbly urge you to declare a state of Linguistic emergency as outlined in House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 by Representatives Ortiz, Kreiss-Tomkins, Parish, Edgmon, Foster, Kopp, Lincoln, and Chenault. I further urge you to advocate to the best of your ability for language immersion in Alaska schools.

Sincerely, and urgently,

Kelsey "Etalia" Greenstreet
Student, University of Alaska Southeast
Minister & Organizer, Twisted Root ADF
(541) 510-2633

Cynthia "Sis" Bolivar M.S.
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
1407 W. 31st Ave, Suite 602, Anchorage, AK 99503
907-276-5944

To Our Honorable Legislators:

I strongly support House Concurrent Resolution 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an Administrative Order recognizing a **linguistic emergency in Alaska**. Alaska's Native languages are imperiled, as the last generations of fluent speakers are an aging population and younger generations face ever increasing assimilation pressures. UNESCO's Endangered Languages listings include Seward Peninsula Inupiaq (King Island, Diomede, and Norton Sound dialects) as *Critically Endangered*, Kotzebue and North Slope Inupiaq dialects are *Severely Endangered*; Siberian Yup'ik is listed as *Definitely Endangered*, and Central Yupik and Nunivak Island Yupik are listed as *Vulnerable*. The loss of Native languages reflects centuries of unjust policies and practices that resulted in innumerable social and health consequences for Alaska's first peoples. As a mental health professional, I have witnessed these consequences first hand. I also have experienced the resiliency and recovery that are hastened by access to ancestral lifeways, pride in one's indigenous identity, and sacred connections to the land, animals, family, society, and spirituality which are best conveyed and understood in one's own language. As a non-Native person, my own mental, physical, relational, and spiritual well-being have been improved enormously through contact with Alaska Native languages and lifeways. I know of many other non-Native persons who have received similar benefits.

I urge you to support Concurrent Resolution 19.

Thank you,
Cynthia Bolivar
Cynthia Bolivar

DOYON Foundation

615 Bidwell Avenue, Suite 101 | Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
907.459.2048 | 1.888.478.4755
foundation@doyon.com | www.doyonfoundation.com

March 6, 2018

Committee Chair
House Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: House Concurrent Resolution 19, urging Governor Bill Walker to issue an administrative order declaring a linguistic emergency for Alaska Native languages

Dear Chairman Parish and members of the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

Greetings. Doyon Foundation would like to lend our voice in support of House Concurrent Resolution No. 19. We concur with the sponsors of this resolution that an emergency situation exists for Alaska Native languages. There are ten languages in the Doyon region, half of all 20 Alaska Native languages in the state.

Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga (Lower Tanana)
Dihthaad Xt'een Iin Aandëeg' (Tanacross)
Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim)
Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in)
Deg Xinag
Denaakk'e (Koyukon)
Hän
Holikachuk
Inupiaq
Nee'aanëegn' (Upper Tanana)

Through the work of our language revitalization program, we see firsthand how each of these languages are greatly endangered. In the majority of these languages, one can identify each of the speakers by first name only. We see a great need for substantial changes in order to open the door for the survival of Alaska's precious first languages. Some of the supports that could make a crucial difference are funding for immersion schools & programs, the formation of an Alaska Native Language School Board, high school graduation standards that include basic proficiency, and statements of commitment such as HR19.

Na basee', Dogidinh, Basee', Tsen'anh, Hai', Mähsi' Xasagidaghisidhoot, Tsin'ee, Tsin'ee and Quyanaq for your commitment to Alaska Native languages.

Adak'ohtii, take care.



Doris Miller
Executive Director



Allan Hayton
Language Revitalization Program Director

From: Gavin Hudson
To: House Community and Regional Affairs
Subject: HCR 19 Testimony Thursday March 8, 2018, 8:00AM
Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018 8:52:17 AM

HCR 19 Testimony Thursday March 8, 2018, 8:00AM

To: House Community & Regional Affairs Committee
844-586-9085, House.Community.And.Regional.Affairs@akleg.gov

