

# The Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council's

## 2016 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

Delores Churchill

Walkie Charles, Ph.D (2012-2013 Chair)

April G.L. Counciller, Ph.D., Vice-Chair

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle

*Legislative members:*

Senator Donald Olson

Representative Benjamin Nageak

# 1. Letter from the Council

January 1, 2016

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

As members of the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC), we are pleased to present our 2016 report to the Governor, the Alaska State Legislature, and the people of Alaska. This is our second report and builds upon the findings and recommendations of our 2014 report.

Alaska Native language preservation and revitalization issues of particular interest to the Council include:

1. Advocating for the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages through collaboration and sharing for all.
2. Developing adequate methods to encourage language revitalization and restoration.
3. Informing the Governor, the Legislature, and Alaskan citizens about the commission's role and duties.

The ANLPAC is honored to work collaboratively with the Governor, Alaska State Legislature and all Alaskans to address Alaska Native language issues and to help shape our state's future preservation and revitalization efforts for Alaska Native languages.

Sincerely,

## ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL



Annette Evans Smith,  
*Council Chair*



Delores Churchill,  
*Council member*



April Counciller, Ph.D.,  
*Council Vice Chair*



Walkie Charles, Ph.D.,  
*Council member*



Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle,  
*Council member*

# Table of Contents

1. Letter from the Council .....	i
2. Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations .....	1
3. Introduction.....	3
4. Methodology.....	4
5. Information Scarcity.....	5
6. Regional Disparities.....	6
7. Education .....	8
8. Reconciliation.....	15
9. Technology .....	18
10. Funding.....	19
11. CONCLUSION .....	20
Appendices.....	22



*Ahtna Language enthusiasts, (L-R) Jeanie Maxim, Elsie Nicklie and Kevin Gene; First Alaskans Institute, Elders & Youth Summit. Anchorage, October 12, 2015. Photo by Grant Rebne*

*On cover: Boy and elder, photo courtesy Sealaska*

## 2. Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

### Information Scarcity

**Finding:** There is a lack of accurate research data on 1) the status of Alaska Native languages, 2) the availability of programs to learn Alaska Native languages, and 3) the effectiveness of such programs to teach Alaska Native languages. This knowledge gap exists for individuals, families, and language communities: an effort is needed to consolidate information on language-learning opportunities and to make this information widely available to all Alaska Natives.

**Recommendation:** Alaska Native communities—villages, regions, language communities—are urged to assess your own community’s 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.

### Regional Disparities

**Finding:** There are huge differences among regions and among Alaska Native language communities in terms of language learning opportunities and efforts at language policy and planning for Alaska Native language survival. Communities and organizations within regions, and activities among regions and language communities, need to be coordinated.

**Recommendation:** Alaska Native communities—villages, regions, language communities—are urged to assess which language-learning opportunities exist locally, to coordinate with other villages and regions who share your language, to share this information with ANLPAC, and to consider language policy and planning steps to increase the opportunities for everyone to learn to speak Alaska Native languages.

### Education

**Finding:** Schools have historically played a major role in undermining and threatening the survival of Alaska Native languages. Even though school-based programs alone cannot reverse the decline in Alaska Native languages, highly effective programs in schools can increase the number of fluent language speakers. Sadly, most Alaskan schools and school districts do very little or nothing to support Alaska Native languages. Alaska Native language programs in schools often rely on fluent (or less-than-fluent) speakers who have received very little training in effecting methods of teaching second language.

**Recommendation:** The ANLPAC strongly urges the Legislature to adopt HB 157 in support of language immersion schools and for training for Alaska Native language teachers in a framework that leads to teacher certification.

**Recommendation:** The Legislature should amend AS 14.30.420 to clearly apply to *all schools* in which a majority of students are Alaska Natives—calling for a Native language curriculum advisory board to be established and, furthermore, directing that school districts *shall* create Native language programs if so directed by their Native language curriculum advisory boards.

**Recommendation:** Offering accessible Alaska Native language instruction through the University of Alaska - including the traditional language of each campus - in programs designed to lead to conversational fluency. To support student access, UA and the State of Alaska should work together to broaden a scholarship program such as the UA Scholars Award, or the Alaska Performance Scholarship to apply to students’ AK Native language study. Additional options include non-credit continuing education courses for those seeking traditional language education, and partnering with tribal organizations for community-based brokered/sponsored courses. Furthermore, the University should insure that “best practice” teaching methods and curriculum design are utilized system-wide for Alaska Native language instruction.

**Recommendation:** The Council urges Alaskans avail themselves of new amendments to Sec. 6004, Alaska Native Educational Equity Program (ANEP) and the Sec. 6133, Native American and Alaska Native Language Immersion Schools and Programs in the recently signed-into-law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to provide funding for Alaska Native language immersion programs.

**Recommendation:** The ANLPAC urges schools, public offices, businesses, Native corporations, and local leaders to make use of Alaska Native languages in their daily operations.

### Reconciliation

**Finding:** The continued effects of forced language-loss in previous generations are still being felt by 21st century Alaska Natives and end up providing great discouragement to language learners nowadays. Efforts to heal and transcend these previous wrongs are a fundamental part of any successful program to revitalize Alaska Native languages. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Congress, have formally apologized for these destructive U.S. policies.

**Recommendation:** In order to localize this apology, Alaskan lawmakers are encouraged to declare an official apology, 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.

**Recommendation:** The Legislature should declare April 21<sup>st</sup> of each year as Alaska Native Languages Day, to celebrate and recognize Alaska Native languages.

**Recommendation:** The Legislature should declare that the second Monday of every October annually be *Indigenous Peoples' Day* in Alaska.

**Recommendation:** The Council calls on all state, borough, city, and other regional groups to consider using traditional, Alaska Native place names when the local community desires and, to the degree possible, to recognize these names formally with the state and federal governments and to use these names in maps, signage, publications, and school curricula.

**Recommendation:** The Council urges the artist community to express Alaska Native Languages as both critical to our daily lives and to use artistic expression to create healing moments that promote our languages and cultures.

### Technology

**Finding:** Electronic technology and internet communication have created new opportunities and new methods for individuals to learn Alaska Native languages and to use them to communicate with others over long distances. These efforts need to be supported and expanded.

**Recommendation:** The Council encourages the creation of electronic means to promote the learning and the everyday use of Alaska Native languages and supports human teaching, rather than learning from tech alone.

### Native Language Council Funding

**Finding:** In order to achieve its legislatively-mandated goals, the Alaska Native Language section within DCRA should have its budget increased.

**Recommendation:** ANLPAC urges the Legislature to restore the PCN and the budget to support the return of the 2012-2015 position of Administrative Assistant to the ANLPAC section within the Division of Community and Regional Affairs.

*“Qaġnutinatut magua nutaat tuiġat Inupiaaraqsuituat pizanjilagut nalutiblugit Inupiaqtun qaniġnamik, uaptiktun ilisimatitaagatigut anayugaaptalu, aanagutlu. Naguuġasualuta ‘aa nunuġuta Inupiaqtun qaniġnamik.” {We need to apologize to our young people and children that we didn’t speak to them like our grandparents and parents did for us. We need to reconcile our intergenerational grief of losing our language} - Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, ANLPAC member, May 6, 2014*

### 3. Introduction

#### What would it mean if 90% or more of Alaska Native languages were lost?

Alaska is home to twenty, officially-recognized Native languages. Signed into law in 2014, the Official Languages Act by our State Legislature 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, Hän, 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. 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 of these 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 Expanded version (Lewis and Simons 2010) of Joshua Fishman’s (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (*page 36*), Central Yup’ik—as the healthiest Alaska Native languages—is at best considered at 6b, *threatened*, in perhaps eight villages and is 7 or 8a, *shifting* or *moribund*, in all other villages. St Lawrence Island Yupik is now 7, *shifting*. All other Alaska Native languages are generally 8a or 8b, *moribund* or *nearly extinct*. Eyak is 9, *dormant*, and Tsetsaut—an Athabascan language once spoken in southernmost Southeast Alaska—has been *extinct* since approximately 1930.

Despite these declines in numbers, there are some *very* promising signs of *language revitalization* in Alaska Native language communities! The highly successful Ayaprun 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 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!

## 4. Methodology

Since its inception late in 2012, the Council has pursued a vigorous agenda of meetings to establish the foundation for future efforts, holding strategic planning and work sessions, and developing the biennial reports to the Governor and Legislature. The Council began the process of gathering critically important public testimony and researched how others have met the challenge to preserve, restore and revitalize Alaska Native languages.

