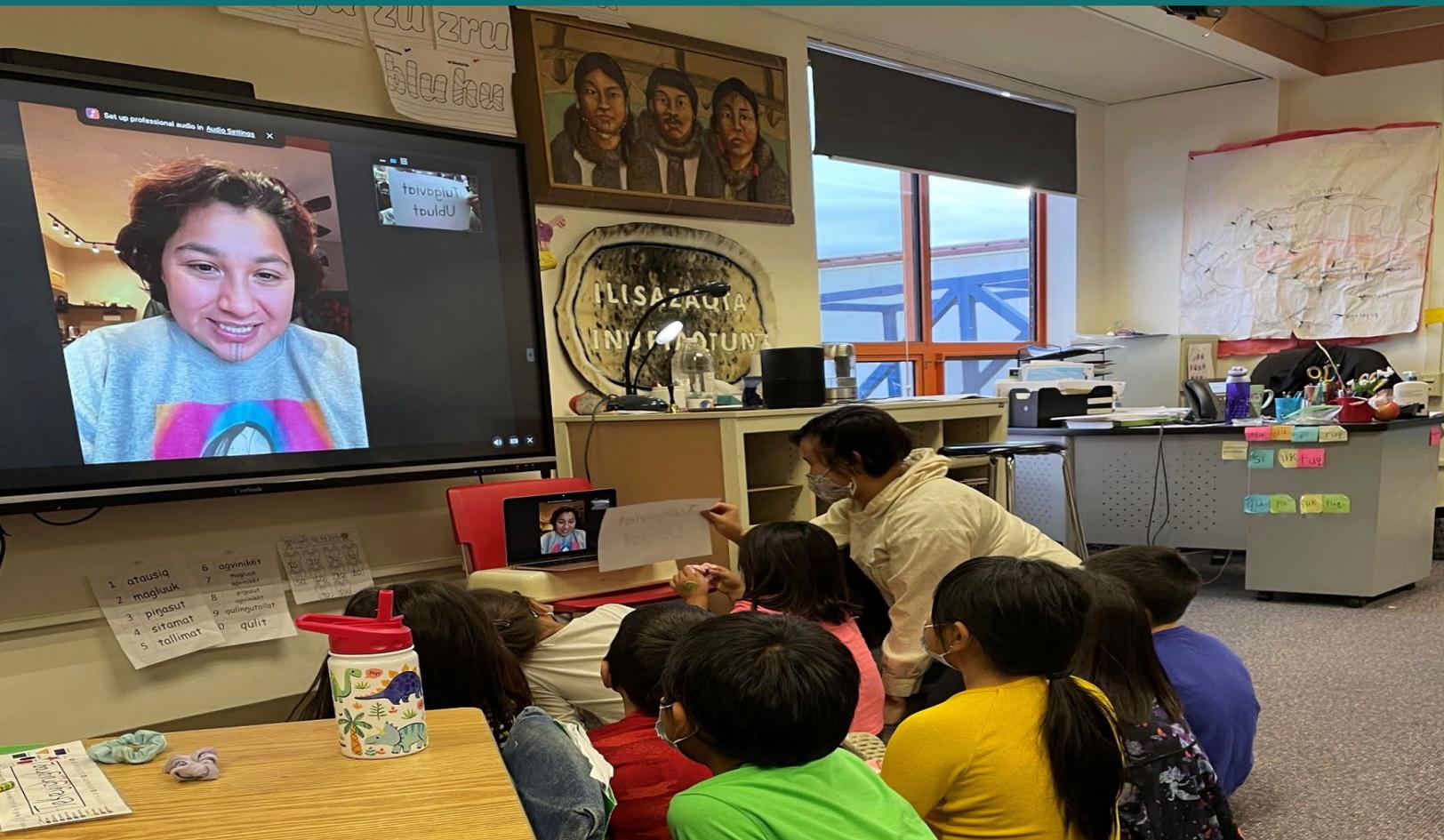


# The Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council's 2022 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature



Kiminaq's first grade Inupiaq immersion guest, Kunaq, on lighting the seal oil lamp. Nome Public Schools. 2021



State of Alaska  
Division of Community and Regional Affairs  
Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council

*Appointed members:*

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, Chair  
X'unei Lance Twitchell, Ph.D., Vice-Chair  
April G.L. Counciller, Ph.D.  
Annette Evans Smith  
Walkie Charles, Ph.D.

*Legislative members:*

Senator Donald Olson  
Representative Andi Story

## LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL

January 1, 2022

Dear Governor Mike Dunleavy, Alaskan State Legislators, and People of Alaska:

As members of the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC), we present our 2022 report to the Governor, the Alaska State Legislature, and the people of Alaska.

Alaska is home to some 23+ Indigenous languages. It is the foundation for cultural identity of everyone of Native heritage. Each language of the Native people thrived before colonization and outside threats, which meant the people thrived as well. The State of Alaska has time to act to support each of the indigenous languages. This is a critical time to preserve languages that are endangered for dormancy. The Alaska Native Language and Preservation Council is working to build a language movement that is strategic and directional. To these ends, these are policy steps that we recommend move to make progress towards language revitalization and stability of our languages. The healthy future of Native languages depends on each one of us.

The loss of Indigenous Elders to the Covid-19 pandemic has been deeply troubling, not only for the severe damage to Native communities but also to our language revitalization efforts. In the Kodiak Archipelago, for example, from early 2020 to early 2022, *half* of the first-language speakers of Kodiak Alutiiq passed away, leaving no speakers of the northern Kodiak Archipelago dialect and only approximately 17 of the southern dialect. Our abilities to meet face-to-face for language and cultural activities have been greatly reduced and not all our elders are able to participate in electronic communication as a substitute. Our traditional funeral activities have had to be simplified and curtailed because of the dangers of spreading Covid-19. We struggle to maintain our heritage languages during this pandemic.

But the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have inspired many to work harder to find ways to meet together to speak and study our languages through electronic forums. Many language classes are being offered in multiple villages electronically now, including villages that have no highly proficient speakers. Students of Alaska Native languages who live outside their traditional homelands have new opportunities to learn their languages through distance-delivered education and learner study groups.

The *2022 ANLPAC Report* focuses on four principal areas that are followed by policy recommendations for the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the general public:

- 1: Make Alaska Native Languages a Statewide Priority
- 2: Reform Education in Alaska to Include Alaska Native Languages
- 3: Normalize the Use of Alaska Native Languages
- 4: Address Historical Language Suppression and Inter-Generational Trauma

The biennial report emphasizes Alaskans making strategic plans for growth and development of Alaska Native languages, providing suggested pathways for individuals and families, for communities and institutions, and for regions and governments to follow toward bringing new life and vitality to our languages. Since we cannot depend on others outside our own communities and other states, we need to be the ones to bring ourselves forward with healthy language and cultural practices. Therefore, ANLPAC respectfully requests a response from the Governor's Office and from the Legislature to the recommendations made in this report.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle,  
Council Chair

X'unei Lance Twitchell, Ph.D.  
Council Vice-Chair

April Counciller, Ph.D.  
Council Member

Walkie Charles, Ph.D.  
Council Member

Annette Evans Smith  
Council Member



*Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council members and staff, in public meeting via Zoom*

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## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC) was created by the State Legislature in 2012. The Council is charged with recommending programs which support the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. The voting members of the Council are language professionals who work with their Alaska Native languages to see that all our languages continue and flourish as living languages.

Among other tasks, the Council meets at least twice annually and produces its biennial report on January 1st of each even-numbered year. This *2022 Report* is the fifth such from the Council, following upon the 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 Reports. Photographs and short biographies of each Council member appear in Appendix A.



*Yup'ik language experts and musicians, Larry Kairaiuak and Aassaanaaq Kairairuak, share their knowledge to assist Sugpiat in Chenega Bay to revitalize their singing, drumming, and dancing traditions, 2002.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council continues to investigate ways in which all Alaska Native languages can have a future in their homelands as vibrant, spoken languages. Specific recommendations inform the Governor of Alaska and the executive branch, and the Legislature of Alaska, with specific steps that can be taken to improve the status of Alaska Native languages and to make the learning of Alaska Native languages accessible to Alaskan peoples.

This *2022 Report* emphasizes Alaskans making strategic plans for the efflorescence of Alaska Native languages, providing suggested pathways for individuals and families, for communities and institutions, and for regions and governments to follow toward bringing new life and vitality to our languages.

Developing *your* strategic language plan starts with you considering what the status of your language is today and what you would like the status of your language to be in the years to come. Consider these categories of health status for your language and think about where you would like your language's health status to be in the future.

### TRACKING LANGUAGE STATUS

Degree of Endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
<b>Safe for Now</b>	Language is spoken by all
<b>Vulnerable</b>	Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., the home)
<b>Definitely Endangered</b>	Children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue in the home, but parents speak it regularly
<b>Severely Endangered</b>	Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to their children or among themselves
<b>Critically Endangered</b>	The youngest speakers are elders, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
<b>Dormant</b>	There are no conversational speakers left now

Twenty-five or thirty years ago, there were some Alaska Native communities whose language statuses were in each of these six categories; today, no Alaska Native language is “safe” or merely “vulnerable.” In designing your strategic language plan, identify which degree of language endangerment exists for your language now. In this *2022 Report*, we provide you with recommended steps to pursue in order to start raising your language up the ladder, to less-endangered statuses. Our wish is that all Alaska Native languages will once again become safely assured as the living languages of Alaska Native communities.

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For the 2022 Biennial Report of the Alaska Native Languages, the council has grouped its recommendation into four major focus areas with specific policy and public recommendations within each of those areas. We are working to build a language movement that is strategic and directional. *The focus areas are listed below, and then are explained in greater detail in the following section of the report starting on p. 25, with recommendations to the **Governor**, the **Legislature**, and the Alaskan **Public**.*

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## **#1 Prioritize the health and future of Alaska Native Languages with a commitment to language equity and restoration of status and use.**

**GOV:** Declare Alaska Native Languages Day, reconfirm the declaration of Linguistic State of Emergency for Alaska Native languages in 2018, include Alaska Native languages in more statements made to the public, and express a commitment to the health and future of Alaska Native languages. Reaffirm within each State department that the State of Linguistic Emergency stands (A.O. 300) and make a formal commitment to the health and future of Alaska Native languages.

**LEG:** Restore funding to the ANLPAC, develop standing committees that place Alaska Native languages into the regular work of Alaska's government.

**PUB:** Work within your community to develop and implement a language plan and to raise awareness of the need to focus on the health of Alaska Native languages, analyze the resources that are in your community and commit to develop methods of gathering and sharing those resources, and work with Alaska Native language speakers and teachers to develop and distribute new resources. Every region should develop a strategic language plan to promote the continued survival of their language(s).

**Finding:** Political discourse and party affiliations should not dictate whether our State government is focused on the health and future of Alaska Native languages. We need decisive action and policy that elevates Alaska Native languages to a high priority, or we will continue to lose languages.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

1. Declare Alaska Native Languages Day
2. Reconfirm the Linguistic State of Emergency that was declared in 2018
3. Restore Funding for the ANLPAC Administrative Assistant Position, and for Council travel.
4. Establish "Alaska Native Languages" as standing committees within the State House and State Senate.

## #2 Recognize that Alaska Native people have a right to be educated in Alaska Native Languages, forge pathways to education through Alaska Native languages, and decolonize education throughout Alaska.

**GOV:** Commit to including Alaska Native languages as a core part of education in Alaska and state that Alaska Native languages are vital to the future of Alaska.

**LEG:** Direct the Alaska State Board of Education to 1) develop Alaska Native language teacher certification and licensure procedures, 2) establish an Alaska Native Language Schools Consortium, and 3) include Alaska Native Languages in State Standards of Education; urge the University of Alaska to increase Alaska Native language instruction while developing “zero credit, zero dollar” options for Alaskans; and fund an annual state-wide meeting for Alaska Native language teachers.

**PUB:** Advocate for an increase in Alaska Native languages instruction at the University of Alaska, collaborate on increasing the number of Alaska Native language immersion programs, and advocate for “zero credit, zero dollar” options within the University of Alaska framework.

**Finding:** Alaska Natives and all Alaskans have the right to be educated in Alaska Native languages. Education in Alaska has a powerful historical role in the prohibition and resultant endangerment of Alaska Native languages, and thus reform of education is necessary to ensure their survival and restoration to use and stability. By default, education in Alaska excludes Alaska Native languages, so specific and sweeping policy must be developed to become inclusive and to change how we view Alaska Native languages in education. Now is the time for Alaska Natives to reclaim agency in our educational programs across the State of Alaska, with the intent of improving educational outcomes for all students.

### Policy Recommendations:

5. Develop methods of certifying and licensing Alaska Native Language Teachers without considering them “alternative” certifications or licensures.
6. Establish an Alaska Native Language Schools Consortium.
7. Develop and include Alaska Native languages in State Standards of Education.
8. Increase Alaska Native language instruction at the University of Alaska and establish “zero credit, zero dollar” methods for Alaskans to learn Alaska Native languages without cost.
9. Promote, establish, and increase Alaska Native Language immersion programs in all regions.
10. Fund an annual state-wide conference for Alaska Native language teachers
11. Clarify and strengthen Alaska Statute 14.30.420

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### **#3 Increase the use of Alaska Native Languages and normalize Alaska Native languages in physical and social spaces.**

**GOV:** Highlight Alaska Native language place names and phrases in a series of short public presentations in collaboration with Alaska Native language speakers and teachers.

**LEG:** Initiate an Alaska Native language place name restoration project, direct state offices to include local Alaska Native languages in public spaces and allocate funding to support Alaska Native languages on public media.

**PUB:** Use Alaska Native languages as often as possible in as many different physical and social settings, and work within communities and regions to celebrate those who are teaching and learning.