From: Gavin Hudson, Chairman of the Haayk Foundation, Metlakatla, Alaska

Honorable Members of the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee, and to all the members of the Alaskan Legislature, I am compelled to testify to you this morning because we need the elected leadership of Alaska to admit that we have A Linguistic Emergency on our hands. We are losing what might be the last generation of Tsimshian fluent speakers. Sm'algyax, the beautiful language of the Tsimshian people, is dying. In the entire world, there are less than 100 fluent speakers of our language. In Alaska, there are only six. Every living fluent speaker is over the age of 65, many in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. Many with poor health. I have heard that some Alaskan languages could be gone within 100 years. I am here to tell you, that our language, one of the official languages of the State of Alaska, could be gone in 20 years. That, ladies and gentlemen, is within my own lifetime, and within yours. We all could may very well be the witnesses of the death of our last fluent speaker. If and when that day comes, what will history say about you? Did you do everything you can do to stop it? Did you even admit there was a problem? Did you at least acknowledge the emergency? In our language, we have an ancient and positive expression, sa'aaml waan, it means make good what you do and make your name good. Our names, the quality of them, is determined by our actions. Did we behave with integrity and compassion? Did we answer the call to serve? Do we hold others up when they need our support?

No one can save a language on their own. But languages can be saved, if we do it together. Whether you are indigenous or not, we are all in the same canoe, and we have to pull together. We need you, all of you, to help us. I am asking for your support in the effort to save the Tsimshian language, I am asking you to vote yes in declaring a linguistic emergency. We have all sworn oaths to do what is best for our peoples. And I am telling you, having living and vibrant indigenous languages is what is best for our State. Learning our grandparents' language, and then passing it down to our grandchildren, is an act of overcoming colonialism and historical trauma. Bilingual children do better in math, science, reading, art and music. As Mr. Boxley and Dr. Alice Taff have both testified, when an indigenous language is healthy, rates of suicide and drug abuse drop significantly. So this is not just a matter of health, but literally of life and death. At a time of division and animosity, we can decide to move forward together toward the beautiful and noble goal of saving our mother tongues.

We Tsimshian have another ancient, positive expression, Wayi Wah! Wayi Wah means,
Let's go!

So I say to you today, Wayi Wah, because this is an emergency, and we have no time to
waste.

Thank you for your time.

Legislative Written Testimony to the House Community & Regional Affairs Committee
in support of House Concurrent Resolution 19 *Urging the Governor and Other State Agencies
to Work Actively with the Legislature and Alaska Native Organizations to Ensure the Survival and
Continued use of all 20 of the State's Alaska Native Languages* 03/08/18 by Gail Dabaluz

Good afternoon to the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee. I am pleased to submit my legislative written testimony to this body in support of House Concurrent Resolution 19.

My given name is S'eenakw' and English name is Gail Dabaluz. I am a tribally enrolled citizen with Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA). It is our sovereign governmental entity that administers the P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act, as amended contractual agreements on behalf of its 31,000 tribal citizens. I am a current doctoral student enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in the Indigenous Studies Ph. D program.

I am voicing my support of HCR 19 from a deeply personal level. My family and I relocated from Juneau, AK to Hilo, HI in 1994 to attend the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH), so our daughter Ke'ala could be enrolled in the Hawaiian Immersion schools. We left our jobs, house, boat and large network of family and friends to move to Hilo, to be a part of the Pūnana Leo 'O Hilo (language learning nest) Hawaiian Immersion Preschool and later, Keaukaha Hawaiian Immersion Elementary School. Our daughter was accepted into the program, after a year in Hawai'i. She is the only Alaska Native who has been admitted to the Pūnana Leo 'O Hilo and Keaukaha Hawaiian Immersion schools that I am aware of. The medium of instruction was 'olelo Hawai'i Wale No (Only Speak in Hawaiian) on all campuses and is pre-K up to the Ph. D level. Participating families had to commit to the Hawaiian epistemology, which is a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge, from a Hawaiian paradigm (worldview).

While an undergraduate at UHH, I worked with the founding members of the Pūnana Leo, including: Drs. William "Pila" Wilson, Kaunoe Kamanā, Larry Kimura, and Kalena Silva. They provided me the foundational knowledge to understand how to create an immersion language program, incorporating an Indigenous worldview, which exceeded western educational standards. This first-hand knowledge as a parent of a Hawaiian Immersion student is the only one in the entire state of Alaska and probably, throughout the United States.

I later broadened my understanding of immersion schools, through my travels to Aotearoa (New Zealand) to gain direct knowledge of Te Kōhanga Reo (language

learning nest) Māori immersion schools. The Indigenous language learning model was first launched by the Maori's in Aotearoa in 1981, and later, followed by the Hawaiians in 1982.

