



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Edward K. Thomas Building
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CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TLINGIT & HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES OF ALASKA
Eighty-Sixth Annual Tribal Assembly
October 1, 2021
Juneau, Alaska

Resolution TA 21-03

Title: Making Alaska Native Language Classes Mandatory for K-12 State of Alaska
Public Schools

By: Ralph Wolfe, Yakutat Delegate

WHEREAS, the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) is a federally recognized tribe with more than 32,000 citizens; and

WHEREAS, culture and language are foundational aspects of one's identity, and are critically important to the perpetuation of Alaska Native language and culture and pedagogies must reflect Indigenous values, cultures and languages for the Indigenous children of Alaska to have a positive self-concept, strong cultural identity, and to thrive; and

WHEREAS, historically, all of Native America's languages were disallowed in schools, and loss of language and culture was a direct consequence of government and school policies promoting assimilation; and

WHEREAS, over the course of the last 30 years, research has shown that community protective factors based on cultural continuity help to protect Indigenous youth against suicide and high-risk behaviors, and of these protective factors, the inclusion of local culture and language in schools to strengthen cultural identity is the leading protective factor for Indigenous youth; and

WHEREAS, while most school curricula are professionally developed, printed and bound, cultural and bilingual education classes are often treated as extracurricular, relying on materials developed by individual teachers and printed in schools, and this disparity in materials translates to Alaska Native children as inferiority of one's cultural identity; and

WHEREAS, increased full time positions in Alaska Native language teaching are needed across Alaska public schools because it provides accessibility to entire student bodies; and

WHEREAS, the 1990 U.S. Congressional Native American Languages Act Section 2903 declares: It is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Alaska Native Educators, in partnership with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, the National Science Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, Alaska Federation of Natives and the University of Alaska, developed a set of standards for education, entitled Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, and within these guidelines, there are standards for the students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 14.1 states: Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Alaska State Legislature passed Senate Bill 130 into law and the bill established the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to assess the state of Alaska Native languages, reevaluate the programs within Alaska, and make recommendations to the state Governor and state Legislature to establish new programs or reorganize the current programs; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the Alaska State Legislature passed House Bill 216, which officially recognizes 20 Alaska Native Languages as official languages of the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, shares as of 2018, that all 20 Alaska Native languages are currently considered threatened by extinction; and

WHEREAS, in September 2018, the Governor of the State of Alaska signed Administrative Order 300, declaring a state of linguistic emergency for Alaska's indigenous languages; and

WHEREAS, Alaska Native ways of knowing and learning, ways of being and value systems, are parallel and equal to any other, and should be respected and supported And Alaska Native ways, knowledges and understandings add to the incredible diversity and contribute to the richness of our great state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Alaska Native communities need support for local initiatives to restore and enhance cultural and language programs in all schools, as fully equal, fully supported aspects of our school systems;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eighty-Sixth Tribal Assembly of Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska delegation convened October 1, 2021, honoring the work of the Tlingit & Haida Youth Commission – a working body for Tlingit & Haida, allowing representatives from all 21 Tlingit & Haida communities, with the intent of serving as a resource and collective youth voice to tribal leaders, the Tribal Assembly, Executive Council, and other stakeholders when engaging with Tlingit & Haida Youth – on this issue, hereby urges the Association of Alaska School Boards and Alaska State Department of Education and Early Development to make mandatory two years of study in an Alaska Native Language in order to graduate high school; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that curriculum based off of Alaska Native cultures is created and implemented through all grade levels by reaching out to cultural bearers and leaders in each community and then creating a curriculum based on their suggestions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Tlingit & Haida calls upon Sealaska Heritage Institute, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and Alaska Tribal Unity to consider and approve this resolution, as well as the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Alaska Legislature and Alaska Senate President.

ADOPTED this 1st day of October 2021, by the Eighty-Sixth Tribal Assembly of Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

CERTIFY



President Richard J. Peterson

ATTEST



Tribal Secretary Ralph Wolfe