**Finding:** Alaska Native languages have been historically prohibited through active and passive means. In order to move against that, conscious governmental, community, and personal actions should be made to restore the regular use of Alaska Native languages in as many social and physical spaces as possible. The normalization of Alaska Native languages is the responsibility of all Alaskans.

#### **Policy Recommendations:**

12. Restore Alaska Native Place Names.
13. Direct state, federal, and municipal offices to include local Alaska Native languages in signage within facilities.
14. Develop “Alaska Native Languages in the Workplace” documents within each Alaska Native language for distribution to local organizations, encouraging an increased presence of Alaska Native languages.
15. Increase the presence of Alaska Native languages within public media.

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#### #4 Address Historical Language Suppression and Intergenerational Trauma

**GOV:** Make a statement about overcoming historical traumas as an entire state and declare Alaska Native languages as vital to the past, present, and future of Alaska.

**LEG:** Commit to an annual survey of the health of Alaska Native languages with an intention of informing political and educational decisions. Make an apology to Alaska Native peoples for historical suppression of Alaska Native languages and commit to inclusion. Fund a series of statewide listening sessions to document the experiences of historical trauma in order to inform future governmental action.

**PUB:** Document the experiences of elders who directly experienced language and cultural oppression in education. Create local and regional gatherings to address historical traumas, which include documenting those traumas and incorporating culturally appropriate ceremonies for overcoming traumas.

**Finding:** The traumatic experiences of language loss and cultural suppression have lasting intergenerational impacts. Governance and education in Alaska often operate in ignorance of the devastating impacts, historically and currently, on Alaskan communities and peoples. The State of Alaska can make a strong commitment to community health and language stability by committing to addressing the systemic and lasting harm done to Alaska Native peoples through forced assimilation practices.

#### **Policy Recommendations:**

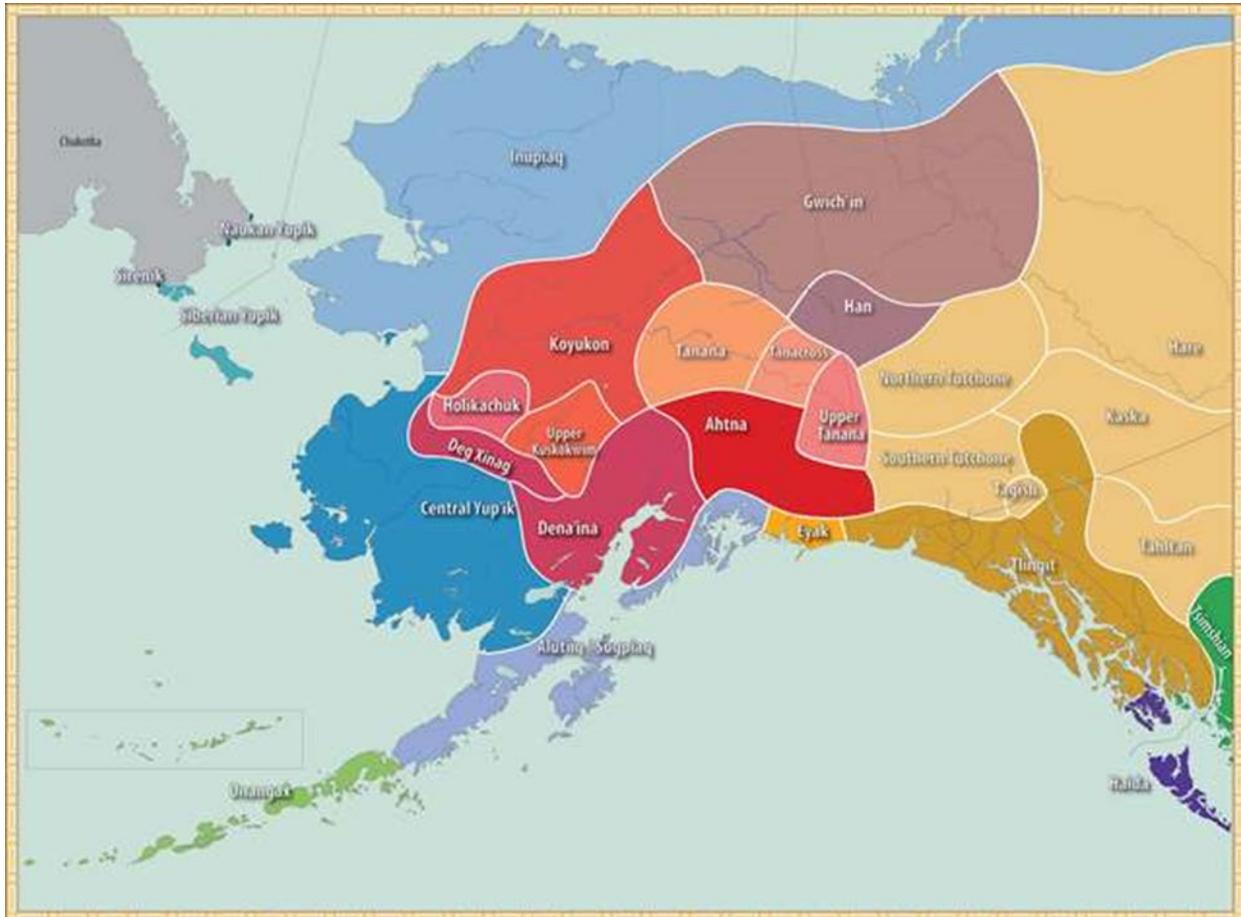
16. Survey the health of Alaska Native Languages and develop methods to track the state of Alaska Native languages to raise awareness of language health and to help inform policy and planning.
17. Initiate a series of statewide listening sessions to document the historical traumas in relation to Alaska Native Languages.
18. Offer an apology for historical Alaska Native language suppression.
19. Commit to overcoming historical traumas of forced assimilation as an entire state.

*Please see page 25 and following where these policy recommendations are presented in greater detail.*

## ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES -- OVERVIEW

The land we call Alaska is home to around two dozen Native languages, spoken in and near Alaska for many thousands of years. Each Alaska Native language is a treasure beyond value, holding cultural knowledge of a unique people, a unique history, and a unique way of viewing life.

Every Indigenous language in Alaska faces threats from colonial, English-only policies and practices, and all of them are endangered.



### 3.1 Languages and language families.

Linguists group Alaska Native languages into four *language families*, sets of languages which appear to be related to each other, descendants of a common, ancestral language in the ancient past. The two large language families in Alaska are the Inuit-Unangan language family—with ten or 12 languages across much of the Arctic—and the Na-Dene language, with about 40 or 50 languages across western North America. The other two are the Tsimshianic language family (four languages) and the Haida language, a ‘language isolate,’ that is, a family of one.

### 3.2 Languages and their dialects.

For linguists, a *dialect* is a specific, regional or social variety of a language. All living languages have multiple dialects—and every time someone speaks, they are speaking in a dialect of a language. If two ways of speaking are similar, the linguists' rule of thumb to decide if they are speaking two, distinct language—or speaking two dialects of the same language—is to ask a speaker of each variety (ideally who are not previously familiar with each other's way of speaking) to have a conversation with each other, each speaking their own language variety. If they can readily carry on a conversation on their first attempt, then linguists would count the varieties as being two dialects of the same language. If they can communicate but misunderstand each other frequently, then linguists may count the varieties as being two, closely related languages. There is a large “grey area” in which two speakers understand each other fairly well but not very well the first time they attempt to converse with each other; because of this, there can be disagreement on how many “languages” there are in a particular language family. This is true of Alaska Native languages as well and this is the larger reason why some people will come up with different numbers of languages.

The most important factor is that Alaska Native people's social identity is powerfully linked to their traditional dialects, which generally correlated with which traditional nation or society they were members of. For this reason, individuals tend to strongly identify with the particular type of speech from their home community, or that of their family. Issues of dialect differences often arise in language revitalization contexts, because with the development of learning materials, groups often must determine which version of a word will be used. If the differences in the language are not captured sensitively, speakers and learners of certain styles may be affronted.

### 3.3 Acts of the Alaska Legislature.

Acts of the Alaska Legislature, and subsequent Alaska Statutes, affect policies regarding Alaska Native languages. Please see Appendix B for full texts of the following statutes:

- 1972, Establishment of the Alaska Native Language Center, AS 14.40.117
- 1995, Native Language Education, AS 14.30.420
- 2012, Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, AS 44.33.520
- 2014, Official Languages Act (revising the 1998 English-only version), AS 44.12.310

The Official Languages Act, updated by our State Legislature in 2014, 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, Han, 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.

## THE STATUS OF ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

Measuring the health of a language can be difficult. There are many challenges to counting who is a “speaker” of a language and there always will be. The numbers presented in the following table, if the number is fewer than 100, come from community members who tell us that they have sat down with other language community members and written down lists of who all they can name who is a strong speaker. Sadly, those numbers are easier to come by as the number of speakers becomes quite small.

Surveys that simply ask, “Do you (or does that person) speak the language?” result in poor data. One person who speaks the language quite well but knows that they are far from being a “perfect” speaker, may modestly reply “no” whereas someone else, who knows a couple hundred words and a few dozen phrases, may reply “yes.” Neither one is wrong as such, but it illustrates how a simple “yes/no” question about speaking does not provide useful information.

With declines in the number of speakers of Alaska Native languages over the last several generations, the Council is very interested in learning how many speakers (at different levels) there are of each language and how many teachers there are of each language and how quickly new teachers are being developed, but also what the social situations are—in the home and in the broader community—in which Alaska Native languages are being used today. Having detailed information on how many people can speak, how many do speak, how many are learning, and how and where our languages are spoken will be of great benefit in planning for the continued survival of all Alaska Native languages.

In order to have a more valuable, more detailed understanding of what successes are happening with Alaska Native languages, it is important to learn the health of each language, considering how and when the languages are spoken in the house and community as well as the overall numbers of speakers by language in four categories. These categories are based in large part upon the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012>), with our “highly proficient” corresponding to their “superior” and our “conversational” speakers corresponding with “intermediate” speaker.

1. Those who learned the language as children and speak the language well: highly proficient speakers
2. Those who learned their language as children but, due to childhood trauma associated with physical and psychological punishments for speaking their language, became “dormant speakers” who understand but now cannot converse
3. Second-language learners who speak the language well: highly proficient speakers
4. Second-language learners who can carry on short conversations (five or ten minutes)—more than simply using memorized dialog: intermediate speakers

As noted above, there never has been a systematic study of the number of language teachers available, nor an actual count of language speakers. Research indicates that it is vital to understand the status of a spoken language in order best to develop plans, policies, and materials for revitalizing that language. For Alaska, information is very limited. The information, below, is a listing of the best data available based upon a variety of sources including language workers in the communities, linguists who work with particular languages, and sometimes late 20<sup>th</sup> century estimates on the Alaska Native Language Center that we suspect are overly optimistic. If you have more up-to-date or more accurate information on numbers of speakers in your community, please email [anlpac@alaska.gov](mailto:anlpac@alaska.gov) or phone (907) 269-3646 (see also Appendix F).



*Ian Angaiak teaching drumming to Sugpiaq preschoolers, Chenega Bay, 2014*

<b>Language Family</b>	<b>Numbers of highly proficient speakers in Alaska by language</b>
Inuit-Unangan	<p>Inupiatun (Inupiaq language): &lt;2,500 highly proficient speakers in Alaska</p> <p>Yupigestun / Akuzipigestun (St. Lawrence Island Yupik language):            &lt;1,000 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Yugtun / Cugtun (Central Alaskan Yup'ik / Cup'ik language):            &lt;10,000 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Cup'ig (Nunivak Island Cup'ig):??</p> <p>Sugt'stun / Alutiit'stun (Sugpiaq / Alutiiq language): ~60 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Unangam Tunuu (Unangaâ Aleut language): ~150 highly proficient speakers</p>
Na-Dene	<p>Dena'ina Qenaga (Dena'ina language): 5 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Kenaakk'enaage (Koyukon language): &lt;150 highly proficient speakers</p> <p><b>Doogh Qinag (Holikachuk language): 0 highly proficient speakers</b></p> <p>Deg Xinag (Deg Hit'an language): 2 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Denak'i (Upper Kuskokwim language):            &lt;5 highly proficient speakers—maybe one or zero</p> <p>Benhti Kokhwt'ana Kenaga' (Lower Tanana language): 1 highly proficient speaker</p> <p><b>Sahcheeg Xut'een Xneege' (Middle Tanana language): 0 highly proficient speakers</b></p> <p>Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa (Gwich'in language): &lt; 250 highly proficient speakers in Alaska</p> <p>Hãĭ Goĭan (Hãn language): 2 highly proficient speakers in Alaska</p> <p>Dihthaad Xt'een lin Aandëeg' (Tanacross language): &lt;10 highly proficient speakers</p> <p>Nee'aanëegn' (Upper Tanana language): ~7 highly-proficient speakers</p> <p>Koht'aene Kenaage' / Atnakenaage' (Ahtna language):            ~25 highly proficient speakers</p> <p><b>Wetaĭ (Tseta'ut language): 0 speakers</b></p> <p><b>dAkhunhyuuga' (Eyak language): 0 highly proficient speakers</b></p> <p>Lingit Yoo X'atangi (Tlingit language):            ~10 highly proficient, first-language speakers in Alaska            ~ 20 highly proficient, second language speakers in Alaska</p>
Tsimshianic	<p>Sm'algyax / Shm'algyack (Coast Tsimshian language):            1 highly proficient first-language speaker in Alaska            ~ 6 highly proficient, second language speakers in Alaska</p>
Haida	<p>Xaad Kíl (Haida language): 1 highly proficient first language speaker in Alaska            4 highly proficient, second language speakers in Alaska</p>

Note: These data in some cases are based upon late-1990s estimates by the late Dr. Michael Krauss; in other cases, they reflect numbers reported to ANLPAC members and staff by language professionals of, or linguists working with, the language communities. Accurate numbers are needed for language planning.