These personal experiences with language immersion programs were applied when I returned to Juneau to work for Sealaska Heritage Foundation (SHF) as their Language and Culture Specialist to develop the At Yatx'i Satu Kei Nas.ax (The Voices of our Children are Rising) Tlingit Immersion Preschool in 2000. The preschool was based upon the Head Start model and experienced challenges, since it was based upon an income criteria. Those lessons learned have led to various approaches to reversing language shift, in order to preserve our ancestral languages in a tangible way. The CCTHITA, Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, University of Alaska (UAS) and Juneau School District (JSD) has worked collaboratively to create Indigenous language opportunities in order to save them. We have few remaining fluent speakers in the southeast region, representing the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Nations.

The importance of learning one's ancestral languages is to understand the paradigms and deep philosophical connections to our homelands. These lessons are shared through an oral tradition of our Elders and transmitted, oftentimes, in secular ceremony. We understand the importance of looking at unique ways to share our languages and Ways of Being. Some of our tribal citizens have You Tube channels to teach the languages. Others use social media to foster comradery among geographically diverse and separate places to maintain our cultural identity through language.

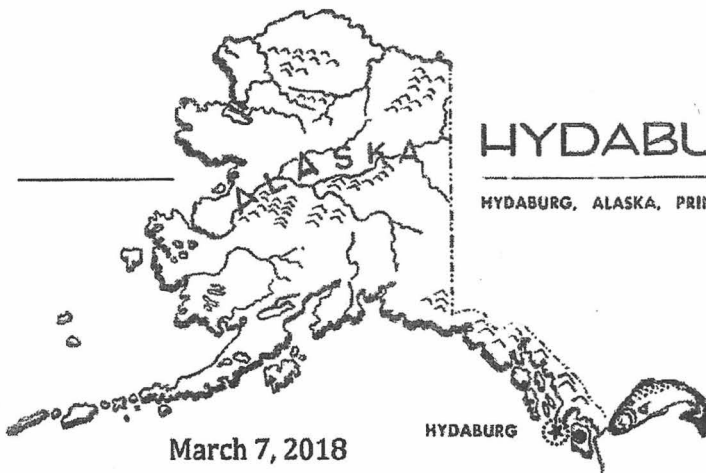
I can attest to the efficacy of total immersion and using as many approaches to achieve this goal. It is my family's experience that immersion is the way to instruct our People in order to regain our Indigenous languages, as they relate to our culture.

I urge each committee member to concur with the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council's recommendation to work with Governor Walker and state agencies to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency is occurring in the State of Alaska. All measures to reverse this are recommended. There is no threat to displace the English language through this measure; there is literally no escaping the English language in the state of Alaska.

Gunalchéesh,

S'eenaaku'

Gail Dabaluz



HYDABURG CITY SCHOOL

HYDABURG, ALASKA, PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND 99922

March 7, 2018

Justin Parish
Community and Regional Affairs
Juneau, Alaska 99801


Re: House Concurrent Resolution No. 19


Dear Mr. Parish:

The Hyدابург City School District would like to express its strong support for the Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A). We have embarked on a language preservation effort for about three (3) years now and our efforts, so far, have been pretty positive. We have seen increased interests and participation from young children to adults, in the Haida Language and Culture and need your support in the passage of the Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A). The passage of this resolution will greatly enhance the survival of indigenous languages as well as enriching the larger society by ensuring the perpetuation of cultural diversity within Alaska.

Hyدابург City School District has begun several programs that have been very successful: Haida Language, Haida Art, and Haida Canoe Building. Next year we hope to offer courses on Haida History, Haida Culture and Tribal Government. We believe that these programs will restore and reshape the social and emotional health of our students and the community as a whole.

It is vitally important for all Alaskans to keep our rich Native cultures, heritage, and languages alive. It is this diversity that makes Alaska unique and a very special place to live. We thank you in advance for a favorable response and urge you to support the House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19A).

Sincerely,

Bonnie Morris
Board President
Hyدابург City School District


Bart Mwarey
Superintendent/Principal
Hyدابург City School District

March 2, 2018

The Honorable Governor Bill Walker
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Governor Walker:

I am Karla Booth and I am a constituent of District 19. I am interested in bill HRC 19 Alaska Native Language Emergency because I am Tsimshian and my family comes from the community of Metlakatla, Alaska and no one in my family can fluently speak our indigenous language called Sm'algayax. In our community as a whole, only about five Elders can fluently speak our language and two adults are second language learners that are almost fluent speakers.