This work continues to be the basis for this 2016 report. Four methods were used to determine the findings and recommendations. These methods include: building partnerships, hearing public testimony, collecting data from across the state, and strategic planning and work sessions.

The ANLPAC has met with 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.

Since 2013, the Council has been collecting public testimony from statewide events such as the First Alaskans Institute (FAI) Elder and Youth Conference, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the Rural Providers' Conference. Additionally, the Council in 2013 and 2014 conducted a survey via postcards, distributed to Alaska Natives at several state-wide events, to solicit input on which areas were of greatest concern. The Council takes it as imperative to share the voices of Alaska Native peoples, their experiences, and their goals for the survival of our languages. And it is the voices of our people that shape our findings and recommendations throughout this report.

At its meetings to collect public testimony, the Council also invites participants to identify specific Native language programs they know of in their regions, marking these on sticky notes and placing them on a large map of the *Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska*. Results from this are included here in Appendix E.

The ANLPAC meets regularly via audioconference—typically once a month—in open, public meetings and invites participation and input from the public.

*"It's heart wrenching [the loss of our Native languages]. It's an emergency, and we're scrambling to record as much as we can ... there's only six fluent speakers left in Metlakatla.... And they're all senior citizens. So if we don't do something now, if we don't save our language right now, the Tsimshian language is going to die, or go to sleep. And I don't know if we'll be able to revive it again."* - Gavin Hudson, Tsimshian



*"What I hope to see for the Haida language is to see our young children speaking the language. And when our young children start speaking the language then we know it's going to survive".*

- Skil Jáadei Linda Schrack, Haida advanced learner and teacher, October 12, 2015

## 5. 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 is no central listing of the many, organized opportunities to learn Alaska Native languages across the state. And 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.

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 or not they have Native languages in their schools. In some cases, the district office does not know whether a particular 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. In order to know if there are potentially effective language programs in particular schools, such information needs to be gathered.

But information on the status of individual Alaska Native languages is not the goal of the Council. Rather, it 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 Division of Community and Regional Affairs (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 2016, 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 of Alaska Native Peoples and Languages (see Appendix E). The Council calls on each individual Alaska Native community—each villages, region, and language community—to assess your own community’s 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](mailto:anlpac@alaska.gov). The Council aims to continue to collect such data and see that they are compiled into a user-friendly, publically-available electronic data base: the DCRA Community Database Online.

**Finding:** There is a lack of accurate research data on 1) the status of Alaska Native languages, 2) the availability of programs to learn Alaska Native languages, and 3) the effectiveness of such programs to teach Alaska Native languages. This knowledge gap exists for individuals, families, and language communities; an effort is needed to consolidate information on language-learning opportunities and to make this information widely available to all Alaska Natives.

**Recommendation:** Alaska Native communities—villages, regions, language communities—are urged to assess your own community’s 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.

## 6. Regional Disparities

All of Alaska’s Native languages have undergone losses and deserve to be put back on their proper footing as authentic ways to express being a modern Alaskan once again. Yet many languages, in many regions of our great state, have very few or no opportunities available for language learners.

**Finding:** There are huge differences among regions and among Alaska Native language communities in terms of language-learning opportunities and efforts at language policy and planning for Alaska Native language

survival. Communities and organizations within regions, and activities among regions and language communities, need to be coordinated.

**Recommendation:** Alaska Native communities—villages, regions, language communities—are urged to assess which language-learning opportunities exist locally, to coordinate with other villages and regions who share your language, to share this information with ANLPAC, and to consider language policy and planning steps to increase the opportunities for everyone to learn to speak Alaska Native languages.

*“One of the things that we found when we traveled across the state and listened and heard people speak was that, from one region to the next, you might have a load of language programs in one region and then you go to the next and they have next to nothing. And unfortunately those regional disparities exist across our state. And we need to start to even the playing field. We need to begin connecting regions that are building new language programs to those regions that have well-established, long-running programs that have integrated early Head Start, elementary school, and even in secondary.” - Annette Evans Smith*

*“We need to quit talking about our languages as if they were dying or dead. We need to start talking about the language making a recovery. As long as we speak about it as dying or dead, then we’re losing.” - Delores Churchill, Haida elder and weaver*

## 7. Education

### Journal of Loss

I.

It's her first day of school.

She says to the teacher,

*Tlél ax daa yaa kushusgé, Tlél ax daa yaa  
kushusgé*

I do not understand, I do not understand  
and she keeps repeating the Lingít words  
until they slap her hand with a ruler.

She looks down at the sting,  
repeats in her language, *I do not understand*,  
and she's led away to the closet,  
already prepared with a little bed  
and thin blanket.

She's shut in tight, door locked;  
in the dark she thinks about  
darkness,

wonders what bad thing  
they thought she had spoken.

Sixty years later, she says

*I thought the world had come to an end.*

It did,

I think to myself,

It did.

Vivian Faith Prescott, *Hide of My Tongue*,  
2012, p. 17

### Historical Background

Alaska Native peoples have always had their own systems of education within the residential family, the extended family, and the community. For untold thousands of years, structured play, observation, careful apprenticeships with family members, and careful stories of instruction have educated each generation in what they needed to know in order to survive and thrive.

Schools, by way of contrast, were something different: organized structures in which students are to be educated by strangers. The Russians created some schools in the early 1800s, for children of Alaska Native mothers and Russian fathers. In these schools, children were taught to read and write in Russian as well as in their own, Native languages; the Russians, working with Alaska Natives, developed alphabets for five languages: Unangam Tunuu (Unangan Aleut), Sugt'stun, Central Yup'ik, Dena'ina, and Tlingit (Krauss 1980).

Almost two decades after Russia's sale of their Alaskan claim to the United States, the U.S. federal government became involved in public schooling

in the Territory of Alaska. In this, Sheldon Jackson (below) instituted a formal program aimed to eliminate all Alaska Native languages. Forceful and violent oppression of children speaking their home languages—both in village schools and in boarding schools—took its toll in obvious and subtle ways. Many who experienced this first-hand made the conscious decision to save their own children from such hateful treatment and, therefore, did not pass their own language on. For other parents, it was not so much a conscious decision but the subconscious result of the “brainwashing” provided by non-Native schools that led them to speak only English to their own children. Both of these often had the same result: for many parts of Native Alaska, the violent English-only policies of the schools led to a disconnect between the generations, halting the transmittal of language and depriving further generations of their traditional language.

Official U.S. policies since the 1880s actively worked to destroy Alaska Native languages, along with all other important aspects of Alaska Native life. The missionary, Sheldon Jackson, was appointed federal minister for education in Alaska in 1885 and immediately forbade the use of Alaska Native languages in all schools. Teachers were instructed to punish students for speaking their own languages in schools and teachers were forbidden to learn their students' languages; additionally, teachers were supposed to convince parents not to speak their own language to their own children! (Krauss 1980).



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

*U.S. Government School, Cape Prince of Wales, 1902-1906. Alaska Digital Archives*  
[vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/cdmg11/id/1158/rec/2](http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/cdmg11/id/1158/rec/2)

Additional forces of assimilation were the largely involuntary boarding school programs which removed young Native American children from their homes for months or years at a time. There, not only were their home languages forbidden, but they were largely boarded with students of other Native languages, leaving English as the one, common language. As part of the “kill the Indian, save the man” point of view, English-only schools promoted the concept that “civilized” Natives were those who no longer spoke their own languages, ate their own foods, wore their own clothes, or lived lifestyles of their own choosing (see Hirshberg and Sharp 2005).

Small changes in this English-only policy in Alaskan schools began with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Lower Kuskokwim region in 1969 when they designed an experimental program of “Yup’ik First Education” for students who spoke only Yup’ik. In the fall of 1970, one kindergarten in Bethel and one each in four Yup’ik villages piloted a program of teaching Yup’ik speaking children in their own language. The results were so profoundly superior to the previous English-only schooling that the BIA quickly expanded it to several other Lower Kuskokwim schools. Also during the early 1970s—partially in response to the 1968 federal Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (which authorized bilingual education in the United States) some public schools in Alaska Native villages began to offer small amounts of instruction in local Native languages. Not all Alaska Native communities have had Native language programs in their local schools and—sadly—almost all such school programs provide only very short amounts of time for instruction in the local language.