#### 4.1 Language loss on a global scale

In 1992, the linguist Michael Krauss (who started the Alaska Native Language Center) published an article on “The World’s languages in crisis,” saying that by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—if current trends were to continue—about 50% of the world’s languages would be endangered and another 40% threatened with loss. Sadly, it appears that his dire warnings 30 years ago were too optimistic. Today, most languages of the world are under threat of imminent loss. Even languages with millions of speakers (such as Igbo, one of the largest African languages in Nigeria with 27 million speakers) are now endangered because very few young people speak them, speaking instead one of only a few, world languages, primarily English, Spanish, Hindi, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, German, French, and Arabic (it is English in Nigeria). Most of the other 7,000 modern human languages now are losing ground at an alarming rate.

The problems that face Alaskans with our languages are the same problems that exist around the world; the political, economic, and military hegemony of a few language communities are driving the others into decline. As the power and influence of these small number of languages has increased drastically across the 20<sup>th</sup> century—and even more so in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the urgency of the loss of almost *all* human languages is paramount (Wiecha 2013). What is lost when a language is lost? Each human language encodes a unique view of the world, including our understanding of how people are to treat each other, how we are to live in this world and interact with it. As a language is lost, these subtleties are lost.

Loss can include environmental and ecological knowledge, vitally important especially in times of environmental change and changes in population number and migratory pathways; this is often called TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) or simply TK (traditional knowledge) (Maffi and Dilts 2014)

Loss of language can include traditional ways of relating with one’s relatives, as kinship terms vary from language to language. Kinship roles are not interchangeable across languages; indeed, the very categories of kin do not necessarily align among different languages. Much of traditional, indigenous society relies upon traditional kinship ties and, without the language that holds these kin terms and their expected rights and obligations, traditional societies may become less resilient, resulting in increases in social disruption.

Other losses that accompany language decline are potential declines in social and cultural identity. More than simply the name that people call themselves, social and cultural identity includes the day-to-day realization in people’s lives of their group history as a *living* tradition. Indigenous communities function best with their traditional languages in place as living language of the home and community. Research shows that indigenous communities with strong languages and strong social and cultural identity have lower rates of social disruption, including lower suicide rates (Hallett, Chandler and Lalonde 2007).

“I am a speaker of my language and one of the younger birth speakers. Alaska Native languages are very important to me because it is the indigenous people right to have access to their language. Learning about indigenous history and learning who we are helps us to be connected to the lands and our ancestors who have lived and roamed these lands from time immemorial. Even for visitors to see and hear the indigenous languages and cultures would make their visit to the northwestern section of The United States. Alaskan Native Language’s is not just important to me as a speaker but even to the rest of the world.” **Marsha Guneiwti Hotch, Tlingit Language and Culture Bearer**

“[I]n Southeast, there's a Native proverb that... translates into...: ‘If you do not know the names, your way of life will drift away forever.’ And there was a Tlingit woman that once told me—a very knowledgeable woman—said: ‘The land yearns to hear the Tlingit language spoken.’ **Mario Fullmer, Tlingit, Juneau**



*Gwich'in Language Nest: Jessica Black & Aurora, Princess Daazhrai Johnson & K'edzaaye, Charlene Stern & Grayson, Alisha Gilbert & Ryler, Shelby Fisher Salmon & Hunter.*

## Your Strategic Language Plan

“[The major components of language revitalization are] one, what sort of language education do we use...to teach people the language and [the] other component is language use areas and opportunities: how communities and partners work together to ensure that you protect the speakers that you have, while making new ones, and to make sure that your language is the language of power and use. And those are huge, huge steps to take.” X̣'unei Lance Twitchell

If you are interested in promoting the future of your Alaska Native language, we encourage you to think *strategically* about how to remove the stumbling blocks that have been discouraging people from using your language. We offer here some proven suggestions for how you and your community can succeed at increasing the use of your language as an important part of daily life.

To get started with planning for your language’s future, two important questions for you to explore first are:

What is the status of your language?

What are your goals for your language?

When we talk about “language status,” we are referring to how many people *can speak* the language, how many *do speak* it on a regular basis, whether it is *learned as a first language* by all generations, whether it is *learned as a second language*, and how it is *spoken in the home* and local neighborhoods, and how many people also *read and write in the language*. Language status also refers to how the language is used in schools, local businesses, local government offices and services, in news media and social media that local people access.

When we talk about “language goals,” we are referring what the language community desires the status of their language will be in the future. Your “strategic language plan” is an outline of the steps that you and your community intend to undertake in order to take your language from its current status to the language status that is your goal.

There are two, very important reasons why a strategic language plan has to start by considering the current status of your language. First, some language revitalization activities require that certain aspects of language status are already in place. For example, opening a language immersion school requires that you already have highly proficient language speakers who are also experienced, certified teachers. If you don’t already have highly proficient speakers at all, developing new speakers must come before opening your language immersion school.

The second, important link between your current language status and your language plan is as an aide to help you in considering all the relevant domains of language use. Language domains are the places and situations in which a language is used. In multilingual societies, it is often the case that the same people consistently use a different language in a different domain.

Degree of Endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
<b>Safe for Now</b>	Language is spoken by all
<b>Vulnerable</b>	Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., the home)
<b>Definitely Endangered</b>	Children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue in the home, but parents speak it regularly
<b>Severely Endangered</b>	Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to their children or among themselves
<b>Critically Endangered</b>	The youngest speakers are elders, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
<b>Dormant</b>	There are no conversational speakers left now



*“One day we will be able to see all of our faces; for now, the masks allow us to learn and teach face to face.”*  
 Professor of Yup’ik, Walkie Charles, UAF

	Language Status Assessment	Language Status Planning	Decolonization and Healing Inter-Generational Trauma	Language Normalization Activities*	Breath of Life Institutes	Master-Apprentice Language Teams	Language Immersion Retreats	Communicative Language Classes in English-medium School	Language Nests & Language Immersion Schools	Language Medium Schools
Safe for Now	X	X	X	X					X	X
Vulnerable	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Definitely Endangered	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Severely Endangered	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Critically Endangered	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Dormant	X	X	X	X	X					

\* Language normalization activities include: Reclaiming traditional place names; hosting language circles on a regular basis; using language casually when interacting with people in public; using language within social media; children speaking to each other in the Native language; the presence of the language on public signage; and more.

## IF YOUR LANGUAGE IS “DEFINITELY ENDANGERED”: LANGUAGE RESTORATION / REVITALIZATION

A language that is *definitely endangered* is one in which “children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home” even though it is spoken by their parents and grandparents” <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/> . Children may speak words and phrases but do not carry-on conversations. This is the approximate situation in the two St. Lawrence Island Yupik villages and about sixteen of the Central Yup’ik villages. Your strategic language plan should focus on *language revitalization* or *restoration*, that is to say, helping younger people become fluent speakers. Steps you need to take are:

- Conduct a Language Status Assessment
- Develop a Language Status Plan
- Work toward decolonization and healing inter-generational trauma
- Normalize the use of your language
- Consider starting master-apprentice language learning teams
- Host language immersion retreats
- Ensure that your language is taught in your schools communicatively
- Work to establish language immersion education in your schools as soon as possible

## IF YOUR LANGUAGE IS “SEVERELY ENDANGERED”: LANGUAGE RESTORATION / REVITALIZATION

A language that is *severely endangered* is one in which “the language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves” <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/> . This is the approximate situation in the in Central Yup’ik villages, a few Inupiaq and Sugpiaq villages, and perhaps a few other communities. Your strategic language plan should focus on *language revitalization* or *restoration*, that is to say, helping younger people become fluent speakers. You can build upon the elder generations’ language abilities in your community. Steps you need to take are:

- Conduct a Language Status Assessment
- Develop a Language Status Plan
- Work toward decolonization and healing inter-generational trauma
- Normalize the use of your language
- Start master-apprentice language learning teams
- Host language immersion retreats with your master-apprentice teams and others
- Ensure that your language is taught in your schools communicatively
- Work to establish language immersion education in your schools as soon as possible, staffed with new, highly proficient speakers

## IF YOUR LANGUAGE IS “CRITICALLY ENDANGERED”: LANGUAGE RESTORATION / REVITALIZATION

A language that is *critically endangered* is one in which “the language speakers are grandparents or older and they speak the language partially and infrequently”

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/> .

This is the approximate situation in the in perhaps the majority of Alaska Native villages. Your strategic language plan should focus on *language revitalization* or *restoration*, that is to say, helping younger people become fluent speakers. You will want to build upon the elder generations’ language abilities in your community but also work to coordinate with speakers in other communities. Steps you need to take are:

- Conduct a Language Status Assessment
- Develop a Language Status Plan
- Work toward decolonization and healing inter-generational trauma
- Normalize the use of your language
- Start master-apprentice language learning teams
- Host language immersion retreats with your master-apprentice teams
- Ensure that your language is taught in your schools communicatively

## IF YOUR LANGUAGE IS “DORMANT”: LANGUAGE REVIVAL

A language that is *dormant* is one in which there are no highly proficient speakers. This certainly is the case for Eyak and Wetał and appears to be the case for two other Alaska Native languages. Your strategic language plan should focus on *language revival*, that is to say, bringing new life to your language by building a community of learners who work to locate, use, and expand existing language-learning materials and practice using them with each other. Steps you need to take are:

- Conduct a language status assessment
- Develop a language status plan
- Participate in a Breath of Life language institute for dormant languages <https://aicls.org/breath-of-life-institute/>
- Work toward decolonization and healing inter-generational trauma
- Normalize the use of your language
- Lay the groundwork for your learners to start teaching the language communicatively in schools

Additionally, here are important action goals for every Alaska Native community to attend to, regardless of your language status.

#### FOR EVERYONE

Identify your language partners and allies who are supportive

Speak phrases or expressions of your language every day with your family and kids

Learn new sentences in your language every day

Promote the use and the public recognition of traditional place names

Attend your local school board meetings and talk about your language during public comment

#### FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Network with other language learners

Identify highly proficient speakers (in your community or who can contact electronically) and spend time just in the language several times per week

#### FOR HIGHLY PROFICIENT SPEAKERS

Talk with other highly proficient speakers; encourage each other to use the language among yourselves and to speak it with learners.



*Delores Churchill, the last remaining birth speaker of Alaskan Haida and former member of ANLPAC, visits the Xántsii Náay Haida Immersion Preschool in Hydaburg, AK (2021)*

## Findings and Recommendations of the Council: for Governor/Executive branch, for Legislature, for the Public

For the 2022 Biennial Report of the Alaska Native Languages, the council has grouped its recommendation into four major focus areas with specific policy and public recommendations within each of those areas. We are working to build a language movement that is strategic and directional. The focus areas are listed below, and then are explained in detail in the following section of the report, with recommendations to the **Governor**, the **Legislature**, and the Alaskan **Public**.

### #1 Prioritize the health and future of Alaska Native Languages with a commitment to language equity and restoration of status and use.

**GOV:** Declare Alaska Native Languages Day, reconfirm the declaration of Linguistic State of Emergency for Alaska Native languages in 2018, include Alaska Native languages in more statements made to the public, and express a commitment to the health and future of Alaska Native languages. Reaffirm within each State department that the State of Linguistic Emergency stands (A.O. 300) and make a formal commitment to the health and future of Alaska Native languages.

**LEG:** Restore funding to the ANLPAC, develop standing committees that place Alaska Native languages into the regular work of Alaska's government.

**PUB:** Work within your community to develop and implement a language plan and to raise awareness of the need to focus on the health of Alaska Native languages, analyze the resources that are in your community and commit to develop methods of gathering and sharing those resources, and work with Alaska Native language speakers and teachers to develop and distribute new resources. Every region should develop a strategic language plan to promote the continued survival of their language(s).

**Finding:** Political discourse and party affiliations should not dictate whether our State government is focused on the health and future of Alaska Native languages. We need decisive action and policy that elevates Alaska Native languages to a high priority, or we will continue to lose languages.

#### Policy Recommendations:

1. Declare Alaska Native Languages Day. Alaska Native languages are an invaluable treasure for Alaska Natives and all Alaskans. Increasing the public recognition of our uniquely Alaskan languages supports the continued vitality of our languages. The Council calls on the Legislature to declare an annual State holiday, Alaska Native Languages Day, on April 21<sup>st</sup>, to celebrate and recognize Alaska Native Languages. April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014, is that day that HB 216 was passed, recognizing that *all* Alaska Native languages are official languages in Alaska, along with English.

2. Reconfirm the Linguistic State of Emergency that was declared in 2018. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, Gov. Walker signed A.O. 300 which recognized the Council's call for to recognize that there is a linguistic emergency. This A.O. did promote increased attention to Alaska Native languages in education, Alaska Native place names in road signage, but did not address AS 14.30.420 directly.
3. Restore Funding for the ANLPAC Administrative Assistant Position, and for Council travel. The Council finds that its ability to initiate and maintain contact with Alaska Native language stakeholders across Alaska is hindered by the reduced funding which no longer covers an administrative assistant position to assist in communication with tribes, school districts, colleges, and non-profit organizations around the state, as well as by the Council members lack of funding to participate directly with AFN and other language professionals at language revitalization workshops. The Council asks the Governor to restore funding for the 2012-2015 position of Administrative Assistant to the ANLPAC section within the Division of Community and Regional Affairs and to restore funding for each Council member to travel twice during the year to attend the Alaska Federation of Natives meeting and one other language revitalization meeting.
4. Establish "Alaska Native Languages" as standing committees within the State House and State Senate.

## **#2 Recognize that Alaska Native people have a right to be educated in Alaska Native Languages, forge pathways to education through Alaska Native languages, and decolonize education throughout Alaska.**

**GOV:** Commit to including Alaska Native languages as a core part of education in Alaska and state that Alaska Native languages are vital to the future of Alaska.