I am asking that you support efforts to place greater importance in the preservation and learning of Alaska Native languages. Alaska Native people cannot save our languages on our own. This needs and deserve the attention of the state of Alaska and all its citizens to take an active role in preserving these treasures that connect us to our ancestors and a people that truly exemplify the spirit of Alaska. By placing an emergency status on the preservation of our languages this could provide the motivation that is needed to enact supportive actions that will strengthen our dying languages. Those actions could include:

- Public recognition and use of indigenous place names
- Use of indigenous greetings and salutations
- Use of indigenous forms of giving thanks
- Indigenous language learning by all K-12 students
- Inclusion of indigenous introductions by all Alaska citizens

Nt'oyaxsn, thank you for your time, energy in serving Alaskans, and your support in preserving what makes Alaska so unique and important to the world. Our languages are a connection to the past that should not be allowed to break.

Sincerely,

Karla Booth
446 Bliss Street
Anchorage, AK 99508

From: Lacey Jade
To: House Community and Regional Affairs
Subject: Testimony for HCR19
Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018 8:58:07 AM

Good Morning to the members of the committee:

Today, I'd like to speak towards language-based marginalization taking place today and in the history of our people.

Language is our identity in that it impacts how we understand our relationship to the world, the structure of our society, and our ability to see the possibility of the future. Without our original, indigenous language, our people cannot relate themselves to the world and to our people in a healthy way. As in the case of nurturing children, and also in the case of nurturing ourselves, neglect is tantamount to murder by inaction.

The loss of our language is directly impacted by our people being marginalized by english speaking society and colonial law. We are marginalized in that in this society we are allotted limited resources to address our societal struggles, such as poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence. This has left little or no resources left for language revitalization. Having to put our language on the backburner for so long has resulted in it's waning status as an important component to our health as a people.

Our language is the the root of our identity. It is a part of the land where we grow. Losing it from this land, is like losing oxygen from our soil. It causes a structure of toxicity where nothing will grow. We cannot hope to grow and be a healthy people, if we lose our language.

Please vote today in recognizing the linguistic emergency in Alaska, so that we may hope to have the resources allocated to bring back the roots of our identity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Lacey Wilson, Program Director
Tourism Dept, Metlakatla Indian Comm.
Ph: 907.886.TOUR
Fax: 907.886.4436

The Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council's

2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature



State of Alaska
Division of Community and Regional Affairs
Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council

Appointed members:

Annette Evans Smith, Chair
X'unei Lance Twitchell, Vice-Chair
Walkie Charles, Ph.D.
April G.L. Counciller, Ph.D.
Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle

Legislative member:

Senator Donald Olson

LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL

January 1, 2018

Dear Governor Bill Walker, Alaskan State Legislators, and People of Alaska:

As members of the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC), we present our 2018 report to the Governor, the Alaska State Legislature, and the people of Alaska. The theme for this, our third report, is *self-determination* and focuses on the right of Indigenous peoples to shape the future survival of our languages.

The basic human rights and fundamental freedoms which these Indigenous populations are entitled to are enshrined within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. Those basic human rights, as stated in the UNDRIP, are:

- The right to unrestricted self-determination
- The unalienable right to the ownership, use and control of lands, territories, and other natural resources
- The rights to maintain and develop political, cultural, religious and educational institutions
- The requirement for prior and informed consultation, participation and consent in activities that impact Indigenous peoples
- The requirement for fair and adequate compensation for violations of the rights in the Declaration

While much attention has been paid to reaching political equity and social justice for Alaska Native peoples through acts of Congress and in the judicial system, we must now turn our attention toward achieving another type of equity and justice: *cultural justice*.

Aimed at protecting what we must remember in order to maintain our identity as Indigenous peoples, cultural justice is the reclamation of our traditional and cultural forms of practice. These are precious and renewable, but also fragile. We are at a critical tipping point and while Alaska Native peoples have fully realized the cumulative effect of policies that led to the banning of our languages and loss of identity, we know the power and resilience gained when we bring them back and we truly begin to heal.

Sincerely,

Annette Evans Smith,
Council Chair

April Counciller, Ph.D.,
Council Member

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle,
Council Member

X'unei Lance Twitchell,
Council Vice-Chair

Walkie Charles, Ph.D.,
Council Member

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Sally Swetzof challenged her students with flash cards during her Unangax, or Aleut, language class.