Schools in Alaska have historically played a major role in undermining and threatening the survival of Alaska Native languages. Even though school-based programs alone cannot reverse the decline in Alaska Native languages, highly effective programs in schools can increase the number of fluent language speakers. Sadly, most Alaskan schools and school districts do very little or nothing to support Alaska Native languages and several school districts are not in compliance with AS 14.30.420 (see Appendix B).

Indeed, it is unfortunately the case that the number of speakers of Alaska Native languages has continued to decline even *after* the languages were no longer officially forbidden. Part of this is due to continued prejudice against Alaska Native languages in the schools—and generally in public places—in Alaska.

*“The kids started telling me, gee we’re not doing a lot of those, we miss Yupik, I wish you were still here. Ever since the school started to become standard [because of education reforms] ... the hours are getting limited, limited, limited. And last time I went, one kid said now when we say things in our language, we get punished, we’re on the gym list. The principal is telling us don’t use your language when I’m hearing you.”*

**- Elaine Kingeeguk, Savoonga, Alaska Native Language Summit, April 26, 2013**

## Best Practices for Language Revitalization

Around the world—in other parts of Indigenous North America and the Pacific and beyond—there are success stories of indigenous communities which have stabilized or revitalized their languages. The most powerful successes in creating new speakers are coming from language nests and language immersion schools, from master-apprentice teams, and from fluent speakers who make concerted efforts to speak only their own language to their children, creating a new generation of first-language speakers.



*X'unei, Kaalkéis', and Shaawatk'é: fluent second-language speaker of Tlingit raising his daughters as first-language Tlingit speakers.*

Critical to recommending best practices for language revitalization is addressing the linguistic demographic status of each language. That is to say, best practices for a language still spoken by almost every one of all ages, or by everyone age 20 and upwards, will be different from best practices for a language that now is spoken only by elders.

*“[T]he only solution it seems to me is to generate, to cultivate, a new crop of young, fluent speakers of Sm’algyax, the Tsimshian language. And that’s incredibly difficult to do given our circumstances. They’re all senior citizens.” - Gavin Hudson, Tsimshian*

## Master-Apprentice Language Teams

Developed by indigenous language workers in California, this approach matches a highly-motivated language learner with a highly-fluent speaker who then spend 10-20 hours per week speaking only their heritage language with each other on a variety of topics. Currently, Sealaska Heritage Institute has a Mentor-Apprentice program going with Tlingit in Yakutat, Juneau, and Sitka, and Chugachmiut has a Master-Apprentice program with Sugt’stun in Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Nanwalek, and Port Graham.



Master speaker Paul Marks (right) with apprentices Joshua Jackson (seated) and Ishmael Hope

*“They’re trying to hold our language, but it’s very, very weak in our schools. We used to have a multi-cultural room; now it’s a[n English] classroom. My wife taught in there for years. We need a linguist in Yupigestun, in our language, and spend, like a teacher, three to four hours a day teaching our language, that would improve, for sure. That way our kids would learn, as soon as they go to school, they will learn our language and they will like it. That’s what we need: a linguistic teacher in our language.” - Nataay Jerome Apatiki, St. Lawrence Island elder, Gambell*

**Finding:** The importance of Alaska Native languages is inadequately recognized, as is the fact that they are threatened or endangered. Many people do not know of the opportunities that already exist to learn Alaska Native languages, nor do they know how to get new and improved Alaska Native language teaching/learning/speaking opportunities started in their local communities and via the internet.

**Recommendation:** The ANLPAC urges schools, public offices, businesses, Native corporations, and local leaders to make use of Alaska Native languages in their daily operations.

## Support for Alaska Native Language Immersion Schools

Language immersion education is a highly-effective approach to teaching children a second language. Developed first in Quebec in the early 1960s with French for English-speakers, it has since been adapted to use with other languages around the world and with the same successes. Early Total Immersion is the gold standard of language immersion schooling, in which children are taught 100% through the immersion language, kindergarten through second grade; English language arts (reading and writing) are added during third grade, and in fourth and fifth grades additional academic classes are taught in English so that by sixth grade, the students are doing half of their academic subject in English and half in the immersion language.

Alaska Native language immersion schools have been operated in Bethel (Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, Central Yup'ik, 1995-to present, K-6<sup>th</sup> charter school), Kotzebue (Nikaitchuat Ilisaġviat, Iñupiaq, 1998-present, private pre-school); Barrow (Iñupiaq, 1995? – early 2000s); K-4 partial immersion program in Mekoryuk (Cup'ig, 1999 to present); and Nanwalek (Sugt'stun, 1999-2002?, pre-school, Nanwalek IRA Council). The Yup'ik immersion program in particular has had great success in teaching young people to be conversationally fluent and academically competent in Yup'ik alongside with English.

**Finding:** The Council finds that language immersion programs in schools and language nests for infants and young children are important means for stabilizing the loss and revitalizing our languages, but there are many challenges to implementing these successful programs. The Council supports the implementation of language immersion schools in general, and public charter schools and tribal schools in particular. These require that effective programs of training be made available to the potential language teachers, especially in effective immersion teaching strategies. The Council strongly supports local and tribal autonomy in setting teacher certification standards for language immersion teaches. The Council also supports language nests.

**Recommendation:** The ANLPAC strongly urges the Legislature to adopt HB 157 in support of language immersion schools and for training for Alaska Native language teachers in a framework that leads to teacher certification.

**Recommendation:** The Council urges Alaskans to avail themselves of new amendments to Sec. 6004, Alaska Native Educational Equity Program (ANEP) and Sec. 6133, Native American and Alaska Native Language Immersion Schools and Programs, in the recently signed-into-law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to locate funding opportunities for Alaska Native language immersion programs.

*"I am a Haida language learner, a very enthusiastic one. But I'm a beginning Haida language learner. My struggle as a Haida language learner is that there's not enough teachers."*

- Susie Lee Edwardson, Haida, October 12, 2015

## The University of Alaska and the Teaching of Alaska Native Languages

**Finding:** The *University of Alaska* should take more seriously its *responsibility* to provide instruction in each Alaska Native language that is within a campus' service region and that such instruction include coursework designed to lead to conversational fluency in each language.

Each campus of the University of Alaska should offer instruction in the traditional Alaska Native language or languages of its service area. Such programs may include additional goals but should always include the aim of allowing students to achieve *conversational fluency* in Alaska Native languages.

In some cases, distance-delivered language instruction may be the most appropriate means to achieve this, although face-to-face language learning opportunities generally are more powerfully effective at leading to *conversational fluency*.

In order to have highly qualified teachers of Alaska Native languages, the University of Alaska should expand its offerings of training to all speakers who would like to teach their Alaska Native languages.

The University of Alaska's *Shaping Alaska's Future* (n.d.,page 13) recognizes that

*Issue B: Some Alaska Native languages and cultural traditions are endangered. Many communities do not have sufficient resources to safeguard and nurture culture and the arts, so UA plays a vital role in preserving and advancing this knowledge and these traditions.*

*Effect: UA is a major center of culture and the arts in Alaska and is a center of excellence for Alaska Native and indigenous research and scholarship.*

**Recommendation:** The University of Alaska shall offer instruction in Alaska Native languages, including the traditional language of each campus, in programs designed to lead to conversational fluency. The University should offer such courses with free tuition to all Alaskans and not cancel classes because of pre-determined minimum enrollment levels. Furthermore, the University should insure that it offers comprehensive instruction in the most effective teaching methods and curriculum design for Alaska Native language instruction.

*"My concern is the cost of how much it takes to get in the (Native language) class because I think that there's a lot of eager young people who may be Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, a combination of all of them, that want to learn.... And the [cost of] tuition is very high for these classes."*

**- Susie Lee Edwardson, Haida language learner and activist**

## Alaskan School Districts and their local Native language curriculum advisory boards: Clarification and/or strengthening of AS 14.30.420

**Finding:** Section (a) currently reads in part:

(a) A school board shall establish a local Native language curriculum advisory board for each school in the district in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives and any school district with Alaska Native students may establish a local Native language curriculum advisory board for each school with Alaska Native students in their district. If the local Native language curriculum advisory board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for a school, the school board may initiate and conduct a Native language education curriculum within grades K through 12 at that school.

