

# First Alaskans Institute

FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE  
2021 ANNUAL ELDERS AND YOUTH  
RESOLUTION 21-02

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

**WHEREAS:** The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

**WHEREAS:** The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

**WHEREAS:** While most school curricula are professionally developed, printed, and bound, cultural and bi-lingual education classes are often treated as extracurricular, relying on materials developed by individual teachers and printed in schools. This disparity in materials translates to Alaska Native children as inferiority of one's cultural identity; 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:** In 2012, the Alaska State Legislature passed Senate Bill 130 into law. The bill established the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council to assess the state of Alaska Native Languages, reevaluate the programs within the state, and make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to establish new programs or reorganize the current programs. 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. 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

**WHEREAS:** Alaska Native Ways, Knowledges and Understandings add to the incredible diversity and richness of our great state and nation. 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 as COVID-19 has further endangered our languages and cultural retention; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the participants of the 2021 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference urging 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; Local school boards and Alaska State Department of Education and Early Development utilize COVID-19 Relief Funding to pay for development of curriculum; new K-12 curriculum focused on Alaska Native cultures and history be created and implemented through all grade levels by reaching out to cultural bearers and Native leaders in each community, and upon receiving final approval from Tribal leaders; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2021 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference calls upon our Tribes, regional non-profits and for-profits, Alaska Federation of Natives, Association of Alaska School Boards and Alaska State Department of Education and Early Development, Alaska Tribal Unity, Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council to consider and approve this resolution, as well as the Speaker of the House, the House of Representatives of the Alaska Legislature, Alaska State Senate and Alaska Senate President.

Submitted by: The Tlingit & Haida Youth Commission (Joseph Hilaire Jr, Tiadola Silva, Drew Jackson, Patrice DeAsis, Christianna Edwards, Sabena Allen, Alayna Duncan, Elizah Dominy, Marlis Boord, Sienna Reid, Sydney Guthrie)

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 20, 2021