Front cover: Dancers from Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup’ik Immersion School perform on Saturday, April 1 at the 2017 Cama-i Dance Festival. Photo courtesy of KYUK

Back cover: Indigenous peoples and Languages of Alaska map. Alaska Native Language Center, 2011; Michael E. Krauss, Gary Holton, Jim Kerr, and Colin T. West. <http://www.uaf.edu/anla/collections/search/resultDetail.xml?id=G961K2010>

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNCIL

The Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC) was created by the State Legislature in 2012, finding that Alaska Native languages are critical, and the Council is charged with recommending programs which support the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. The voting members of the Council are language professionals who work with their Alaska Native languages to see that our languages continue and flourish as living languages.

Among other tasks, the Council must meet at least twice annually, and produce a biennial report by January 1st of each even-numbered year. This, *2018 Report*, is the third from the Council, following upon the 2014 and 2016 *Reports*. Photographs and short biographies of each Council member appear in Appendix A.

Note on Recommendations in This Report

When the Council has made formal recommendations to an intended audience; the following will be used or in combination:

- **Policy Making Recommendation:** Means they are directed at State of Alaska policy-makers.
- **State-wide Institution Recommendation:** Means they are directed at other statewide institutions.
- **Individuals and Communities Recommendation:** Means they are directed at individuals and communities.



David Boxley teaching Tsimshian Language, August 26, 2015

2. METHODOLOGY

The ANLPAC meets regularly via audioconference—typically once a month—in open, public meetings and invites participation and input from the public. The Council has worked since late 2012 to meet with Alaska Native language stakeholders and gather information critical for:

- Understanding which events have led us to the dire situation we are in now, with every Alaska Native language either vulnerable to becoming endangered;
- Discovering which Alaska Native language learning opportunities exist across the state; and
- Planning how to strengthen the status of Alaska Native languages as living, vibrant treasures used in everyday life.

Since our 2016 report, we have participated with the Alaska Native Studies Department of the University of Alaska Anchorage to hold a language conference in April, 2016 aptly named, "Breathing New Life Into Our Languages: *Promoting Wellness In Our Language Communities*." That same year we also participated in the *Elders and Youth Conference* of the First Alaskans Institute and presented information at the Alaska Federation of Natives in 2016 and 2017. At each of these events, a key component of the Council's work has been to invite the public to tell us their stories of what has happened with their languages.

Especially important in 2016 and 2017 has been the Council's work with the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska, operating under a memorandum of understanding, to combine and support each other's efforts to increase the vibrancy of languages and culture.

This work continues to be the basis for this 2018 report. Four methods were used to determine the findings and recommendations: 1) building partnerships, 2) hearing public testimony, 3) collecting data from across the state and from other Indigenous regions in other countries, 4) and strategic planning and work sessions.

The ANLPAC meets and consults with statewide Native organizations such as the First Alaskans Institute, Alaska Federation of Natives, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alaska Native Language Center, Alaska Native Language Archive and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference—Alaska. The Council and staff meet with representatives of many regional Native non-profit corporations, foundations, and institutes to discern the pressing needs that each region and organization has for the survival of Alaska Native languages.

3. INTRODUCTION TO ALASKA'S LANGUAGES

Alaska is home to twenty, officially-recognized Native languages, alongside English. The Official Languages Act, updated by our State Legislature in 2014, was the culmination of many hundreds of hours of effort by legislators and grass-roots efforts by Alaska Natives and others in Juneau. Alaska has now joined with the state of Hawaii in recognizing Indigenous languages as *official* languages within their own state. Alaska has formally recognized Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unangax, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Han, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian in Alaska. This public recognition is a

powerful symbol of the value that Alaska's Native languages have to all Alaskans at a time when every Alaska Native language is threatened or endangered.

Language endangerment is a serious problem in Alaska but is not unique to the Great Land. Across the globe—if current trends were to continue—at least 50% of the world's 7,000 languages are expected to die out and another 40% are threatened with loss before the year 2100. What does it mean when up to 90% of all living human languages may be lost during this century? What would it mean if 90% or more of Alaska Native languages were lost? Each human language is literally unique, providing its own view on the human world and the natural world. Grammatical features of different languages provide unique means of understanding the relationships between people, objects, and events—including things not noticed by other languages. Alaska's Native languages literally are a unique cultural and social treasure.