**Recommendation:** AS 14.30.420 (a) should be amended to read:

A school board shall establish a local Native language curriculum board for each school in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives and any school district with Alaska Native students may establish a local Native language curriculum board for each school with Alaska Native students in their district. If the local Native language curriculum board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for a school, the school board shall initiate and conduct a Native language education curriculum within grades K through 12 at that school.

**Finding:** Although Alaska Native languages have been recognized as official languages of the State of Alaska, Alaska's indigenous languages have not received the educational recognition that they need and deserve. Alaska Native languages are (among other things) a *powerful resource* for academic success in Alaskan schools.

**Recommendation:** Within the Department of Education and Early Development, create a Division of Indigenous Languages that supports Alaska Native language teachers, programs, and schools and teachers.



School in Nondalton

## 8. Reconciliation

*“Even as a Yup’ik speaker, and a teacher of Yup’ik at a university, one time one of my students said ‘Well, what would happen to the stream where the blackfish swim in the wintertime if it ever does freeze [solid]?’ It’s just one of those things that just kind of pops out as a question with nothing that we were covering, she just out of the blue asked and caught me by surprise. And I just got filled with emotion and I said ‘I don’t know because during the time that I should have known, I was taken away to boarding school.’” - Walkie Charles, University of Alaska Professor, Yup’ik*

The ANLPAC recognizes that four generations of Alaska Native children being punished for speaking their languages created huge problems for those generations, part of a larger, longer history of damage inflicted upon them. Additionally, the children and grandchildren of those punished for speaking their language have inherited their own trauma and grief in being denied what is their birthright—the ability to speak their heritage language. While some might feel that language loss and its associated suffering is in the past, many who spoke out in public testimony to the Council expressed ongoing trauma as a result of language suppression and the continued erosion of Alaska Native languages and cultures. While this finding may be surprising or discomforting to many, it was clear from public testimony collected by the Council that historic wounds run deep and are exacerbated by the continued struggles of individuals and communities to retain their languages. This intergenerational trauma will continue to shadow Alaska Native communities unless widespread reconciliation is achieved. In order to transcend these traumas, Alaska Native peoples need to re-frame our ideology, to decolonize our minds.

*“I had to go to Wrangell [Institute] and when we did talk our language they washed our mouth out with soap. Some of them, I don’t know what they had but it made their mouth foam. When I went home that summer I didn’t want to talk [my language] anymore and it’s still hard for me to talk about it.”*

**- Gloria Danson, Alaska Native Studies Conference, April 5, 2013**

*“At the core of many problems in the Alaska Native community are unhealed psychological and spiritual wounds and unresolved grief brought on by a century-long history of deaths by epidemics and cultural and political deprivation at others’ hands; some of the more tragic consequences include the erosion of Native languages in which are couched the full cultural understanding, and the erosion of cultural values.”- Alaska Natives Commission Final Report, 1999.*

*“We come from a place of strength as indigenous peoples...The practices of colonization, take those things out of us, still exists...it’s not past tense. Our kids aren’t learning their languages in our public school system... Whatever we can do to support your work, let us know. Gunalchéesh, Háw’aa.”*

**- Liz Medicine Crow, First Alaskans Institute, April 5, 2013**

## Alaska Native Place Names

**Finding:** The Council encourages the reclamation of Alaska Native place names throughout the state, including local, state, and federal usage in signage and maps. Some progress is being made. The U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewel, in September, 2015, ordered that North America’s highest mountain have its traditional Koyukon Athabascan name, Denali, recognized—in lieu of the former name for Ohio’s 1896 presidential candidate, McKinley.

Three rivers in Gwich’in country have had their traditional Gwich’in names recognized in 2015 for use on federal maps, replacing English or French language names given in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: Ch’idriinjik River, Teedriinjik River, and K’iidootinjik River.

**Recommendation:** The Council calls on all state, borough, city, and other regional groups to consider using traditional, Alaska Native place names when the local community desires and, to the degree possible, to recognize these names formally with the state and federal governments and to use these names in maps, signage, publications, and school curricula.

## State Holiday for Native Languages

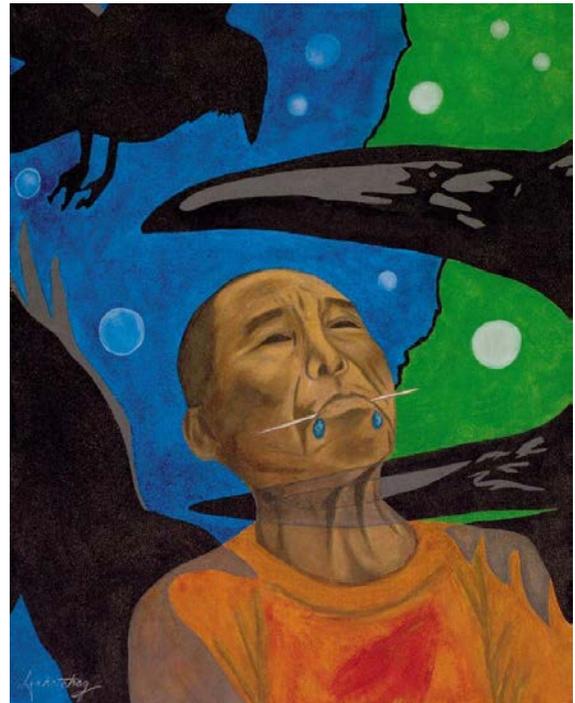
**Finding:** The Council encourages public discourse about language loss and the many benefits of language revitalization. Bringing Alaska Native languages to the forefront of people’s awareness is critical.

**Recommendation:** The ANLPAC recommends the creation of an annual State holiday, *Alaska Native Languages Day*, to celebrate and recognize Alaska Native languages, on April 21, the anniversary of the passage of Alaska HB 216.

## Healing Art

**Finding:** The Council finds that art can be an incredible change-agent in our communities, helping people to re-frame how they experience inter-generational trauma and grief; art can become a catalyst for transformation and healing. Alaska Native playwrights such as Ishmael Angaaluk Hope (*The Reincarnation of Stories*) and Jack Dalton (*Assimilation*) have given all Alaskans new ways to experience and think about those aspects of Alaskan history that, while negative and unfortunate, can help us all grow, transcend, and heal. Visual arts, spoken arts, and other art forms are to be encouraged and explored.

**Recommendation:** The Council urges the artist community to express Alaska Native Languages as both critical to our daily lives and to use artistic expression to create healing moments that promote our languages and cultures.



*“Amouluq Walking” (Great-grandfather) by Aakatchaq Schaeffer (Iñupiaq, Kotzebue) Shaman with Raven in a Dream State.*

## Honoring Loss, Promoting Healing

**Finding:** Generations of physical and psychological punishments in local schools and in boarding schools for speaking their own languages not only traumatized those who received the punishments directly but have created additional problems for the generations who have been unjustly denied the heritage languages that are their due inheritance. The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2000 formally apologized for its role in the destruction of Native American peoples, cultures, and languages. The U.S. Congress in 2009 formally apologized in Public Law 111-118, Section 8113, stating that

“the United States, acting through Congress—

- Recognizes that there have been years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes;
- Apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by the citizens of the United States; and
- Urges the President to acknowledge the wrongs of the United States against Indian tribes in the history of the United States in order to bring healing to this land....”

*“We need to apologize to our young people and children that we didn’t speak to them like our grandparents and parents did for us. Since we haven’t spoken to them in our Native language some unspoken rules or protocols are forgotten. We need to reconcile our intergenerational grief of losing our languages. On behalf of the King Island Native Community elders committee, I apologized to the young shareholders of King Island Native Corporation. I had to think of a way to honor every generation because the letter dealt with sensitive issues around Native dancing.*

*I said in Inupiaq, “Inupiuraaqtauvin, kanjqsilaḡuin, nugupitin”. All who could understand looked at each other, so I repeated, Inupiuraaqtauvin, kanjqsilaḡuin, nugupitin. All who could understand me stood up. I said, “Quyaana agupitisi”. They sat down. I then said, “For those of you that didn’t understand me, stand up. All the young people and those were unsure of what I said in Inupiaq, stood up. I asked them to stay standing and said: “On behalf of the Elders committee, we are so sorry that we didn’t speak to you in Inupiaq so you can know what we know. We apologize we didn’t talk to you like our grandparents and parents did. Because of this, our cultural protocols and rules are getting lost. From there, I read Elder’s letter.”*

**- Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, ANLPAC member**

*“People in the audience that don’t carry that language, they cry, because it’s a healing moment when they are finally apologized to.” - Annette Evans Smith, ANLPAC Chair*

*“There was even a young man who was watching AFN on TV and saw that we were going to break into those groups. He ran over to the Dena’ina Center and joined that group. He realized that his grandfather was the one that was traumatized and that’s the reason that he can’t speak his language.” - Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, ANLPAC member*

The ANLPAC has repeated this process of public apology several times. When they do so, only about one quarter of the room stands up as speakers; three-quarters stand up as non-speakers. The Council has found that this helps people heal and realize that they can move on, ready for language acquisition of their heritage languages.