**LEG:** Direct the Alaska State Board of Education to 1) develop Alaska Native language teacher certification and licensure procedures, 2) establish an Alaska Native Language Schools Consortium, and 3) include Alaska Native Languages in State Standards of Education; urge the University of Alaska to increase Alaska Native language instruction while developing "zero credit, zero dollar" options for Alaskans; and fund an annual state-wide meeting for Alaska Native language teachers.

**PUB:** Advocate for an increase in Alaska Native languages instruction at the University of Alaska, collaborate on increasing the number of Alaska Native language immersion programs, and advocate for "zero credit, zero dollar" options within the University of Alaska framework.

**Finding:** Alaska Natives and all Alaskans have the right to be educated in Alaska Native languages. Education in Alaska has a powerful historical role in the prohibition and resultant endangerment of Alaska Native languages, and thus reform of education is necessary to ensure their survival and restoration to use and stability. By default, education in Alaska excludes Alaska Native languages, so specific and sweeping policy must be developed to become inclusive and to change how we view Alaska Native languages in education. Now is the time for Alaska Natives to reclaim agency in our educational programs across the State of Alaska, with the intent of improving educational outcomes for all students.

**Policy Recommendations:**

5. Develop methods of certifying and licensing Alaska Native Language Teachers without considering them “alternative” certifications or licensures.
6. Establish an Alaska Native Language Schools Consortium.
7. Develop and include Alaska Native languages in State Standards of Education.
8. Increase Alaska Native language instruction at the University of Alaska and establish “zero credit, zero dollar” methods for Alaskans to learn Alaska Native languages without cost.
9. Promote, establish, and increase Alaska Native Language immersion programs in all regions. Language immersion schools are one of the most powerful ways of revitalizing indigenous languages while, at the same time, encouraging students to excel in English, math, science, and social studies. The Council supports the implementation of language immersion schools in general and public charter schools and tribal schools. 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 teachers. The Council also supports language nests.

ANLPAC calls on the Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development clearly indicate that it is the policy of the State of Alaska to promote the establishment and functioning of Alaska Native language immersion schools wherever possible.

Early, total immersion schools elementary school programs in which students who already speak a national language (such as English) receive all their K-2 schooling entirely in a new language; by grade three, English language arts are added. Additional academic topics are switched to English so that by sixth grade, students typically receive half of the instruction in each language. Such immersion schools have a 50-year track record of proven success across Canada and the U.S.A. in producing elementary school graduates who are highly fluent in both languages and who are superior in the performance in English, science, mathematics, and social students when compared with English-only elementary school graduates.

10. Fund an annual state-wide conference for Alaska Native language teachers. The Council has determined that it is important for Alaska Native language teachers and others across the widely dispersed state of Alaska to have an opportunity to get together share information about successful methods in language revitalization and Indigenous language instruction. The Council calls upon the Legislature to provide \$35,000 funding annually to hold an annual conference for Alaska Native language teachers, coordinators, and administrators, and other language advocates in Anchorage.
11. Clarify and strengthen Alaska Statute 14.30.420. AS 14.30.420 has the potential to better support language survival in Alaska by strengthening its wording about language advisory boards. As it is (see AS 14.30.420 in Appendix B), the statute is not sufficiently strong in support of Alaska Native languages in schools because it only requires Native language advisory councils only if the entire school district has a majority of Alaska Native students. Thus, many Native communities—in regions with a majority of non-Natives in the hub town—are left out of the requirement. ANLPAC calls on the Legislature to clarify and strengthen the wording in AS 14.30.420 to 1) make it clear that the statute applies to every school which has a majority of students who are Alaska Natives and that 2) school districts shall offer instruction in the local Alaska Native language(s) if their local Native language curriculum advisory board directs them to.

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### #3 Increase the use of Alaska Native Languages and normalize Alaska Native languages in physical and social spaces.

- GOV:** Highlight Alaska Native language place names and phrases in a series of short public presentations in collaboration with Alaska Native language speakers and teachers.
- LEG:** Initiate an Alaska Native language place name restoration project, direct state offices to include local Alaska Native languages in public spaces and allocate funding to support Alaska Native languages on public media.
- PUB:** Use Alaska Native languages as often as possible in as many different physical and social settings, and work within communities and regions to celebrate those who are teaching and learning.
- Finding:** Alaska Native languages have been historically prohibited through active and passive means. In order to move against that, conscious governmental, community, and personal actions should be made to restore the regular use of Alaska Native languages in as many social and physical spaces as possible. The normalization of Alaska Native languages is the responsibility of all Alaskans.

**Policy Recommendations:**

12. Restore Alaska Native Place Names. With millennia of residence on the land in Alaska, Native place names not only are part of the language and culture of Alaska Native peoples but are a daily reminder of who the traditional owners of the land are. Using traditional place names more. The Council encourages the reclamation of Alaska Native place names throughout the state, including local, state, and federal usage in naming facilities, public signage, and maps. 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. 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 Denaakke’ / Koyukon name, Denali (Deenaalee), recognized, in lieu of the former name for Ohio’s 1896 presidential candidate, McKinley.

Official recognition of a place name in Alaska operates at two levels: with the State of Alaska and with the U.S. federal government. Generally, it is easiest to start at the State level with the Alaska Historical Commission and, if successful at getting recognition here, your proposal will also be forwarded to the U.S. Board of Geographic Place Names. To have the best chances of having your proposal be successful, it will be important for the community to document that the Alaska Native place name is traditional in their area and that there is extensive, local support for reclaiming the traditional name. If the place already has an official English name, “[c]hanging an official name is only done when a current name is derogatory, causing confusion, or there is evidence of extensive local support by authorities and residents” says the State website <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/designations/geonames.htm>

13. Direct state, federal, and municipal offices to include local Alaska Native languages in signage within facilities.
  14. Develop “Alaska Native Languages in the Workplace” documents within each Alaska Native language for distribution to local organizations, encouraging an increased presence of Alaska Native languages.
  15. Increase the presence of Alaska Native languages within public media.
-

#### #4 Address Historical Language Suppression and Intergenerational Trauma

- GOV:** Make a statement about overcoming historical traumas as an entire state and declare Alaska Native languages as vital to the past, present, and future of Alaska.
- LEG:** Commit to an annual survey of the health of Alaska Native languages with an intention of informing political and educational decisions. Make an apology to Alaska Native peoples for historical suppression of Alaska Native languages and commit to inclusion. Fund a series of statewide listening sessions to document the experiences of historical trauma in order to inform future governmental action.
- PUB:** Document the experiences of elders who directly experienced language and cultural oppression in education. Create local and regional gatherings to address historical traumas, which include documenting those traumas and incorporating culturally appropriate ceremonies for overcoming traumas.

**Finding:** The traumatic experiences of language loss and cultural suppression have lasting intergenerational impacts. Governance and education in Alaska often operate in ignorance of the devastating impacts, historically and currently, on Alaskan communities and peoples. The State of Alaska can make a strong commitment to community health and language stability by committing to addressing the systemic and lasting harm done to Alaska Native peoples through forced assimilation practices.

#### Policy Recommendations:

16. Survey the health of Alaska Native Languages and develop methods to track the state of Alaska Native languages to raise awareness of language health and to help inform policy and planning. There is a scarcity of accurate data on the numbers of speakers of Alaska Native languages. Effective language policy and planning for successful language revitalization requires that decisions and programs be aligned to the needs of each language's sociolinguistic and demographic condition.

The Council calls on the Legislature to provide funding for the Alaska Native Language Center to conduct a comprehensive survey on numbers of speakers of each Alaska Native language including numbers of highly proficient first-language speakers, dormant first-language speakers, and highly proficient and intermediate level second-language speakers.

The Council further urges Alaska Native communities—villages, regions, language communities—to assess your own state of its language, to share this information with ANLPAC, and to begin using these data to form plans for the future of our languages. Highly proficient first-language speakers, dormant first-language speakers, and highly proficient and intermediate conversational second-language speakers should be counted.

17. Initiate a series of statewide listening sessions to document the historical traumas in relation to Alaska Native Languages. Decolonization is a powerful way to heal inter-generational trauma.

Significant inter-generational trauma has resulted from the complex history of language loss; these traumas reverberate through subsequent generations and create blockages to language revitalization and continue to disrupt lives. When people start practicing their cultural ways, including gathering and storing foods, speaking their languages, and participating in traditional ceremonies and festivals,

Policy Recommendation: The Council urges the Legislature sponsor a series of listening sessions around Alaska, to allow people to come together and talk about what they went through, what their ancestors may have gone through, and encourage partnering with communities and Indigenous organizations to hold healing ceremonies. These instances of inter-generational trauma need to be documented, publicly recognized, and survivors need to be provided with options for healing. Inter-generational trauma associated with language loss can be a factor in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These historical forces contributed to the original decline in numbers of speakers through direct force in schools, in the economic system, and through institutional racism.

The Council further urges the Legislature to provide funding to tribes and non-profit organizations to host community-based healing sessions, along the lines of Calricaraq, the “Healthy Living” program created by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation’s Behavioral Health Department.

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/CHWE/Documents/CALRICARAQ-%20A%20Culture%20Based%20System%20of%20Care.pdf>

The Council further urges Alaska Native groups and organizations to hold decolonization sessions with facilitators who are familiar with this type of work. This is where people can brainstorm and strategize how to best teach Indigenous peoples to reclaim their languages through cultural activities.

Decolonization for Indigenous peoples is a way of exploring how learning takes place from their own worldview in their Native language. Since colonization took place for Alaska Natives, many young Natives were sent away to boarding schools, thus losing a critical part of learning to become parents to the next generations. Education was taught only in English, where the Native language was not tolerated. In this way, Native peoples became “brainwashed” or colonized to teach using English only and using typical English ways of teaching instead of using their cultural ways.

Decolonization is a process of establishing resiliency by building on a community’s own strengths and protective factors. It is a process of facilitated consciousness-raising and awareness-building for Indigenous communities to reverse the negative effects of historical trauma that result from generations of colonization from a dominant culture.

18. Offer an apology for historical Alaska Native language suppression. 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. A formal apology is a symbolic act that opens up the door for deeper discussion and engagement between the Native community and the governing body.

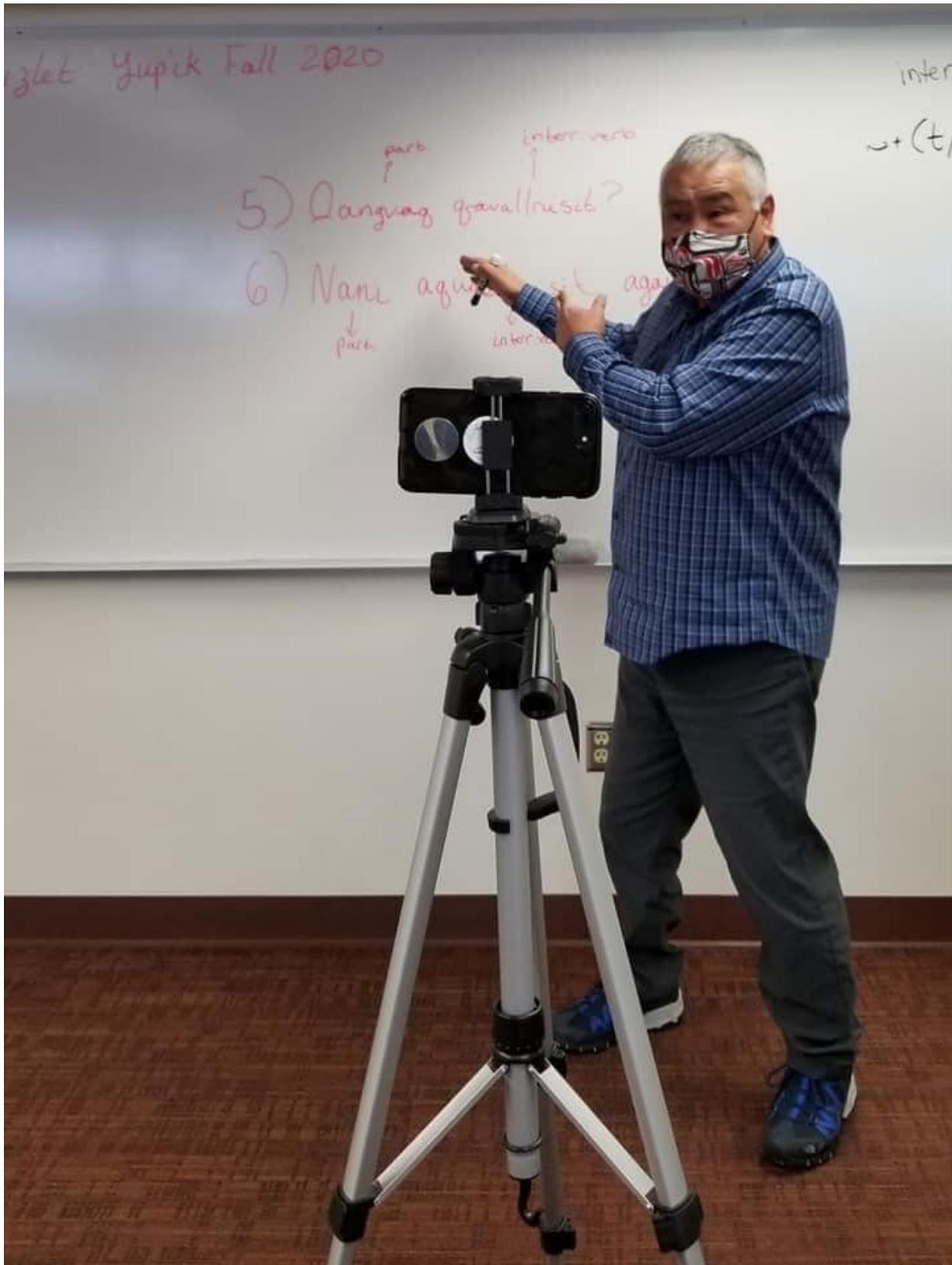
The Council calls on the Legislature to provide a formal apology, on behalf of all Alaskans, to the generations of Alaska Natives who were involuntarily separated from their families and home communities and sent away to boarding schools and the policies that specifically forbade the use of Alaska Native languages in all schools from 1885 until the 1970s. The Council recognizes that these past abuses of Alaska Native peoples have not come at the hands of people currently in positions of authority in our State and also recognizes that the current Alaskan leadership nonetheless can positively contribute to Alaska Native self-healing and language revival through this powerful, symbolic act.