How does the transmission of languages from one generation to another get halted? Broadly speaking, wars, colonialism, and globalization have led a few languages to replace many others. In some cases, parents stop speaking their language to their own children because they fear for their children's safety. In other cases, young children stop speaking their parents' language due to peer pressure and broader societal pressures. Both have been—and some continue to be—factors that are leading to a reduction in the numbers of speakers of every Alaska Native language. As it stands, every one of Alaska's Native languages is currently threatened. According to the UNESCO Scale of Language Endangerment (*see* Appendix G in this Report), Central Yup'ik—as the healthiest Alaska Native languages—is at best considered as *vulnerable*, in perhaps five-to-eight villages and *definitely endangered* or *severely endangered*, in all other villages. St Lawrence Island Yupik is now *definitely endangered*. All other Alaska Native languages are generally *critically endangered*, with the youngest speakers being of the grandparental generation and older. Eyak and Tsetsa'ut—an Athabascan language once spoken in southernmost Southeast Alaska—are *extinct* (or dormant) with no fluent speakers at present.

Despite these declines in numbers, there are some very promising signs of language revitalization in Alaska Native language communities. The Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik immersion school in Bethel has produced approximately 300 new, fluent speakers of Yup'ik since it began in 1995. Some highly motivated individuals have learned their heritage languages to the point of fluency as young adults, through a combination of university courses and—especially—with very intensive one-on-one interaction with fluent elders, practicing speaking only in the language. These young adults are Tlingit, Gwich'in, and Alutiiq (*Sugt'stun*) speakers (though there may be others). These newly fluent, second language speakers are raising their own children with their heritage language in the home; this may be the beginnings of new generations of first-Native-language speaker again for the first time in twenty to sixty years!

Existing Community Programs

Formal programs of instruction in Alaska Native languages exist in many public schools and at many branches of the University of Alaska. Some Alaskan tribal and non-profit organizations have formal language instruction programs and there are informal language study groups in some communities. But there are still many—perhaps most—Alaska Native communities in which there are no programs at all for learning the local Alaska Native language. (*See* Appendix E for detailed breakdowns by language and by community).

Information Scarcity

Across Alaska, there generally are only rough approximations of the numbers of fluent speakers and their age ranges for each Alaska Native language. Likewise, there has not been any central listing of the many, organized opportunities to learn Alaska Native languages across the state. Yet, such basic language demographics are necessary if the people of Alaska are to make the best-informed decisions about the future of each Alaska Native language. The Alaska Native Language section at the Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) has begun working on a database that will allow people to search for Alaska Native language learning opportunities, searchable by name of language, village or region.

During 2013 and 2014, ANLPAC contacted school districts across Alaska regarding their Alaska Native language programs. It turns out that many districts are unclear on whether they have Native languages in their schools. In some cases, the district office does not know whether a class is to teach “language” or “culture” and, if it is a language class, whether the teacher speaks the language with the students or just talks about it in English. To know if there are potentially effective language programs in particular schools, such information needs to be gathered. Please look the sample Language Needs Assessment, Appendix F and consider using it in your community.

Information on the status of individual Alaska Native languages is a tool to help Alaska Native communities most effectively in developing their own language plans and setting language policies that will support the continued vitality or revitalization of their languages. Knowing how many fluent speakers there are, their age ranges, and which villages and towns they live in, is important in deciding which steps need to be taken to promote each language.

The ANLPAC staff has been meeting with other DCRA Research and Analysis staff and coordinating how ANLPAC may make use of DCRA’s *Community Online Database* to store information on the traditional language(s) of each Alaska Native community. Beginning in January 2018, the Council’s own research analyst will be providing data village-by-village for inclusion into the Community Online Database, indicating names of traditional languages, but also including (if known) the status of the language and which language-learning opportunities exist within the community.

As mentioned above, the Council has been collecting its own data, informally and with no special funding, by inviting members of the public to describe language programs they know of and post these on sticky notes onto a map, *Alaska Native Peoples and Languages* (see Appendix E). The Council calls on each individual Alaska Native community—each village, region, and language community—to assess the state of its language, to share this information with ANLPAC, and to begin using these data to form plans for the future of your language. Please share your findings with ANLPAC at anlpac@alaska.gov. The Council continues to collect such data and see that they are compiled into a user-friendly, publically available electronic database—the DCRA Community Database Online also referred to as the CDO.