**Recommendation:** In order to localize these apologies from the federal government to Alaska, the ANLPAC calls on the Alaskan legislature to provide a formal apology, on behalf of all Alaskans, to the generations of Alaska Natives who were involuntarily separated from their families and home communities and sent away to boarding schools. The Council realizes that this Governor and Legislature had nothing to do with creating this problem themselves but they can have a very constructive role in healing through the public acknowledgement and apology to Alaska Native people.

*“Preserving our language is one of my passions. And one of the struggles that we have is a lack of speakers that are available to teach us. All the fluent speakers are elderly... and we’re trying to figure out innovative ways to get younger people to learn the language.”*

**- Skíl Jáadei Linda Schrack, Haida language advanced student and teacher. October 12, 2015**

## 9. Technology

**Finding:** All people in Alaska, but particularly the young people, are involved in electronic technology as a key component of our lives. In Alaska and around the world, people are developing means of using new technology to teach traditional languages. On-line communities of language learners and language speakers are an important vehicle for the survival of Alaska Native languages.

**Recommendation:** The Council encourages the creation of electronic means to promote the learning and the everyday use of Alaska Native languages. The Council further encourages individuals to make use of electronic resources to learn their heritage languages and to participate in on-line forums where individual Alaska Native languages are the preferred languages for everyday communication.

- ◆ The University of Alaska Fairbanks, in partnership with its Kuskokwim Campus, is going on-line with a Bachelor of Arts degree program in Yup’ik language and culture, as the first bachelor’s degree program on-line for any Alaska Native language.
- ◆ Northwest Arctic Native Association (NANA), and then the North Slope Borough, have each partnered with Rosetta Stone and produced Level One (Kotzebue Iñupiaq) and Levels One through Three (Barrow Iñupiaq) language learning materials available for independent language-learning via the computer. These can be useful tools for getting students through the “Novice High” level and ready to begin “Intermediate” conversations with other language learners.
- ◆ A 2008-2010 project of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe created Dena’ina language self-study videos. Two central ideas were key to the project: 1) to embed study of verb conjugations into useable formats so that learners could model how to have simple conversations, and 2) to make these lessons available 24 hours a day, anywhere there was internet access. With only about 15 highly fluent speakers (the youngest in her late 60s), Dena’ina is a highly endangered language. Dena’ina lessons are on youtube.com and at <http://www.languageinsights.net/> where additional Dena’ina language-learning resources can be found.

- ◆ X'unei Lance Twitchell has a channel on YouTube, called *X'unei Lance Twitchell*, on which he posts recordings of his Intermediate Tlingit classes which he distance-delivers from Juneau for the University of Alaska Southeast.
- ◆ Byron Nicholai of Toksook Bay is creating music videos that use Yup'ik language in ways that appeal to and inspire young people, combining old styles of music with new ones, such as beat-boxing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0MQ9IFiucI>
- ◆ Ishmael Angaaluk Hope led in the creation of an Iñupiaq language video game, *Never Alone: Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, which has become internationally popular.
- ◆ Stepahnie Gilardi has created an ongoing, interactive art project online called “Adopt” Tlingit which encourages people to use Tlingit language in their everyday lives: <http://adopt-tlingit.squarespace.com/>
- ◆ Susie Lee Edwardson and the Juneau-based group, Haida Language Learners, maintain a channel on YouTube, also called *Haida Language Learners*, emphasizing words and phrases for beginners.
- ◆ Julien Jacobs is working on his Qenik Media effort to make computer-interactive, virtual reality interfaces that potentially can be used with Yup'ik and other languages. He hopes to help make mobile phone apps available in all Alaska Native languages.
- ◆ Several Alaska Native languages have active pages on Facebook, where learners and fluent speakers not only can ask questions about their languages, but where long, involved conversations *are taking place in the Native language*. This is particularly true so far for Yup'ik and Tlingit.

*“I would like to see a priority established on getting endangered languages recorded. My dialect (Holikachuk) has only a couple of speakers left. It was my first language until age 14. When I was sent outside I lost the use of most of it. I now only know words and phrases. Some churches established there and ordered the people not to speak or do their songs and dances, telling them it was against God. So they have lost all of their songs and ceremonies and language. Now they would like to learn to speak, but there are not many speakers left. I've been trying to teach them what I know. I would like to record the few speakers left remaining. When a language dies, almost all of the rich culture that gives much meaning to life dies, also. It is a great loss.” - Elizabeth Keating, Holikachuk elder, November 23, 2015*

## 10. Native Language Council Funding

**Finding:** As created by the Alaska State Legislature, the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council—and the ANLPAC Section within the Division of Community and Regional Affairs—are tasked with several important and necessary tasks. Although initially funded with a staff of two within DCRA, it would take four, full-time employees for the Alaska Native Language section to fulfill its legislative mandate. As it stands, the budget has recently (June 2015) been reduced to support only one staff position.

**Recommendation:** The Council urges the Legislature to restore funding for the Administrative Assistant position within the ANLPAC section of the Division of Community and Regional Affairs.

*“For a long time, I have been reflecting on some of the issues Alaska Native people have been facing. Alcoholism. Substance abuse. Domestic violence. Depression. Suicide. I have come to believe that many of these maladies stem from a systemic loss of identity for Alaska Native peoples. Entire generations had been forbidden to practice their culture and speak their language. Those young students who did were ridiculed, punished, and shamed until they conformed to their teachers’ standards. Alaska Natives were taught that everything Native about their families and themselves were wrong. In the oft-quoted words of Richard Pratt, “Kill the Indian, save the man.” If we seek to address those psycho-social maladies afflicting our people, we must recreate our identities as Native people.”*  
**- Eric Somerville, Yup’ik**

*“I see Language as being one of these great pillars upon which we can rebuild our identity. By learning and using our heritage languages, we recreate critical connections with our ancestors. That is not to say we must reject all influences of Western contact and strive to return ourselves to our original state. Rather, we must find ways of recognizing and understanding how our daily lives belong – and contribute – to our Alaska Native cultures. Much of the health of the Alaska Native people relies on repairing our cultural narratives. Using heritage languages in our day-to-day life is one way we can make our identities whole again.”* **- Eric Somerville, Yup’ik**

## 11. CONCLUSION

*“Kiarqurarraarluni yuk, niicugniurturarraarluni-llu tuani taugaam qanemcikangqerciquq. When we've taken the opportunity to observe and taken the opportunity to listen, then we too, might have a story to tell.”* **- John B. Charles (1930-1995)**

While Alaska Native languages are declining at an alarming rate, it is the Council's firmly-held belief that well-planned and well-implemented language programs can reverse the trend. This report highlights important issues that the ANLPAC wishes to bring to prominence among Alaska’s policy makers. This parallels the expectations of many Alaskans who testified and shared recommendations through the statewide survey. It is clear to the Council that it has tremendous statewide support for the work ahead. It is through these partnerships and collaborations that the Council hopes to achieve ambitions goals.

*[O]ur languages went to sleep. It takes every single one of us to wake it back up.”*

**- Walkie Charles, ANLPAC member**

This challenge is both daunting and hopeful—and is a role that the ANLPAC members are grateful to have. The Council has the support of 10,000 years of history and looks forward to a future with healthy and sustainable communities with revitalized linguistic heritage. There is much to be done, and many other potential actions that will help the survival of Alaska Native languages. Reversing language loss in Alaska will require allies and collaborators from all regions and communities, along with government and policy makers—people who aspire to strengthen communities through living language and culture.

