

ALASKA TRIBAL UNITY

122 1ST AVE SUITE 600 · FAIRBANKS, AK 99701

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CONTACT: President Peterson, 888-335-8981, rpeterson@ccthita-nsn.gov

On ANILCA's 40th Anniversary, Alaska Native Leaders Recognize Act's Failure to Protect Traditional Ways of Life

ANILCA was passed 40 years ago today, when elders woke up and their traditional territories were deemed federal conservation units and many of their traditional practices criminalized. On the 40th anniversary, Alaska Native Peoples are standing together to recognize the failure of the Act to provide for Alaska Native ways of life, and the inherent systemic racism and indigenous erasure of the act as traditional territories were claimed as federal conservation units. Alaska Native leaders call for an overhaul and replacement of ANILCA, access to our traditional lands and waters, and for self-governance of subsistence management in Alaska.

"Looking back at ANILCA on its 40th anniversary, we see a compromise imposed on Alaska Native people that doesn't meet Congress's intent of fully protecting Alaska Natives' right to continue their traditional way of life," said Alaska Federation of Natives President Julie Kitka. "ANILCA is burdened with many-layered rules and regulations that need to be swept away. The fundamental human right for Alaska Native people to subsist and maintain their cultures must be strengthened by federal law."

"We hold over ten thousand years of experience and knowledge living in our traditional territories," said President Peterson of Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. "Yet we are criminalized when we practice our traditional ways of life, we are harassed and fined. Our communities rely on the wild foods for our health and wellbeing. Denying us our traditional way of life is killing our peoples. It's as simple as that."

"ANILCA is failing Native peoples. While some hail it as cutting edge legislation, Native peoples have borne the brunt of its oppressive and assimilationist impact," said President Liz La quen náay Medicine Crow of First Alaskans Institute. "We cannot be separated from who we are as Native peoples, our ways of life are tied to the land so intricately that separation means death. That is the result of the current system. It's time for this to be addressed and ANILCA to be centered on Native management and stewardship."

Chief PJ Simon of Tanana Chiefs Conference stated, "Today, we remind Congress and the State of Alaska of the promise made in the passage of ANCSA, to take any action necessary to protect the hunting and fishing needs of Native people, and we stand together, 40 years after the passage to proclaim for the record, Title VIII of ANILCA must be replaced by language to protect Alaska Native hunting and fishing rights and further Alaska Native self-governance in the management of Alaska's resources."

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