Acts of the Alaska Legislature, and subsequent Alaska Statutes, affect policies regarding Alaska Native languages. Please see Appendix B for full texts of the following statutes:

- 1972, Establishment of the Alaska Native Language Center, AS 14.40.117
- 1995, Native Language Education, AS 14.30.420
- 2012, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, AS 44.33.520
- 2014, Official Languages Act (revising the 1998 English-only version), AS 44.12.310



Skil Jáadei Linda Schrack, Haida advanced learner and teacher

Linguistic Emergency

Finding: While programs exist at many levels, Alaska's languages are in crisis and most are predicted to become extinct (or dormant) before the end the 21st century (Krauss 1980; 1992) unless there are well-planned, well-implemented policy changes which support people learning and speaking Alaska Native language daily throughout Alaska. U.S. Federal and State of Alaska policies have played a large part in the decline of Alaska's language since the early 20th century.

Policy Making Recommendation: The Council strongly urges that the Governor issue an Administrative Order, recognizing the linguistic emergency that exists, and clearly stating that it is the policy of the State of Alaska actively to work to promote the survival and efflorescence of all of Alaska's 21 official languages. English language is surviving and expanding while each of the Alaska Native languages is in decline.

Key background factors of this linguistic emergency are:

- Twenty Alaska Native languages are recognized as official languages of the State of Alaska, along with English.
- Every one of Alaska's twenty Alaska Native languages has suffered an ongoing loss in the number of speakers over the past 40 years.
- One Alaska Native language, Tseta'ut, lost its last, fluent speaker in the early 1930s.
- One Alaska Native language, Eyak, lost its last, fluent speaker in 2008.
- If current rates of decline were to continue as they have been since the 1970s, all Alaska Native languages may lose their last fluent speakers by the end of the 21st century.
- Fifty years of educational research clearly shows the value of early, total language immersion education for English speakers in promoting increased academic proficiency in both English and the immersion language as well as increased academic proficiency in mathematics, science, and social studies.
- 2019 has been declared by the United Nations to be the Year of Indigenous Languages.

Specifics which we urge the Governor to include in his administrative order are to:

1. Clarify and strengthen the wording in AS 14.30.420 to 1) make it clear that the statute applies to *every school* which has a majority of students who are Alaska Natives and that 2) school districts *shall* offer instruction in the local Alaska Native language(s) if their local Native language curriculum advisory board directs them to.
2. Clearly indicate that it is the policy of the State of Alaska to promote the establishment and functioning of Alaska Native language immersion schools wherever possible.
3. Authorize the creation of an Alaska Native School Board that would represent and promote Alaska Native tribal and charter schools across Alaska.
4. Support the use of Alaska Native place names wherever and whenever possible in Alaska, including the recognition of traditional Alaska Native place names, and the use of such place names in State-supported projects and in public signage.
5. Apologize on behalf of the State of Alaska for the earlier role that Alaska had in suppressing and forbidding Alaska Native languages in village schools and in boarding schools across the state.
6. Direct all branches of the University of Alaska to provide high-quality instruction, leading to fluency, in the Alaska Native language(s) Indigenous to the region of each of its campuses, and to partner with other Alaskan organizations to underwrite tuition costs for all students for their Alaska Native language coursework.