*“Some of them always say: Alutiit awa’i qikiyut (“Alutiiq people now are shy”) to speak our language... But you know, that’s how we grew up. We have to outgrow it.” - Anonymous Elder, Kodiak Island*

The Council’s recommendations, if enacted, are a collection of strategies that would improve the feasibility of future efforts for language revitalization in our state. This will be achieved by fostering an environment conducive to language use and revitalization throughout communities (Fishman, 1991, 2000; Paulston, 1994). Languages cannot be saved by affecting only one aspect of society—it will take partnerships between governments and individuals, between schools and tribes. While none of the recommendations in this report is directly tied to the survival of any specific language, we believe that these recommendations will aid policy makers, regions, communities, and families in their interconnected efforts to leave a healthy linguistic legacy for future generations.



*Chevak drummers, photo courtesy DCRA*

# Appendices

Appendix A: Council Members and Staff ..... 23

Appendix B: Alaskan laws related to Alaska Native languages ..... 26

Appendix C: References ..... 28

Appendix D: Alaska's Official Indigenous Languages and the Emotions Of Revitalization..... 29

Appendix E: Alaska Native Language Programs ..... 32

Appendix F: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale..... 36



*Native woman, photo courtesy Adams/ANHC*

## Appendix A – Council Members and Staff



### **Senator Donald Olson - *Inupiaq***

From Golovin, lifelong Alaskan, Senator Olson was born in Nome and is a doctor, pilot, reindeer herder, businessman and Legislator. He and wife Willow have four children: Colby, Martin, Donald Jr., and Maggie Rae.



### **Representative Benjamin Nageak - *Iñupiaq***

From Barrow, Representative Nageak was the North Slope Borough Mayor in the mid-1990s and is a fluent, first-language speaker of Iñupiaq.



### **Annette Evans Smith (Chair) - *Koyukon Athabascan, Alutiiq and Yup'ik***

Evans Smith, of Anchorage, is the Alaska Native Heritage Center President and CEO, where she has worked in several roles since 2003. Under her leadership, the center has initiated a study to identify Alaska Native language programs and learners of Alaska Native languages with the hope of connecting Alaska Native residents in Anchorage to the language programs that exist across Alaska. Her prior work involves service with Southcentral Foundation and The Northern Forum. She holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Stanford University and is also a trustee with the Western States Arts Federation. Evans Smith is actively learning the Yup'ik language through her grandmother and Marge Nakak.



### **April Gale Laktonen Counciller, Ph.D. (Vice-Chair) - *Alutiiq***

Counciller, of Kodiak, is the director of the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak and adjunct professor of Alutiiq language and culture at Kodiak College where she established the Alaska Native Studies program. She is an advanced student of the Sugt'stun language and is active in language preservation efforts, serving as a member of the Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit Regional Language Advisory Committee, the Alaska Native Studies Council, and the Alutiiq New Words Council. She has also received the Harry S. Truman Scholar, Leadership and Public Service Award from the Truman Foundation. Counciller holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology and American civilization from Brown University, a master's degree in rural development from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and a Ph.D. in language planning and Indigenous knowledge systems from UAF.



**Delores Churchill - *Haida***

Delores Churchill is a fluent, first-language speaker of Haida and a renowned master weaver of baskets, hats, robes, and other regalia. Using such materials as spruce root, cedar bark, wool, and natural dyes, she creates utilitarian and ceremonial objects of unmatched beauty and cultural significance. Churchill learned these skills from her mother, Selina Peratrovich, at a time when there were just three active Alaskan Haida weavers. Peratrovich asked her daughter to burn her baskets for the first five years of the apprenticeship because "I am well known for my baskets. If you say you learned from me, you better be good." Churchill has lectured, demonstrated, exhibited and published her art of basketry throughout the world. She continues to teach young people the knowledge and skills related to the weaving tradition, observing: "As long as Native art remains in museums, it will be thought of in the past tense." To speak to this point, she recently helped the people of Klukwan village replicate a 500-year-old spruce root hat found frozen in a glacier on the Yukon-Alaska border.



**Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle - *Inupiaq***

Alvanna-Stimpfle, of Nome is a fluent, first-language speaker of Inupiaq and is the director of the Kawerak, Inc. Eskimo Heritage Program. She has taught with Nome Public Schools for twenty-five years as a Bilingual-Bicultural Inupiaq language and culture teacher, a classroom teacher and worked with English as Second Language students and English Language Learners. She has also taught Inupiaq at the Northwest Campus in Nome. She has also worked as a teacher mentor for the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project. From 1998-2008, Alvanna-Stimpfle was involved with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative where Native educators from all over the state to develop standards for culturally responsive school standards and ways to teach students from the indigenous perspective. She is a member of the King Island Drummers and Dancers and a former member of the King Island Native Community tribal Council. She is a member of the King Island Native Community Elders committee. Alvanna-Stimpfle holds a master's degree in Education in Language and Literacy and a bachelor's degree in Inupiaq Eskimo language from UAF.



**Walkie Charles, *Ph.D.* - *Yup'ik***

Charles, of Fairbanks, a fluent, first-language speaker of Yu'pik, is an assistant professor of Yup'ik Eskimo at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). He grew up in Emmonak speaking Yup'ik. He has earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, a master's degree at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and a Ph.D. in applied linguistics at UAF. His research interests are second language acquisition, dynamic assessment, and socio-cultural theory. A key interest of is maintaining his language through teaching it at all educational levels. Charles was the Inaugural Chair of ANLPAC from 2012 to 2013.

## Council Staff



### **D. Roy Mitchell IV, Research Analyst**

Mr. Mitchell is a linguistic anthropologist with B.A. and M.A. degrees in anthropology and a B.A. in Iñupiaq Eskimo language from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and is all-but-dissertation on the Ph.D. in anthropology from U.C. Berkeley. He has been a student of Alaska Native languages since 1976. At previous points in his life he had basic conversational proficiency in Iñupiaq and Yup'ik but is rusty now; he's also studied St Lawrence Island Yupik, Sugt'stun, Tlingit, Eyak, Dena'ina, Koyukon, and Haida. In 1982 he began team-teaching Iñupiaq with fluent elders at Northwest Community College in Nome, using a method that uses no English translation at all; he and some of these others then took this methods training on the road to Alaskan school districts and the Alaska Bilingual Conference in 1985. In the early 1990s, he helped start the Yup'ik immersion school in Bethel and in the early 2000s helped Sealaska Heritage Institute expand its Native languages programs.

*Barrow, Alaska, photo courtesy DCRA*



## Appendix B: Alaskan laws related to Alaska Native languages

### AS 14.40.117. Establishment of Alaska Native Language Center

The University of Alaska shall establish an Alaska Native Language Center, the purposes of which are to

- (1) study languages native to Alaska;
- (2) develop literacy materials;
- (3) assist in the translation of important documents;
- (4) provide for the development and dissemination of Alaska Native literature; and
- (5) train Alaska Native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bilingual classrooms

### AS 44.12.310. Official Languages

(a) The English, 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 languages are the official languages of the State of Alaska.

(b) [Effective January 21, 2015]. The designation of languages other than English as official languages of the state under (a) of this section does not require or place a duty or responsibility on the state or a municipal government to print a document or record or conduct a meeting, assembly, or other government activity in any language other than English.

### AS 14.30.420. Native language education

(a) A school board shall establish a local Native language curriculum advisory board for each school in the district in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives and any school district with Alaska Native students may establish a local Native language curriculum advisory board for each school with Alaska Native students in their district. If the local Native language curriculum advisory board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for a school, the school board may initiate and conduct a Native language education curriculum within grades K through 12 at that school. The program, if established, must include Native languages traditionally spoken in the community in which the school is located. Each school board conducting a program of Native language education shall implement the program as a part of regular classroom studies and shall use

- (1) instructors who are certified under AS 14.20.020 or 14.20.025; and
- (2) to the maximum extent possible

(A) instructors and instructional materials available through the University of Alaska; and

(B) audio-visual, computer, and satellite technology.

(b) In this section,

(1) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990;

(2) "Native" means a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaskan Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut blood.

### **AS 44.33.520. Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council**

(a) The Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council is established in the department for the purpose of recommending the establishment or reorganization of programs to support the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages.

(b) The council established under this section shall

(1) advise both the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects to provide for the cost-effective preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages in the state;

(2) meet at least twice a year to carry out the purposes of the council; members may participate in meetings telephonically; and

(3) prepare reports of its findings and recommendations for the governor's and the legislature's consideration on or before January 1 of each even-numbered year.