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, “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...”

The ANLPAC has repeated a process of public apology several times, across generations, inviting first fluent speakers to stand, and then inviting non-speakers to stand. 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.

“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 latter dealt with sensitive issues around Native dancing.” **Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle, Inupiaq, Nome**

19. Commit to overcoming historical traumas of forced assimilation as an entire state. The traumatic experiences of language loss and cultural suppression have lasting intergenerational impacts. Governance and education in Alaska often operate in ignorance of the devastating impacts, historically and currently, on Alaskan communities and peoples. The State of Alaska can make a strong commitment to community health and language stability by committing to addressing the systemic and lasting harm done to Alaska Native peoples through forced assimilation practices.



*“The pandemic didn’t stop us from learning and teaching our heritage language.” Prof. Walkie Charles, UAF, teaching Yugtun (Yup’ik language)*

## HIGHLIGHT OF LANGUAGE PROGRESS #1:

### Challenges and Successes in Alutiiq language revitalization on Kodiak.

Spoken words of Isiik April Laktonen Counciller, Ph.D.

[In talking about the challenges and successes in Alutiiq language revitalization on Kodiak] I would start with the first master-apprentice project that went from 2004 to 2007. Prior to that, in 2002, is when I joined the Alutiiq Museum after graduating from college. That year, we had an ANA [Administration for Native Americans] planning grant to plan for a master-apprentice grant. Shauna Hegna worked on that with me. We had put together a plan for the master-apprentice project and the first time it was submitted, it was not funded. We submitted it again the following year, but at that time Shauna had had to move to Anchorage, due to other things happening with her family, so I ended up becoming the project manager for that project. The reason we had selected a master-apprentice project was because, you know, the whole GIDS [Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale], and where you are, and the recommended actions are, and so we said, given that the only speakers are the elderly, we know that we can't have them just jump in and start teaching a pre-school, right away, we need to get some adults fluent before that can happen. So that was what had led to choosing a master-apprentice project over any other type of language revitalization work.

We did, I think, a really great job in the beginning in training people. We had a two- or three-day workshop for all of the master-apprentice teams and there had been funding for six teams around the [Kodiak] Archipelago. There were two in Old Harbor, one in Port Lions, and then the remainder were in the City of Kodiak. Being geographically dispersed was difficult; I remember that there were a couple villages that didn't make it in for that initial training and we had to burn DVDs for them to watch, of these day-long trainings... But one of the great things was that we had Leanne Hinton, herself, come up for that initial training. And I just couldn't believe that this lady that I had emailed, because of her book, *How to Keep Your Language Alive*, that was one of the books that we gave to every apprentice, and we also made a little publication, an internal publication of with a bunch of different ideas for the types of activities that people [the apprentices] could do with the elder, so that they wouldn't just show up at the elder's house and say "OK, now tell me something in Alutiiq." And the apprentices were to go and meet with the elders, five days a week, for one to two hours each time. And they also video- or audio-recorded the entire lesson, or a summary of the lesson at the end [of their session together]—because sometimes people felt uncomfortable turning in a two-hour recording when there wasn't, in their opinion, enough language content in there so we allowed them to do a summary recording at the end of what they had learned or gone over. With all of these recordings, we created a collection at the Alutiiq Museum, and it's cataloged; there was a ton of work related to that because every recording had to be burned to a CD or DVD from the original recording device, then we later burned all the DVDs onto solid-state drives.... (Gold CDs; mini-discs; mini-DV cassettes) ... We also sent copies of every recording to ANLC [the Alaska Native Language Center] because we felt that, if our Museum gets wiped in a tidal wave, then there will be a duplicate [at another] location.

We really haven't gone back to a lot of those recordings yet, but I think they are really going to be important in the future because the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak just got funded to do another master-apprentice project and was thinking to myself, How on earth did that get ANA to pay for another master-apprentice project in the same region or community and they said, Well, it's because so much time has passed since the first master-apprentice project.... It's been funded as of September first of this year. The Museum is a contractor on the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak's project. They actually got two grants funded; one was the formula non-competitive grant and we're going to be producing an Alutiiq language textbook for the high school and the 101 level at the college; and then they're doing a master-apprentice project but as a measure of how much time has changed and how much our language landscape has changed since our first master-apprentice project, they are going to *four* apprentices total, because almost all of the elders that we worked with, originally, have passed away. I haven't seen the actual proposal yet, but my understanding is that they will be meeting with different elders because we don't have any one elder or pair of elders that can commit to that amount of time. And so, they're going to be scheduling appointments with multiple different elders, and possibly additionally with more advanced language learners, because of the number of elders available is just not there anymore. They are going to have two apprentices start, and then after another year another apprentice might start, so maybe through the whole project there may be three to four apprentices total (I'm not sure exactly how it's going to work).

In terms of that first master-apprentice project, we had six teams, two apprentices per team (and sometimes three) and then almost all of the masters wanted to have a co-master because they felt uncomfortable having two or three apprentices staring at them, saying "how do you say this" or "how do you say that?"—which is not the best way to work with an elder, anyway. I think there were eleven masters in that project, all of them but one of them working with a co-master. For the apprentices that stayed on for the full three years (because we know, according to Leanne Hinton, that approximately 30% of apprentices will make it through a three-year commitment), for the apprentices that did make it through they ended up being some of the core people in the language revitalization movement over the next ten to 15 years. But I think the biggest issue has been people being spread too thin, having other life responsibilities, or getting additional work responsibilities that pulled them away from the language—which I'm a great example of that, running the Alutiiq Museum, I now have time to *sometimes* go the elders' sessions, but I no longer have a meaningful, daily involvement in the language any more.

Successes: We got quite a few people through that original master-apprentice project, we got quite a few people from Novice Low up to [conversational levels]; I think by the end of the master-apprentice project, at least two apprentices, including myself, had reached Basic Advanced Fluency. All the other apprentices very quickly got up to the Intermediate (basic conversational) level but kind of languished in Intermediate Low, Intermediate Mid, which seems to be a big plateau level for a lot of our learners.

After the big master-apprentice project, we looked for ways to keep the master-apprentice relationship going for some of those learners. We had the NSF project for the New Words Council and under that project we intentionally structured it so that apprentices could apply to be field researchers who were then trained in field research, making recordings, etc., which of course they'd already been partially trained on by making all the recordings under the master-apprentice project. For the NSF project the new words creation was a part of it, and then making additional recordings in the villages was a part of it, and of course that's also what I did my dissertation on was the New Words Council. That...wasn't specifically a way of *revitalizing* the language; it was a documentation project. But it did, of course, have hidden goals of continuing people's fluency advancement, by allowing them to be paid to continue working with elders. During that time, another thing our community tried to do was to have different entities apply for the ANA funding so that ANA rule about too much funding to one entity would not be broken. The Native Village of Afognak applied for a big language grant and they kind of led the Alutiiq language work for the next few years while the Alutiiq Museum was kind of a helper, to help them on that project. They published kids' books in the language, they developed lesson plans and curriculum, they worked with elders; they were trying to prepare for the creation of the immersion daycare/preschool.



Dehrich Chya of the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak edits audio of Alutiiq Word of the Week lessons for use on the radio and social media. The Alutiiq Word of the Week program will have its 25th year in 2022.

## HIGHLIGHT OF LANGUAGE PROGRESS #2:

### How we started our Inupiaq language immersion program when the potential teachers were not yet fluent

Spoken words of Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle

I had to decolonize my mind. I was taught, in a linguistic way, how to teach language in Western education, but as you know, that doesn't work. But luckily, I got involved with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. It was a ten-year project. We had to learn how to use our own way of life to teach in a classroom, to find our own voice even, in the classroom, and not sound like a non-Native teacher from one of the States. And that's a learning journey in terms of how we are to teach from our own perspective. In the meantime, raising our families, and meeting other indigenous people that have taken on language immersion and other approaches and ways that have worked,

I brought my children to all the Bilingual Education conferences. I brought my youngest daughter with me to other indigenous led conferences in language revitalization and she got to know all the Native educators that I'm close to now. What it took was, she and her colleagues, her classmates from school, the friends who learned to write grants, and are at the age to be second language learners, which was like a really good time for those of us who learned Inupiaq as a first language, to start sharing that with our second language learners as young adults.

To prepare my daughter Kiminaq to teach Inupiaq immersion, we used the method of Master-Apprentice Approach developed by Leanne Hinton, a linguist in California. Thankfully, the Sealaska Heritage Institute in Southeast has a good guide for Master-Apprentice language learning teams. I changed that to Inupiaq. We worked for her to have that foundational language for her to be able to in Inupiaq even though she wasn't quite a fluent speaker yet. We also had informal meal with my older siblings and cousins all in the language. And that's where she was, immersed totally, and seeing how the language worked. And then also I'd sit with her, and we'd talk about putting that language into an educational system. While she's learning that, I'm also learning at the same time, from attending University of Hawaii at Hilo how important is for language acquisition in small children.

I helped Kiminaq in the classroom at first, just to make sure she's got the correct pronunciation, and also my niece, Uyuġuluk, she came in every day to help with the math lesson. She worked with groups and kept the students moving. Kiminaq "looped" her students, to teach them First Grade. Anajalutaq is now teaching the Kindergarten class, and she's already a fluent speaker, and that's a good match. Kiminaq already has a set of teaching materials that Anajalutaq can use, she switches it to her dialect of Brevig Mission, Sitaismiut, and so it's a good working relationship. They both have teacher aides in the classroom. Anajalutaq has another fluent speaker in her classroom, a teacher aide originally King Island, so they are able to Inupiuraaq [converse in Inupiaq] to each other, so that's a big plus for those little Kindergartners to listen to, because I remember, when I first started to teach, in the late 1970s-early 80s, one of the elders would say "kids just need to listen to elders speak Inupiaqtun and they will pick up the language." As a young, up-and-coming teacher, it's like "OK," I wasn't really paying attention. But it works! They really do become fluent speakers; while they're listening, they're learning. Kiminaq's teacher aide, Azraazruk happens to be her older cousin; she grew up listening to Inupiaq but missed that

part of speaking. So, it's just a matter of getting her confidence up to Inupiuraaq all the time...She's heard it all the time; she used to translate for her cousins when she was growing up, because they didn't Inupiuraaq when they were young, growing up.

The other nice things that's happening is that Kiminaq has support in helping her develop materials. There is someone that writes grants; she also works for King Island Native Community. She has found funding for a mentor to come in every day to teach math. The Inupiaq immersion classrooms are funded through the school system, but it comes from other sources at King Island Native Community. Kiminaq works with a young woman out of Anchorage who is originally from Kotzebue. They work on changing English math lessons into Inupiaq, even changing out the pictures because this young lady has the capability to do that. So instead of counting zebras and lions, they're counting walrus and polar bears, that kind of thing. What I work on with Kiminaq is translating the math vocabulary to Inupiaq; in some cases, Uyuġuluk and I have to decide on what's the most appropriate Inupiaq word, addition, subtraction—those kinds of math vocabulary words, and that works out really well. The students get the concepts so easily when it's presented to them. One of the administrators, I think the vice-principal, was observing her classroom. She could not believe how the First Graders knew how to do math word problems—in Inupiaq—it just blew her away! She stayed longer in the classroom than she was supposed to, because she wanted to watch the rest of the lesson and the students having full understanding and being able to do math in Inupiaq.

Kiminaq has a couple of students that translate for the others because they can figure it out in our language. If one of the students didn't understand, these other students will come up and help them. In Inupiaq language, we're always having to know how to inference because we have a meaning behind what we're saying. Several of the students have been good with that, and that's why they can translate for the new students.

Other young people are helping as well. There is an up-and-coming linguist, and another person to help build curriculum. They've been writing little books, with pictures that came from Northwest Arctic School District, with pictures from the late 1970s or early 1980's. They are nice pictures and in fact I used to use them myself as an Inupiaq language teacher. They are making beginners' books in Inupiaq with the pictures, and repetition—like starting with *Suva una?* [What is this?]; *Tamna ugruk* [That is a bearded seal]; *Qinġia ugruk* [I see a bearded seal]; that type of lessons. I just had a session yesterday with them, to do the final editing before they get published.

The first graders have spelling tests, so we have had to create a set of spelling tests in Inupiaq. Memorizing or remembering things, called *Iqautiit*, is the word we use for tests. Kiminaq creates examples of words that have short *i* or long *ii*, examples such as *iisaq* or *iiluu*, with sentences for each word. We meet weekly for this activity.

Parent and grandparent reactions are just a gem! They are so, so proud! They have noticed a difference. It's a different pride: to be Inupiaq and then to be taught in your language. Kiminaq noticed, when the kids were in Kindergarten, that, one of them might have been retained in Kindergarten for another year, but in Inupiaq, the student can remember everything, *Inupiaqtun!* And that would not have been seen in the English-speaking classroom. She as a teacher is finding strengths in the students that would not have been known in the English-speaking classroom. It's a strength, all in all, to be your language.

Of course, we have challenges in the program, but we made up those challenges as best as we could, the number one being, I think, was developing our materials; that's a big challenge.

When Uyuguluk and I can't think of Inupiaq words to use, we call somebody to help us. (Covid hasn't help for to visit elder speakers).

