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Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tlingit & Haida Issues Support for Censuring Representative David Eastman



Juneau, AK (May 9, 2017) – Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska’s (Tlingit & Haida) Executive Council has issued a call to action to support the censuring of Representative David Eastman for his racially-charged and misogynistic comments that suggest women from rural Alaska "try to get pregnant so they can have an abortion, because there’s a free trip to Anchorage involved." Despite a demand for an apology made by lawmakers, Representative Eastman has refused to express regret for the remarks he made after proposing to amend a

resolution to proclaim next April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

President Richard Peterson and two vice presidents on the Executive Council issued the following statements on behalf of Tlingit & Haida:

“Facts matter. As a lawmaker and a public servant, it is inexcusable for Representative Eastman to have made these comments,” said President Richard Peterson. “Alaska Native women account for less than 20 percent of the State’s population, but make up nearly half its reported rape victims. Rape in Alaska is also two and a half times higher than any other state. When you understand that Alaska Native women already experience a disproportionately higher rate of domestic violence and sexual assault than any other group in the nation, I consider these comments by Representative Eastman to be a direct insult to Alaska Native women...period.”

“Our families, our men, our women and children already suffer from historical traumas of forced acculturation and assimilation,” said First Vice President Rob Sanderson Jr. “After all these years we continue to be assailed and by a lawmaker no less. He does not represent our people and we must call out these venomous comments that undermine the dignity of our people.”

“As Tlingit and Haida people, we are born into our identity through a matrilineal clan system,” said Third Vice President Ralph Wolfe. “Women are the foundation of our cultures and should always be held in high regard. Eastman’s comments attempt to devalue Alaska Native women, unfairly characterize them and serve to diminish the emotional and physical trauma women experience after an already difficult decision.”

"A woman's reproductive health decision is none of my business and it certainly isn't any of yours," President Peterson said in closing. "Health decisions – yours, mine, hers or his – are an issue between a patient and doctor...end of story. Prying and demonizing are indefensible and completely out of bounds."

The House majority has requested attorneys to research the censuring process and Tlingit & Haida is encouraging all regional and village tribes, corporations and non-profit organizations to voice their support for censuring Representative Eastman and stand up for not just Alaska Native women, but all women in Alaska.

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