(c) The governor shall appoint to the council established in this section five voting members who are professional language experts and who represent diverse regions of the state. In addition, one member of the senate appointed by the president of the senate and one member of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives shall serve on the council as nonvoting members. In appointing the nonvoting members of the council, the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint a member of the bush caucus, if a bush caucus exists. In this subsection, "bush caucus" means a group of legislators that represents rural areas of the state.

(d) The members appointed by the governor shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.

(e) Members of the council shall serve without compensation but are entitled to per diem and travel expenses as provided under AS 39.20.180.

(f) The department shall provide staff as needed to support the council; the staff must demonstrate competency in an Alaska Native language.

## Appendix C: References

### Recommended books on reversing language shift for indigenous language communities

- Fishman, Joshua A. 1991. *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, Joshua A, editor. 2000. *Can threatened languages be saved? Reversing language shift, revisited: A 21st century perspective*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, Ltd.
- Leanne Hinton. 2002. *How to Keep Your Language Alive: A Commonsense Approach to One-on-One Language Learning*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Press.
- Leanne Hinton, editor. 2013. *Bringing Our Languages Home: Language Revitalization for Families*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Press.
- Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. 2008. *Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. BRILL.
- Reyhner, Jon and Louise Lockard, editors. 2009. *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance & Lessons Learned*. Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University.

### Other References Cited

- Alaska Natives Commission staff. *Alaska Natives Commission Final Report, 1999*.
- Hirshberg, Diane and Suzanne Sharp. 2005. *Thirty Years Later: The Long-Term Effect of Boarding Schools on Alaska Natives and Their Communities*. University of Alaska Anchorage: Institute of Social and Economic Research. [www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Publications/boardingschoolfinal.pdf](http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Publications/boardingschoolfinal.pdf)
- Endangered Languages. Ethnologue. [www.ethnologue.com/endangered-languages](http://www.ethnologue.com/endangered-languages)
- Krauss, Michael E. 1980. *Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present, and Future*. Alaska Native Language Center, Research Papers #4. University of Alaska Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.
- Krauss, Michael. 1992. The world's languages in crisis. *Language* 68: 4-10.
- Krauss, Michael, Gary Holton, Jim Kerr, and Colin T. West. 2011. *Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (map). Fairbanks and Anchorage: Alaska Native Language Center and UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research.
- Lewis, M. Paul and Gary F. Simons. 2010. Assessing Endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 55: 103–120. [www.lingv.ro/RRL%202%202010%20art01Lewis.pdf](http://www.lingv.ro/RRL%202%202010%20art01Lewis.pdf)
- Paulston, Christina Bratt. 1994. *Linguistic Minorities in Multilingual Settings*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Prescott, Vivian Faith. 2012. *By the Hide of My Tongue: Ax L'óot' Doogú*. Plain View Press.
- University of Alaska. *Shaping Alaska's Future*. <http://alaska.edu/files/shapingalaskasfuture/SAF-FINAL.pdf>.

## Appendix D: Alaska's Official Indigenous Languages and the Emotions Of Revitalization



X'unei Lance A. Twitchell

*April 23, 2014, Commentary in Alaska Dispatch News.*

In the long hours of waiting for the state of Alaska to recognize Alaska Native languages as equals to English, the group of advocates for the bill laughed as hard as we ever had. It is a coping mechanism. It's medicine. When I was retelling some of the jokes that we were telling then, which were already more funny in Tlingit than they were in English, the jokes fell flat. There is something about standing there, feeling powerless and knowing your bill could be killed off at any time, that leads you to search for reasons to laugh. Earlier in the day, some of our elders who stood with us in protest said they hated that they had to beg for recognition, but they also said several times that they would do anything to make life better for future generations and to help ease the pain of current generations.

We began arriving around noon on Easter Sunday, and shortly after 3 a.m. HB 216 passed, making an incredible statement for the state of Alaska. If you have never been a second-class citizen in the only place where you can live, then the gravity of it can be hard to explain. As this process has unfolded over the past several months, and I recounted some of the stories that our elders have been telling us about the torture they went through as children, I often wondered if the stories seemed unbelievable because of their intensity. Who would grab a child by the hair and shake her violently in front of a class for speaking her language? Who would force a child to go outside in the freezing cold and put his tongue on a metal flagpole? Our elders have lived these stories, and we keep them alive so we remember what they went through so we can have all that we do of our languages and cultures. We are forever grateful.

One of the biggest problems in language revitalization work is the idea that it is someone else's problem. Within our communities this can be found in thoughts like these ones: I'm glad someone is doing this, because I don't have time to. I don't have to speak Tlingit to be Tlingit. Those guys are taking care of it, so we are safe. This bill has passed, so we are safe. A preservation council was formed, so the languages are preserved. I wasn't even born then, so why is it my problem? Why can't you just get over it?

When we are talking about language revitalization, it is important to get some terms clearly understood. When we are talking about revitalization, we mean reversing language shift. Language shift means the movement from speaking one language to speaking two languages to speaking one language. For example, at one point all Tlingit people could speak Tlingit, and then they became bilingual in English, and now hardly anyone can speak Tlingit. Language revitalization means we want to create more speakers than we lose. It does not mean we acknowledge that our languages are dead or dying, but instead states that we intend to keep them from doing so.

Throughout this process, I have been thinking about the emotions of fighting for your languages. When the bill was first put on the floor, we had been in survival mode all day. We felt that the bill to make Alaska Native languages the co-official languages of Alaska could be killed at any time, which is way too familiar for us. In the past week, we have lost three birth speakers of the Tlingit language, and that puts incredible strain on us as learners and defenders of our language. Because of this, we kept looking to each other for hope, laughter, strength. We kept convincing each other that we could do it.

And even though we often felt powerless, we saw allies emerging throughout the legislature and across Alaska. We transformed into one of the most powerful political groups in state, for just a moment, because we stood together for a single cause and that cause could be broadcast through all media possible. No one

was looking for cutbacks or tax breaks. No one was being paid to be there. We were standing up for our future grandchildren so they would not have to endure what we collectively went through.

One of the most alarming things I heard, from several sources, was that making languages (and therefore cultures) equal would create more racial division. That is such a stock answer that it conjures up the exact same type of arguments that were made against the anti-discrimination act. I tried to find the logic in that argument and failed, because it is rooted in a paranoia of losing privilege and not in protecting diversity. It is an argument to keep inequality intact. The reality is that our group of advocates on the hill and statewide were a culturally diverse group of people of all different backgrounds. We had, in fact, racial unity for a single cause: equality and justice.

That might be the most powerful part of all of this for me: This is a cause that everyone can stand behind, unless they believe in some sort of linguistic, racial or cultural superiority. Racism is much harder to make a case for than it was 70 years ago, when civil rights leaders were advocating for the passage of the anti-discrimination act. If we look back through the history of Alaska Natives and American laws, this might be the first time that something comes right out and recognizes us at our core and says, "We are of equal value. We are of equal importance."

This statement moves mountains, but it does not in itself create revitalization of languages. We need to celebrate this incredible moment and progress. We need the governor to sign the bill into law. And then we need to dive into the deep pool of our languages and live them every single day of our lives. And that means everyone who wants to be a part of the movement, to feel the overwhelming joy of overcoming generations of oppression, should grab a hand and jump in with us.

In our first Tlingit language class since the bill's passage an elder stood up and addressed the students who were not born Tlingit. He said that he does not see them as non-Native. He recognized them for standing with us and pointed out that they know more Tlingit than 95 percent of the Tlingit people in the world today. He said they are one of us, and that we are all in this together. There are no racial divisions when we stand together like this and succeed in the way we did the other night.

When the bill was first read all I could hear was my heart pounding in my head. Those of us who stayed there to support it stood up, and many of us instantly began to feel the tears coming. We thought of all those who were there throughout the day and could not stay the whole time. We thought about our elders who were living long enough to see this amazing change. We thought about hours upon hours of advocacy, planning, writing and speaking that kept us from our families, work and sleep.

There is not a better moment than when the vote came through. When this idea was being discussed months ago, I never imagined that it would have passed through the Legislature by a total count of 56-2. Alaska now stands as the only other state in America to recognize Alaska Native languages, standing next to Hawaii as leaders in the language revitalization movement. We know the all the hard work we still have to do, but now there is another thing that we know: We can win. We can succeed, and this is not just a Native problem. This is not a thing that small crowds of people talk about and work themselves to death trying to solve. The day is coming when we are not revitalizing Alaska Native languages any more, but we are instead just living them and keeping them safe.