I'm not sure how far the Inupiaq immersion program will go after first grade. I guess it will depend on finding and hiring more certified teachers. That's the other big challenge: finding more certified teachers. That's where X'unei's idea of a College of Indigenous languages really comes in! We have to make those connections, where there's a need.

The story encompasses everything that we write in the Language Council's Biennial Report: lack of teacher training, materials, what have you.

### HIGHLIGHT OF LANGUAGE PROGRESS #3:

Ilisaqativut is a working group of mostly young people in their 20s and 30s, who have been organizing language planning and language learning activities, across three Alaskan regions (North Slope, NANA, and Bering Straits)

Iḷisaqatuvut: Who we are  
<https://ilisaqatuvut.org/whoweare>



#### About

OUR VALUES  
**WHO WE ARE**  
 SUPPORTERS  
 MEDIA  
 GET IN TOUCH

Iḷisaqatuvut/Iḷisazaqatuvut is every person who has ever participated, shared, contributed, and volunteered to create this space and time together.

Iḷisaqatuvut is a grassroots collective of second-language learners and volunteers who offer fellow language learners opportunities to learn Iḷupiaq. Iḷisaqatuvut offers opportunities to learn Iḷupiaq in a dedicated space, pooling together our language resources to enhance accessibility for aspiring speakers.

It's not easy to learn Iḷupiaq, especially as a young working person. Study groups compete with busy lives. Classes cost money. There are few spaces where one can be enveloped by the language.

Members of the Iḷisaqatuvut collective have spent years picking up Iḷupiaq here and there, working with fluent speakers when we can, paying out of our pockets for college courses, gathering resources as we find them.

Members of the Iḷisaqatuvut collective have spent years picking up Iḷupiaq here and there, working with fluent speakers when we can, paying out of our pockets for college courses, gathering resources as we find them.

We envision Iḷisaqatuvut as a way to make the path to learning Iḷupiaq more fluid. By providing opportunities to focus on the language and a community of people to learn with from across Iḷupiat Nunaat (Iḷupiat Nation), our vision is that every person who participates in an Iḷisaqatuvut program leaves in a markedly different place than when they arrived.

#### Iḷisaqatuvut in 2020:

Evolving from being solely a two-week intensive, Iḷisaqatuvut is an Iḷupiaq language learning community. Any person who is learning Iḷupiaq, is Iḷisaqatuvut, meaning "those who learn together."

In 2020 during a global pandemic brought by COVID-19, this looks like focusing on what language acquisition can be performed in a virtual space, creating virtual qargi, together. Visit us on our Facebook or Instagram pages for Iḷupiaq language content and join our mailing list for future virtual opportunities for online learning.

[ILISAQATIVUT INSTAGRAM](#)

[ILISAQATIVUT FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

“

Iḷaanni payyagniuḡuurugut aglaan quvianaqtuq Iḷupiaqraqtuni. Aglaan Mark Aḷsoam, Utqiaḡviniḡmium, uqallautigaatigut, “Qapiḡnasi.”

— Sometimes we struggle but it is fun to speak Iḷupiaq. Mark Aḷsoak from Utqiaḡvik told us, “Never give up.”

## Ilisagatuvut: Our Values

<https://ilisagativut.org/our-values>



### About

#### OUR VALUES

WHO WE ARE

SUPPORTERS

MEDIA

GET IN TOUCH

### OUR VALUES

#### THERE IS ROOM FOR EVERYONE TO LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE

We are learners who, recognizing the contributions of our celebrated language leaders, understand that the responsibility of reclaiming our language cannot and should not fall on the shoulders of a few. In order for our language to truly thrive, it will take efforts on all fronts, from a multitude of people.

There are many reasons why the language has not been passed on. As such, we acknowledge individual responsibility to meet our speakers where they are. Our language must once again be the language of the youth as well as the elders.

We think there needs to be more language in our lives, not less — more efforts, more programs, more practice and more discussion. We believe efforts by all learners should be encouraged, not diminished.

There is room for everyone to learn their language. Within the passage of one more generation, if we're not raising new first-language speakers, all Inupiat will be learners.

#### TEACHING

We understand that you don't have to know everything to teach, you just have to know something different than the person you are teaching. By embracing this broader definition of teacher, a generation can grow in learning together, hand in hand. Additionally, adult second-language learners understand acutely the journey of language acquisition, both the joys and the challenges.

We emphasize the importance of fostering a supportive environment which seeks to leave learning barriers at the door, such as the fear of criticism, ridicule, or getting something wrong. We appreciate that toddlers and youth are granted the grace to practice making the sounds of language and making mistakes; adult second language learners should be afforded the same privilege.

#### DIALECT

We welcome and encourage all dialects.

We recognize that while we largely speak the same language across regions, our local "styles" differ. There is everything beautiful about a linguistic style that provides connection to the land and place you are from and who you and your people are. There is everything beautiful about wanting to learn and preserve the exact ways of your family and community.

However, we remember that our ancestors traveled across the regions for game and for trade, and that they knew and still know a variety of dialects and ways of speaking. We also know that the grammatical workings of the language are shared across dialectal and regional boundaries. Learning more and different ways to speak Inupiaq does not diminish our ability to learn our own dialects — it is all additive.

We have the capacity to learn the styles of our own communities, and that of others. We urge mutual sharing of the ways of speaking in each of our communities. It will only make our experience of the language richer and stronger.

However, we remember that our ancestors traveled across the regions for game and for trade, and that they knew and still know a variety of dialects and ways of speaking. We also know that the grammatical workings of the language are shared across dialectal and regional boundaries. Learning more and different ways to speak Inupiaq does not diminish our ability to learn our own dialects — it is all additive.

We have the capacity to learn the styles of our own communities, and that of others. We urge mutual sharing of the ways of speaking in each of our communities. It will only make our experience of the language richer and stronger.

“

Nikaichuatguuq piraqtut: Those who think they can, will accomplish something.

— Inupiaq proverb

## APPENDICES

### 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 six children: Colby, Martin, Donald Jr., Maggie Rae, and David and Elise.



#### **Representative Andi Story**

Andi Story has lived in Juneau for over 30 years, raising her three children Ellen, Mallory and Ryan while her husband Mike ran a small engineering firm. She served on the Juneau School Board for 15 years and served as president of the Alaska Association of School Boards. She also served on the Indian Studies Parent Advisory Board, and University of Alaska Southeast Advisory Council. Andi has a Masters in Social Work from San Diego State University. She was elected to the Alaska House of Representatives in 2018. Andi is currently the co-chair of the House Education Committee, and serves on the Fisheries, Military & Veterans' Affairs, State Affairs, and Ways & Means committees.



#### **Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle (Chair) – Inupiaq**

Ms. Alvanna-Stimpfle, of Nome, is a fluent, first-language speaker of Inupiaq and is the director of the Kawerak, Inc. Eskimo Heritage Program, and a doctoral student at Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. 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 taught Inupiaq at the Northwest Campus of the University of Alaska in Nome for many years. 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.



**X'unei Lance Twitchell, Ph.D. (Vice-Chair) – *Lingít, Haida, Yup'ik, Sami***

Dr. Twitchell carries the Lingít (Tlingit) names X'unei, Du Aaní Kawdinook, and the Haida name K'eijáakw. He lives in Juneau with his wife and bilingual children and is from the Tlingit, Haida, and Yup'ik native nations of Alaska and the Sami of Norway. He speaks and studies the Tlingit language and advocates for Indigenous language revitalization. Twitchell is a Northwest Coast Artist and instructor of formline design. He is an Associate Professor of Alaska Native Languages at the University of Alaska Southeast, earned his doctoral degree at Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and is a published poet, filmmaker, and musician.



**April Gale Laktonen Counciller, Ph.D. – *Alutiiq (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak, Native Village of Larsen Bay)***

Dr. Counciller, of Kodiak, is the Executive Director of the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation (Alutiiq Museum) in Kodiak. Isiik, as she is known in her language, is a former professor of Alaska Native studies at Kodiak College (UAA), initiating the Alutiiq Studies program and Alutiiq Language Occupational Endorsement Certificate (OEC). She is an advanced student and teacher of the Alutiiq language and an organizer of the Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit Regional Language Advisory Committee and Alutiiq Language club. 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. Counciller lives with her husband and two daughters in Kodiak.



**Annette Evans Smith – *Koyukon Athabascan, Alutiiq and Yup'ik***

Ms. Evans Smith, of Anchorage, is the former President and CEO of the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Under her leadership, the center 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 involved 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.

**Walkie Charles, Ph.D. – Yup'ik**

Dr. Charles, of Fairbanks, a fluent, first-language speaker of Yup'ik, is an associate professor of Yup'ik Eskimo and Director of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). He is the first Alaska Native Director of ANLC. The Yup'ik language is one of two Alaska Native languages with bachelor's degree programs; the other being Inupiaq. He grew up in Emmonak speaking Norton Sound Kotlik and lower Yukon Yup'ik dialects. 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 his is maintaining his language through teaching it at all educational levels. Charles also heads the Yup'ik Program at UAF. Dr. 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.

## APPENDIX B: REGIONAL LANGUAGE PLANS

## 1. Tlingit Language Plan (introduction only)

## A 30 Year Language Plan for Tlingit

Aḵ X'agáax'i Yéi Kgwatée: Ch'u Tleix̄ K̄ugaagastee Lingít

*My Prayer Will Be This: Let Tlingit Live Forever*

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Daa sá lingít̄ sitee.	That which is Tlingit.
Du tuwáa sigóowu	If s/he wants
Lingít̄ áwé awushgóogu,	to master the Tlingit language,
tle áwé has du eedé gaḵtoodashée.	then they are the ones we will help.
Yéi áwé aḵ toowúch̄ yatee.	That is how I feel.
Aḵ toowú yak'éi	I feel good
yeewháan a daa yánde gaḵyináagi.	you all, that you are all going to stand up for it.
Haa jinák̄ daak kanals'ís a yáḵ áwé yatee,	It is like it is blowing out of our hands,
áwé yá Lingít̄ yoo x'atángi.	the Tlingit language.
Ldakát̄ át̄ ku.aa áwé a daat wutusikóo	we know a lot of things about it,
a xoo áa uháan.	those of us who are among it.
Ách̄ áwé yeewháanch,	Because of this, it will be you all,
a daa yánde gaḵyináagi.	you are going to stand for it.
Aaa, hás tsú,	Yes, them as well,
has du xoodé yoo gáxyi.átk.	you are going to go walk among them.
Has du een k̄wa kanayneek!	You tell them!
Yá Lingít̄ yoo x'atánk̄ áyá .áx̄ji aa,	Those who understand the Tlingit language,
k̄a yoo x'atánk̄ awsikóowu aa,	and those who know Tlingit,
has du xán̄x̄ yigoodí gé	ask them if it is okay for you to go by them,
tlél wáa sá utí yoo has x'anaywóos'.	if you can visit them.
Has du een kanayneek, wáa sá k̄uyeeynóogu.	You all tell them what you are doing.
Ch'u "sometimes" áwé,	Just sometimes, that is,
tlél k̄aa jeet ookéet'ch.	it becomes awkward in the hands.
Áwé,	Yes,
aagáa áwé wudashí	and that is when help
"sometimes" ch'a k̄aa jeex'.	sometimes just comes into a person's hands.
K'idéin yoo dudzinéi Lingít̄ yoo x'atángi teen.	You improve it by using the Tlingit language.

<p>         Ách áwé i een kaḵaneek, yee een kaḵaneek:          has du ḵánḵ nay.aat!          Gaḵyisikóo goodáḵ aa sá,          Lingít          yoo ḵ'atánk awsikóo.          Has du jeedé yoo ḵ'ayudatángi shákdé,          áwé "cooperation" tónáḵ gaḵyisikóo:          tle ch'as yeewháan áyá a daa yánde gaḵyináaḵ. it will just be you all who will stand up for it.          Tléi ch'a goot ḵaa.          Yeewháanch áyá a kagéi yís,          yee ee wdudlitóow.          Ách áyá a kát tuḵwatán.          ḵúnáḵ yee kát tuḵwatán,          k'idéin gugwatéeyi.          Yéi áyá.          Yéi áyá koogéi aḵ yoo ḵ'atángi.          – Ḵeiwnéi       </p>	<p>         This is why i am telling you, i am telling you all:          go by them!          And then you will know where it comes from,          Tlingit,          knowing the Tlingit language.          Maybe when s/he talks to them,          and through cooperation you will all know:          it will just be you all who will stand up for it.          Not another person.          You all, for it,          you were taught.          This is why I hope for it.          I am really hoping for you all,          that it will be good.          This is all.          This is the length of my speech.          – Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Lukaax.ádi       </p>
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# Tlingit Language Plan (introduction only)

## 6.1 Where We Are At, and Where We Are Going

Tlingit is a well-documented language with decades of revitalization efforts that have resulted in a wealth of language documentation in print, audio, and video; a series of classes at the University of Alaska Southeast; and a number of organizations that deliver language learning activities across Tlingit territory. These organizations work to provide language and culture programs in public education, run mentor-apprentice programs, develop curriculum, document language, and also work together on language immersion and language intensive learning camps. Despite these activities, the rate of producing speakers is too slow and low, and intergenerational transmission of the language is not happening at the rate needed. The language exists in isolated pockets and is rarely seen or heard in communities. It is still dying despite decades of efforts to keep it alive, but this plan seeks to change that outcome with a thirty-year plan to develop a P–20 education system that uses Tlingit as the medium for all education, maximizing opportunities to develop fluency and complexity. In order to most effectively develop the P–20 system and to normalize the language, a Tlingit Adult Immersion Program and Tlingit Language Media Network will be developed in addition to activities designed to unite existing organizations in the Tlingit Language Continuity Movement.