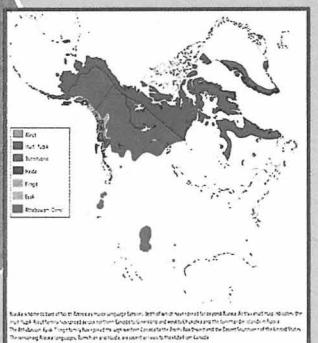
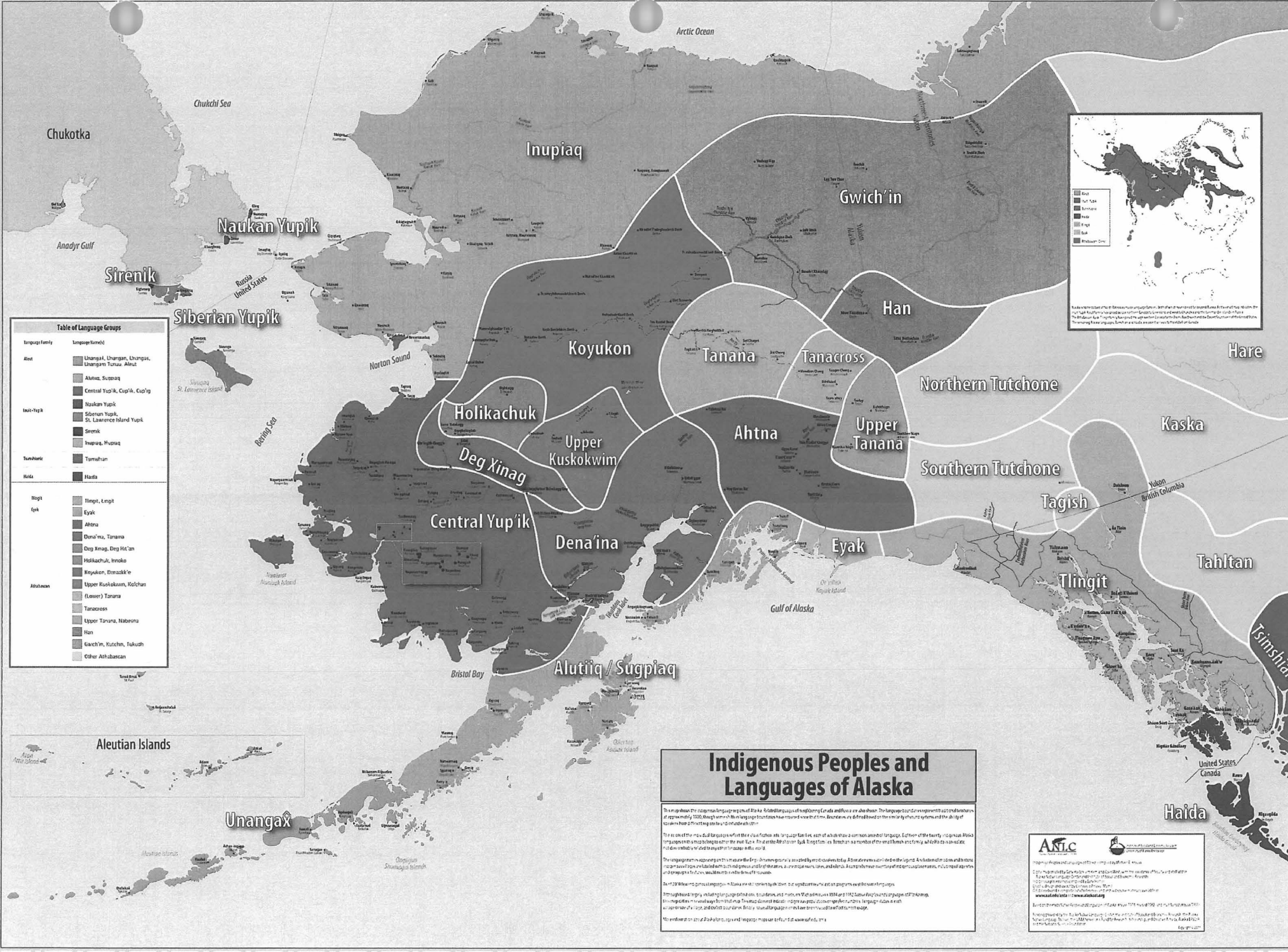


Table of Language Groups

Language Family	Language(s)
Aleut	Unangax, Ungaon, Ungaon, Ungaon Tunuu, Aleut
	Ahtna, Sugpiaq
	Central Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Cup'ig
Inuit-Yupik	Naukan Yupik
	Siberian Yupik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik
	Sirenik
	Inupiaq, Mupiq
Tahltan	Tahltan
Haida	Haida
Tlingit	Tlingit, Emgít
Eyak	Eyak
Ahtna	Ahtna
Dena'ina	Dena'ina, Tanana
Deg Xinag	Deg Xinag, Deg Hax'an
Holikachuk	Holikachuk, Imoko
Koyukon	Koyukon, Dena'ik'e
Upper Kuskokwim	Upper Kuskokwim, Kachem
Tanacross	(Lower) Tanana
Upper Tanana	Tanacross
Han	Upper Tanana, Nabesna
Gwich'in	Han
Other Athabaskan	Gwich'in, Kutchin, Tokud

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska

This map shows the indigenous language groups of Alaska. It is based on the work of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The map is based on the work of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The map is based on the work of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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ANLC
Alaska Native Language Center
University of Alaska Fairbanks

ANLC is a non-profit organization that provides language revitalization services to Alaska Native communities. ANLC is a non-profit organization that provides language revitalization services to Alaska Native communities.

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