We will never be in a state of dying languages like we are now again. The call has collectively gone out, across our state, to make all of our languages protected, sacred, official. This is a wonderful day, and I had to tell my students something Kingheestí David Katzeek taught me: Tlél ghidaleet -- don't quit. I said it to my class over and over and over. I know that there are so many things that can make us give up. Standing so close to the edge, sometimes it is easy to just jump.

But it is so much more fulfilling to push back, to stand up, to unite in a cause that makes the world a better and safer place for future generations. If you have not felt the joy and unity in it yet, then you should know that the invitation is there for you to stand with us. Thank you Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins. What you initiated has changed things for us all, in ways I think we are only beginning to imagine. Thank you to those who joined in, especially the bill sponsors: Reps. Millet, Edgmon, Nageak, Herron, Gara, Guttenberg, Foster, Drummond, LeDoux, Kito III, Kawasaki, Munoz, Josephson, Gruenberg, Isaacson, Tuck, Holmes, Seaton, Tarr, Olson, Costello, and Feige. And Sens. Egan, Dyson, Olson, French, Stevens, Ellis, Wielechowski, Micciche, Dunleavy, McGuire, Gardner, Bishop, Fairclough, Hoffman, Meyer, Stedman.

This commentary is dedicated to the memory of my buddy Cyril George, who lives in my heart forever, and to Miriah Twitchell, who stood with us by taking care of our babies while the movement kept calling.

**Lance A. Twitchell** carries the Tlingit names *X'unei* & *Du Aani Kawdinook*, and the Haida name *K'eijáakw*. He is from the Tlingit, Haida, and Yup'ik Native nations, and speaks and studies the Tlingit language. He is an assistant professor of Alaska Native Languages at the University of Alaska Southeast, and lives in Juneau with his wife, son, and daughters. Beginning in the spring of 2013 he worked with Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins, Liz Medicine Crow, and a team of language advocates across the state to create and pass a bill that made Alaska Native languages the co-official languages of the state of Alaska.

<http://www.adn.com/article/20140423/alaskas-official-indigenous-languages-and-emotions-revitalization>



Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins (in suit coat and blue shirt) and supporters of House Bill 216 gather in a Capitol hallway for a group photo to celebrate passage of the bill through the House State Affairs Committee. The bill would symbolically make 20 Alaska Native languages official state languages alongside English. (Photo by Skip Gray/Gavel Alaska)

<http://www.ktoo.org/2014/04/01/alaska-native-languages-bill-clears-final-house-committee/>

## Appendix E: Alaska Native Language Programs

### REPORTED ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Information collected from participants at ANLPAC sessions.

First Alaskans Institute, Elders and Youth Conference, October 12, 2015, and Alaska Federation of Natives, October 15, 2015, in Anchorage.



#### Ahtna Country:

- Ahtna Heritage Foundation: Language Documentation Program. Glennallen, AHF Office.
- C'ek'aedi Hwnax "Legacy House" (Ahtna Cultural Center), Ethnographic & Linguistic Archive. Copper Center, Alaska. 1500 recordings in Ahtna and English.
- Kenai Peninsula College: Ahtna Language distance learning classes, taught by Sondra Shaginoff & Jeannie Maxim



#### Anchorage Area:

- Iñupiaaraagvik Isagvinmi, Anchorage Inupiaq Language Circle
- Iñupiaq Phrase of the Day
- Ahtna language lessons weekly, at Ahtna, Inc. in Anchorage: Grant Rebne, teacher
- Alaska Native Charter School
- Alaska Native Heritage Center: Urban Eskimo Revitalization Project
- UAA Tlingit Language Circle [Kyle Demienteff-Worl]
- Qenik Media, Julien Jacobs. [Qenik\\_Media@gmail.com](mailto:Qenik_Media@gmail.com); [Jacobs.Julien@gmail.com](mailto:Jacobs.Julien@gmail.com)



#### Arctic Slope Region:

- Arctic language website assessment & teaching & learning policy
- Rosetta Stone North Slope
- Uqautebim Ugma [sic] Iñupiaq Language Net (Barrow)
- ICC-Alaska Education Steering Committee includes starting Iñupiaq / Yup'ik immersion
- Rosetta Stone Northwest (Arctic Native Association version)



#### Bering Straits region:

- BSSD Bilingual Bicultural Dept. Program
- Kawerak – Eskimo Heritage Program language project



#### Central Yup'ik Country:

- Ayaprun Immersion Charter School, Bethel (1995 to present)
- Manokotak: Yup'ik language, SWRSD



#### Chugachmiut Country:

- Chugachmiut Language Program



#### Dena'ina language videos:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=moVZ94hNsK8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moVZ94hNsK8)



#### Fairbanks area:

- UAF: ANLC; ANLP; ANLA
- B.A. in Yup'ik language
- B.A. in Inupiaq language



#### Gwich'in Country:

- Arctic Village: 3, half-hour classes day, 1-5, middle school, high school
- Ft. Yukon: Grades 1-5



#### Holikachuk Country:

- Elizabeth Keating, from Holikachuk/Grayling, Athabaskan on FB word exchange; wants to record and have teleconference capabilities. 10-20 people speak [some of the language? Dr. Beth Leonard knows of two elders who are fluent speakers of Holikachuk]



### Koniag Country

- Alutiiq Museum: Language Program
- Kodiak Alutiiq New Words Council
- Kodiak Alutiiq Dancers
- Alutiiqlanguage.org website
- Alutiiqeducation.org website (materials)
- Kodiak College Alutiiq Language Occupational Endorsement Certificate
- Alutiiq Language oral history archive
- Alutiiq Language Club
- Alutiiq Language & Learners Facebook page
- Port Lions School: Outreach through WVOPL
- Native Village of Afognak: Language Materials & Curriculum
- Old Harbor: Preschool language lessons



### Northwest Arctic Native Association (NANA) region:

- Nikaitchuat Iliisaġviat Iñupiaq Immersion School N.V.K.



### Southeastern Alaska:

- UAS Language Program and Classes
- Tlingitlanguage.com
- Juneau Tlingit Language Learners
- Juneau – Tlingit classes, free: SHI on Wednesdays, GHI on Saturdays; Juneau Library private circles on Mondays.
- Juneau – Tlingit: K-5, Tlingit Culture and Literacy [spelling]. 6-8, Tlingit language at DZ Middle School, teacher Lyal James. 9-12, not sure.
- Juneau – upcoming Tlingit language immersion school
- Juneau – Tsimshian/Shmalgax. Private language circle (sporadic) David Boxley holds intense classes sporadically.
- Juneau dance groups: Wooch.een; Juneau Haida Dancers
- Juneau – Xaad Kil (Haida) family circle Sundays
- Juneau – UAS: Tlingit, Haida language classes; degrees or concentration areas. Professor of Alaska Native Languages, Lance Twitchell.
- Tlingit Language at UAS
- Haida Language at UAS
- Tlingitlanguage.org
- Juneau – Goldbelt Tlingit language projects
- Juneau – Sealaska Heritage Institute language projects, especially for Tlingit
- Southeast Alaska Native Consortium. Not active? But information online.
- Ketchikan: Haida and Tsimshian
- Haida Language Learners Facebook page with over 2,000 likes.
- Metlakatla: Gavin Hudson, Councilman, Metlakatla Indian Community; Chairman, Haayk Foundation



#### Upper Kuskokwim Country:

- Upper Kuskokwim Language Revitalization Website



#### Unangax Country:

- Unangax WAYK [*Where Are Your Keys*]



#### Out-of-State:

- Maggie Jennell, Gig Harbor, Washington: Emaan Unglua, a Sugt'stun (Alutiiq) program. [www.nativebridge.org](http://www.nativebridge.org)

#### General / Cross-Regional:

- Alaska Native Languages on Facebook
- Alaska Humanities Forum: [akstudies.akhf.org/native-languages](http://akstudies.akhf.org/native-languages) [Page not Found, but google search revealed
  - [akstudies.akhf.org/repository/1377/preview](http://akstudies.akhf.org/repository/1377/preview)
  - [akhf.org/content/alaska-humanities-forum-joins-statewide-efforts-revitalize-alaska-native-languages](http://akhf.org/content/alaska-humanities-forum-joins-statewide-efforts-revitalize-alaska-native-languages)
- Suggested: Awareness day for alcohol and other drug abuse, for all Alaskans

# Appendix F: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

## Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

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>