## 6.2 The Urgency of Stopping Tlingit Decline

A rapid decline in speakers has accelerated over the past hundred years and currently reveals a path to extinction. In the early 1900s, even though land ownership and self-governance were threatened by colonial invasion, the Tlingit people still had their language. Fluency rates were high, children learned from birth, it was the language of choice in the home, and wide usage resulted in high levels of language comprehension and use. American colonial genocide destroyed that, beginning with the bombardment of three Tlingit communities (Kake in 1869, Wrangell in 1869, and Angoon in 1882), then transitioning to Jim Crow civilization laws in the early 1900s, and peaking with the boarding school era in the mid 1900's.

Unfortunately, assimilation and language death is a workable outcome for nearly all Alaskan people, Native and non-native. For the Alaska Native, there is far too much complacency to be instigators of real change. In most Alaska Native communities, there are only a handful of activists who are left to solve the dilemma with little real input or support from elected leaders in state, federal, and Tribal organizations. For the non-native, the problem is invisible; language death and cultural genocide do not exist in the public consciousness, except for the occasional news story about language revitalization efforts. Utterly absent in Alaskan media and education are analyses of why genocidal acts took place throughout history, what they signify, and what they result in today. If Alaska Native languages are going to revitalize, then education must undergo a complete transformation. It must be a system governed by Alaska Native people who are aware of the killing machine that education has been and is today, so they can shape it into the mold of successful Indigenous models like those run by Hawaiian, Māori, Sami, Gaelic, and Greenlandic advocates.

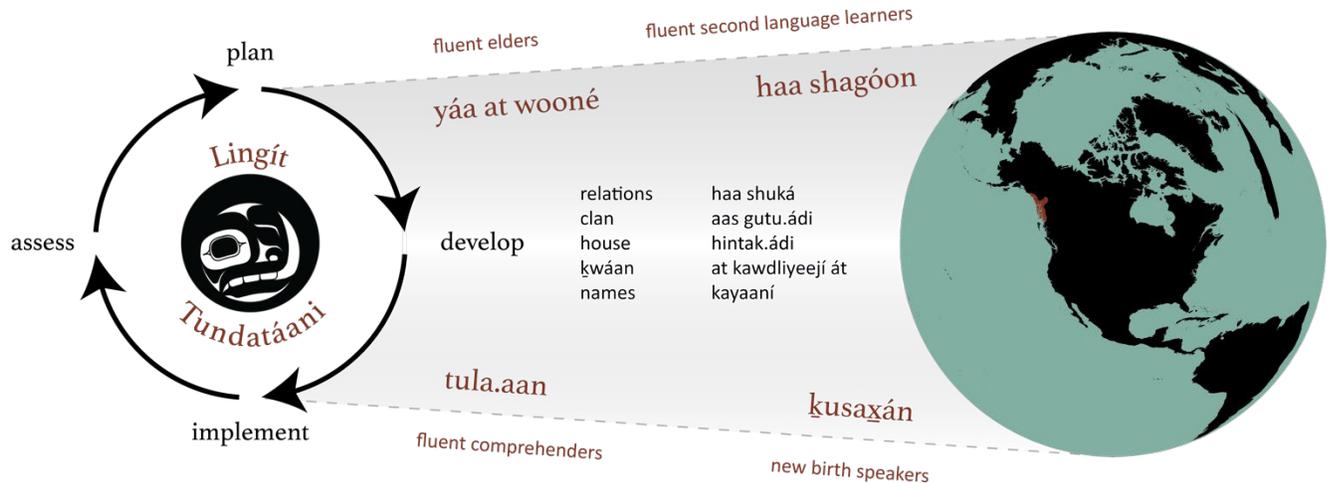
## 6.3 Building a Language Continuity Movement

Language shift in Indigenous communities is a population shifting away from an Indigenous language to a colonial one, resulting in the death of the Indigenous language. While the loss of Indigenous languages is tied to historical traumas and genocidal practices by powerful nations, the future of languages always lies within the hands of those who are ethnically tied to the language. There can be external assistance, and it takes entire communities to revitalize languages to regular use and good health. Instigators of change must focus on the individual and their decision whether or not to speak the language, and then also on the collective and whether or not they choose to stand up for their language. Terms like “language abandonment” and “language suicide” have emerged in recent scholarship to talk about accountability, but a more positive approach should be taken, using terms like language sovereignty or language authority. Some of these realms concern attitudes about language, and language planners and advocates should think of it in this manner: 1) create change so Indigenous people understand that they have the responsibility and capability of revitalizing a language by learning it and using it, and 2) create opportunities for the language to be learned in a positive, productive, and loving environment.

Language revitalization is an everlasting cycle of planning and implementation activities: assess, develop, implement, revise. This should be done with the thought world of the language at the center, tailored for the types of language users, and filtered through the values of the language. A visualization for Tlingit is represented by Figure 16. In linguistics, revitalization efforts are often categorized into two types of planning, *status planning* and *corpus planning*, as explained by the following excerpt from Bamgbose:

Status planning is concerned with the role given to a language. It may involve the maintenance, extension, or restriction of the range of uses of a language for particular functions, language standardization, re-vival of a dead language, or the introduction of an artificial language. Corpus planning, on the other hand, is concerned with the language material and may involve vocabulary expansion, changes in language structure, simplification of registers, orthographic innovation (including design, harmonization, change of script, and spelling reform), pronunciation, style, and preparation of language material.

To put it another way, language planning is thinking about how and where the language will be used, and corpus planning is figuring out how the language will function in those places.



For example, bringing the language back into the home is language planning and could involve strategies on how to encourage this to happen, such as: creating neighborhoods where language-using families reside, social contracts that families undertake, activities designed specifically for those families, newspaper articles that promote and encourage language use, and financial rewards or other social benefits for families who bring the language back to their home. The accompanying corpus planning would involve creating vocabulary for items that may not have words, like remote control, toilet plunger, can opener, and so on. It would also involve working with fluent speakers to recover phrases that may not be in use any longer or develop new ones, like “change the baby’s diaper!” or “keep that dog away from my sandwich!”

These planning efforts should be part of a larger comprehensive plan that is revisited regularly and has overarching goals. Seeing the goals in these ways, compartmentalizing them into what is being accomplished and why, and also the steps involved, helps crystallize the vision of a language revitalization movement. With all the organizations, individuals, and communities involved in language revitalization efforts, the term *Tlingit Language Movement* should be used to show how all the pieces are part of one unifying vision. No one individual is bigger than the big picture. Involved organizations should see themselves as a canoe within a fleet, and those within the organization should be unifying their paddle strokes to help move towards the same goal.

Note: this is only an excerpt of the thirty-year plan for Tlingit. To read the entire chapter, download it from this link:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tnOOajZNOxXUf1Htm5Kloy1\\_CA1uzqhl&authuser=latwitche1l%40alaska.edu&usp=drive\\_fs](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tnOOajZNOxXUf1Htm5Kloy1_CA1uzqhl&authuser=latwitche1l%40alaska.edu&usp=drive_fs)

To view the dissertation that this plan is a chapter of, download it from this link:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1touqSjQwY2goGnD7U8xKsC7LrBy24kO8&authuser=latwitche1l%40alaska.edu&usp=drive\\_fs](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1touqSjQwY2goGnD7U8xKsC7LrBy24kO8&authuser=latwitche1l%40alaska.edu&usp=drive_fs)

## 2. Kodiak Regional Alutiiq Language Strategic Plan, 2019-24

### **Mission**

To bring back the sound of Alutiiq to the voices of our youth, through the words of our Elders.

### **Vision**

Alutiiq language is used in daily communications and spoken in the home by all generations, as supported through immersion education programs within all our communities.

### **Overarching Goals**

1. Support the development of new Alutiiq language teachers at the preschool, K-12, and higher education levels
  - a. Inspire current non-language teachers to learn and teach Alutiiq
    - i. Target language resources to current teachers
  - b. Inspire speakers/learners to teach Alutiiq
    - i. Target preparation such as lesson planning, classroom management, and diverse teaching styles
2. Recruit and retain learners and speakers, and increase fluency
  - a. Develop strategies to support learner retention and continuation on the pathway to fluency
    - i. Describe 'learner' pathway (i.e., Novice, Low- and Mid-Intermediate, Advanced, Superior and average hours of learning)
    - ii. Grow speakers at all levels (e.g., 10 new beginner-level speakers, 5 new intermediate-level speakers, 3 new advanced-level speakers)
  - b. Prioritize efforts to help intermediate speakers become advanced speakers
    - i. Ensure that at least three Alutiiq speakers grow from Intermediate level to Advanced
  - c. Expand targeted self-learning multimedia tools
    - i. Develop collaborative ride book (Where Are Your Keys lessons)
    - ii. Develop and supplement online video resources (e.g., Vimeo, YouTube)
  - d. Revive 'Community of Learners' and mentorship circles, and improve new learner inclusivity
    - i. Develop an orientation for new learners through recurring sessions
    - ii. Visit and take care of Alutiiq Language Elders
    - iii. Support group and training in stress relief for learners
  - e. Develop English-based recruitment and awareness videos
3. Increase outreach, awareness, and access to language resources
  - a. Conduct strategic outreach to village and off-island individuals, communities, and organizations
  - b. Continue to strengthen partnerships with the broader Alutiiq region
    - i. Increase public relations materials on 'dialect similarities awareness'
    - ii. Create and publish inter-dialect language materials (e.g., Combined Dictionary)
    - iii. Compile all Alutiiq dialects into single resources, such as on [alutiiqlanguage.org](http://alutiiqlanguage.org) and Word Wiinaq

- c. Empower communities through understanding of intergenerational trauma and language loss, as well as celebrate resistance
  - d. Develop an Alutiiq Resources section at Kodiak Public Library
  - e. Continue to host Alutiiq language and Alutiiq nation events such as the Alutiiq Nations Festival and the Annual Symposium for Alutiiq Learners & Speakers
  - f. Make Alutiiq cool with slogans and everyday items such as T-shirts, bumper stickers, and comics
  - g. Continue to improve and expand existing language resources
  - h. Increase access to and engagement with archive language materials
4. Institutionalize the Alutiiq language movement
    - a. Work toward funding sustainability
    - b. Work toward preservation and access of language program materials
    - c. Ensure the continuation and expansion of current language events and programs
      - i. Keep the Language Nest going and growing
      - ii. Continue and expand Alutiiq language offerings in K-8 curriculum
      - iii. Continue high school classes
      - iv. Continue college classes and dual enrollment option
      - v. Continue extra-curricular events such as Language Club, Family Language Night, and Alutiit'stun Kesiin
      - vi. Continue the Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit Regional Language Advisory Committee
        1. Pursue the Qik becoming the Kodiak Island Borough School District's Language Committee
    - d. Foster community leader buy-in to supporting the language movement
      - i. Encourage community leaders to create paid positions to develop language and language resources, such as preschool and K-12 curriculum, or fluency acquisition
      - ii. Establish 'points of contact' at each institution/organization that run Alutiiq language programs
5. Create an Alutiiq cultural center or home base for language learning
    - a. Determine ownership/research potential of administrative options
    - b. Develop partnerships to consolidate efforts
    - c. Support development of language community



## **Addendum A**

### **Northwest Arctic Borough Comprehensive Plan/ Iñupiaq Language Plan 2011-2021**

#### **Prepared for**

Northwest Arctic Borough Residents, Organizations and Communities

#### **Facilitated and Prepared by**

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ALASKA  
HUMANITIES  
FORUM

#### ***With support from***

Iñupiaq Language Commission  
Northwest Arctic Borough  
Northwest Arctic Borough School District  
Alaska Humanities Forum/National Endowment for the Humanities  
NANA Regional Corporation  
Kikiktagruk Iñupiat Corporation  
City of Kotzebue  
Bering Air

**Approved via Assembly Resolution 12-47,  
Borough Planning Commission Resolution PC-11-09,  
And Iñupiaq Language Commission Resolution 12-01**



*This Plan is Dedicated in Loving Memory to all the past Elders and Bilingual Teachers, particularly Qutan Ruth Goodwin*

The Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly dedicates this plan to all the past Elders and bilingual teachers, particularly Qutan Ruth Goodwin. Qutan was born in Noorvik, Alaska to Maggie and Robert Newlin, Sr., on July 12, 1952, and she married Willie Goodwin in 1978 and lived in Kotzebue until her death on March 25, 2012.

As she was raising her family, she took elementary education courses and found her passion for the Iñupiaq language, which led her to become an Iñupiaq language teacher at June Nelson Elementary School for over 20 years. She was loved and respected by all the children – she will be missed. Qutan was also a member of the Iñupiaq Language Commission for the NANA region, helped create the curriculum for Nikaitchuat School, and composed the Nikaitchuat school theme song with Agnik Polly Schaeffer. Qutan’s passion for life, special talents, gentle kindness, and her love for all – are precious memories that will continue to touch our hearts for a long time to come.

Qutan participated in this strategic planning process and helped create this plan by working with others and offering her time and energy. May her life, as well as the lives of our past Elders and bilingual teachers, be an example of the dedication to the Iñupiaq language necessary to inspire others and encourage our communities and organizations to work together in successfully implementing this plan.

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

### 1972 - 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

### 1995 - 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.

**2012 - AS 44.33.520. Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council**

The legislature finds that the preservation of Alaska Native languages is a critical component in the sustenance of cultural identity. The legislature further finds that Alaska Native languages are the foundation of cultures and are vital in maintaining traditional knowledge and understanding.

(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 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.

**2015 - 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.

## Appendix D: 2020 Recommendations and Updates

The items below include only those recommendations to the Governor or to the Legislature; recommendations to the general public are difficult to assess in a brief fashion.

**Recommendation:** Calling on the Governor to issue an administrative order, declaring a state of emergency for Alaska Native languages.

Update: On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, Gov. Walker signed A.O. 300 which did recognize the Council's call for to recognize that there is a linguistic emergency. This A.O. did promote increased attention to Alaska Native languages in education, Alaska Native place names in road signage, but did not address AS 14.30.420 directly.

**Recommendation:** Calling on the State of Alaska to hold listening sessions across Alaska, as with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Update: No action to date.

**Recommendation:** Calling for a formal apology from the Alaskan Legislature, on behalf of past actions by the government in Alaska, to the generations of Alaska Natives who were involuntarily separated from their families and home communities and sent away to boarding schools.

Update: There has been no official action by the Legislature, however, Gov. Bill Walker did make a verbal apology on behalf of the State at the Alaska Federation of Natives on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Recommendation:** Calling on the Legislature to adopt legislation in support of language immersion schools and for training for Alaska Native language teachers in a framework that leads to teacher certification.

Update: No action to date.

**Recommendation:** Calling on the University of Alaska to offer instruction in Alaska Native languages, including the traditional language of each campus, in programs designed to lead to conversational fluency. The University should not cancel classes because of pre-determined minimum enrollment levels and should creatively partner with other Alaskan organizations to underwrite tuition costs of all Alaska Native language learners. Furthermore, the University should ensure that it offers comprehensive instruction in the most effective teaching methods and curriculum design for Alaska Native language instruction.

Update: No specific action to date.

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

Update: No action to date.

## Appendix E: Alaska Native Language Programs



### 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



### Anchorage Area:

- Ahtna language lessons weekly, at Ahtna, Inc. in Anchorage
- AlaskaNativeLanguages.org
- Alaska Native Charter School
- Alaska Native Heritage Center: Urban Eskimo Revitalization Project: Teacher training and instruction in Central Yup'ik and Iñupiaq languages
- College Gate Elementary, Yup'ik Immersion, Anchorage School District
- Cook Inlet Native Headstart, Yup'ik immersion program
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Clare Swan Headstart, Yup'ik immersion
- Ilisaqativut, Inupiaq language intensives
- Iñupiaaraagvik Isagviñmi, Anchorage Inupiaq Language Circle
- Iñupiaq Phrase of the Day
- Unanam Tunuu (Aleut) Wednesday noons and Thursday evenings, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association



### Arctic Slope Region:

- Arctic language website assessment & teaching & learning policy
- Rosetta Stone, North Slope Iñupiaq, levels 1-3
- ICC-Alaska Education Steering Committee includes starting Iñupiaq / Yup'ik immersion
- Ilisaqativut, Iñupiaq language intensives



### Bering Straits Region:

- Aniguiin School, Elim, BSSD, Inupiaq and Yup'ik languages
- Brevig Mission School, BSSD, Inupiaq language
- Ilisaqativut, Inupiaq language intensives

- Koyuk-Malimiut School, Koyuk, BSSD, Inupiaq and Yup'ik languages
- Nome, Kawerak – Eskimo Heritage Program language project: Inupiaq, Central Yup'ik, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik languages
- Nome, Inupiaq language pre-school scheduled for fall, 2018; Kawerak and Nome Public Schools
- Nome, Norton Sound Education Working Group (Language & Culture)
- Nome, Strategic Planning Committee for Bering Straits languages
- Nome Elementary School, Nome Public Schools, Inupiaq language
- Shishmaref School, BSSD, Inupiaq language
- Shishmaref School, upcoming Inupiaq language nest, fall 2018, Kawerak
- Anthony A. Andrews School, Saint Michael, BSSD, Yup'ik language
- Tukurngailnguq School, Stebbins, BSSD, Yup'ik language
- James C. Isabell School, Teller, BSSD, Inupiaq language
- Unalakleet: BSSD Bilingual Bicultural Dept. Program



#### Central Yup'ik / Yugtun Country:

- Akiachak, Yupiit School District, Yup'ik language
- Aleknagik School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language
- Atmautluak, Joann A. Alexie Memorial School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Bethel, Ayaprun Immersion Charter School, LKSD (1995 to present), Yup'ik language
- Chevak School, Kashunamiut School District, Cup'ik language
- Ekwok, William "Sonny" Nelson School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language
- Hooper Bay School, LYSD, K-3 Yup'ik Early Total Immersion program
- Igiugig Yup'ik language program, ANA Language Preservation grant
- Kasigluk, Akiuk Memorial School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Kasigluk-Akula, Akula Elitnaurvik, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Koliganek School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language
- Kongiganak, Ayagina'ar Elitnaurvik, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Kwigillingok School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Manokotak, SWRSD, Yup'ik language

- Mekoryak, Nuniwarmiut School, LKSD, Cup'ig language
- Napaskiak, ZJ Williams Memorial School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- New Stuyahok Chief Ivan Blunka School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language
- Newtok, Newtok Ayaprun School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Nightmute, Negtemiut Elitnaurviat, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Nunapitchuk, Anna Tobeluk Memorial School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Oscarville, Qugcuun Memorial School, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- Quinhagak, Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat, LKSD, Yup'ik language
- St. Mary's School, St. Mary's, Yup'ik language
- Togiak School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language
- Twin Hills School, SWRSD, Yup'ik language



#### Chugachmiut Country:

- Chugachmiut Language Program: Master-Apprentice Teams, Sugt'stun language
- Port Graham School, KPBSD, Sugt'stun language
- Nanwalek Preschool, IRA Council, Sugt'stun language
- Nanwalek Elementary/High School, KPBSD, Sugt'stun language



#### Dena'ina - Language Videos:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=moVZ94hNsK8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moVZ94hNsK8)
- [UAA Dena'ina language classes: Anchorage and Kenai](#)



#### Fairbanks:

- Doyon Heritage Foundation: Nine Dene languages plus Iñupiaq
- UAF: ANLC; ANLP; ANLA
- B.A. in Yup'ik language
- B.A. in Iñupiaq language



#### Gwich'in Country:

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



#### Hän Country:

- Eagle, Eagle Community School, AGSD, Hän language



#### Holikachuk Country:

- Elizabeth Keating, from Holikachuk/Grayling, Athabascan 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]



#### Koyukon / Denaakk'e Country:

- Allakaket School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Hughes, Johnny Oldman School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Kaltag School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Koyukuk School, Ella B. Verneti School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Manley School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Minto School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Nulato, Andrew K. Demoski School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language
- Rampart School, YKSD, Denaakk'e language



### 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
- Kodiak High School, Alutiiq language class
- Port Lions School: Outreach through Native Village of Port Lions
- Native Village of Afognak: Language Materials & Curriculum
- Old Harbor: Preschool language lessons



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

- Aqqaluk Trust –language project – Iñupiaq Rosetta Stone CD, Level One
- Chukchi Campus, UAF, Iñupiaq language classes
- Iliisaqativut, Iñupiaq language intensives
- Nikaitchuat Iļisagviat Iñupiaq Immersion School, N.V.K.
- NWABSD Bilingual Bicultural Dept. Program
- Rosetta Stone, Kotzebue Sound Iñupiaq, level 1



### Southeastern Alaska:

- Angoon, Angoon School, Chatham School District, Tlingit language
- Haines, Haines Elementary, Haines SD, Tlingit culture
- Haida Language Learners Facebook page
- Hydaburg School, Hydaburg School District, Haida language
- Hydaburg, Xántsii Náay Haida Immersion Preschool
- Hoonah, Hoonah City School District, Tlingit language
- Kake, Kake City School, Tlingit culture
- Juneau, Central Council Tlingit & Haida, Haa Yoo X'atángi Kúdi language nest
- Juneau, Dzantik'i Héeni Middle School, Tlingit language
- Juneau, Douglas Indian Association, Tlingit language program

- Juneau – Goldbelt Heritage Foundation Tlingit language program
- Juneau, Harborview Elementary, Tlingit Culture, Language, and Literacy Program
- Juneau, Juneau-Douglas High School, Tlingit language
- Juneau, Sít' Eetí Shaanáx - Glacier Valley Elementary, Tlingit language
- Juneau, Thunder Mountain High School, Tlingit language
- Juneau, Yaakoosgé Daakahídi High School, Tlingit language
- Juneau – Sealaska Corporation language projects in Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian
- Juneau – Sealaska Heritage Institute language program supporting Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, Haa Yoo X'atángi Deiyí (Language Pathways Program supports 14 new language teachers)
- Juneau – Sm'algıax Learners Group
- Juneau – Xaad Kíl (Haida) language learners group
- Ketchikan community, Haida and Tsimshian languages
- Ketchikan High School, Tlingit, Haida, and Sm'algıax / Shm'algıack literacy
- Klukwan School, Chatham Strait SD, Tlingit culture
- Metlakatla, Richard Johnson Elementary, Annette Island SD, Sm'algıax / Shm'algıack language
- Sitka, Baronoff Elementary School, Tlingit language
- Sitka, Blatchley Middle School, Tlingit language program
- Sitka, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, Yup'ik and Tlingit literacy
- Sitka, Sitka High School, Tlingit literacy
- [Tlingitlanguage.com](https://www.tlingitlanguage.com)
- UAS Language Program and Classes in Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages, Indigenous Language Speaker Certificate, Indigenous Language Teacher Certificate
- Wrangell Public School, Tlingit language
- Yakutat School, Tlingit culture



#### Tanana Benhti Kokhut'ana Kenaga' Country:

- Minto, Minto School, YKSD, Lower Tanana language class



#### Unangax Country:

- St. George, Summer Unangam Tunuu workshop, WAYK [Where Are Your Keys]
- St. Paul School, Pribilof School District, Unangax Aleut language
- Unalaska City School, Unangax Aleut language



#### Upper Kuskokwim / Dinak'i Country:

- Upper Kuskokwim Language Revitalization Website  
<http://ukpreservation.com/>



#### Upper Tanana / Nee'aanèegn' Country:

- Northway, Walter Northway School, Upper Tanana Athabascan language

## Appendix F: Language Policy & Planning

One important step that can help in holding on to a traditional language—and increasing its vitality—is to be strategic in understanding language revitalization work as conducting language policy and planning. Language planning is when a group gets together and decides how they want their language(s) to be used now and into the future and which steps they believe will bring about those results (Cooper 1989). Language policy in Alaska is when a family, a town, a language region, or the whole state gets together and takes steps to implement these plans.

Where should a community start on language policy and planning for maintaining a Native language? People might begin by hosting community meetings to talk about what people want for the future of your language or bring this up as a topic during times for public comment at existing meetings. This information can be compiled into a local or regional language strategic plan. This plan can be circulated among the individuals and groups who incorporate language in their work so that different entities can take responsibility for different parts of the plan.

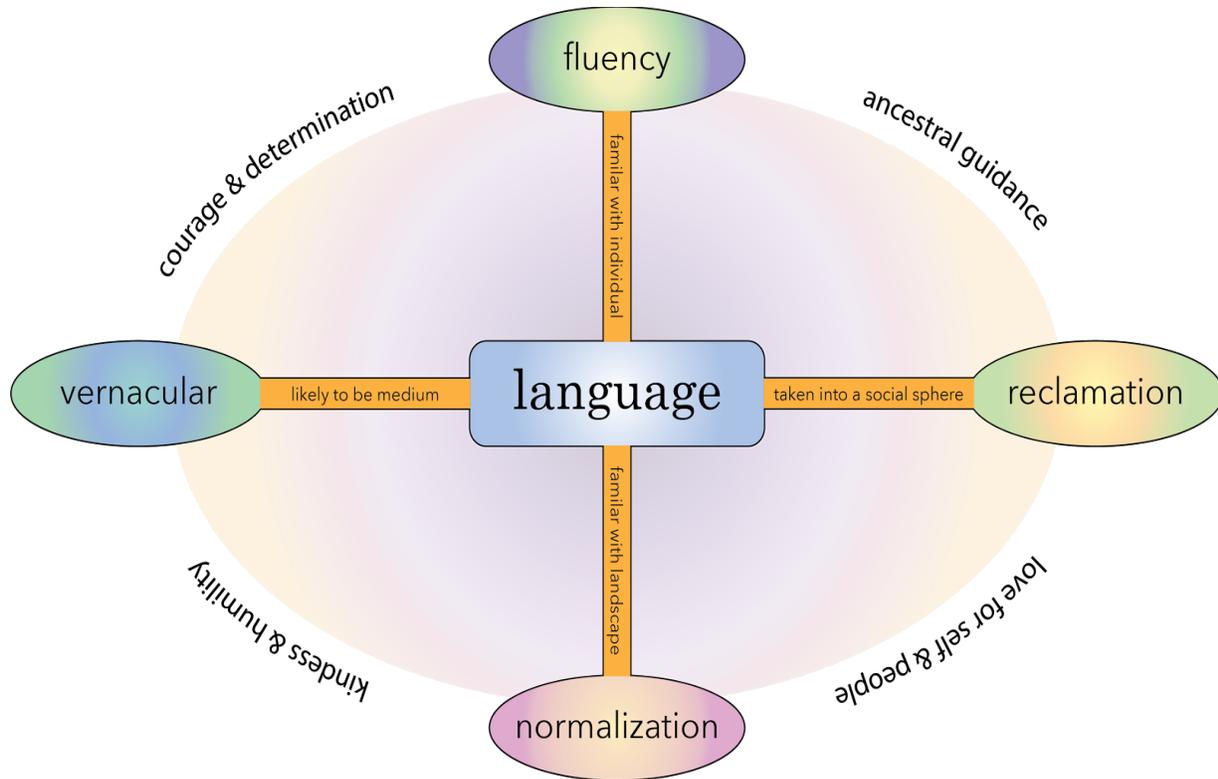
More information on language policy and language planning can be found at the Council’s website: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/AKNativeLanguagePreservationAdvisoryCouncil.aspx>

### 5.1 Best practices in language revitalization

Language revitalization—which involves bringing a language back to stability—and language maintenance—which is keeping a language from becoming endangered—are theoretically straightforward processes, but not as simple in real life as language communities struggle to turn back the tide of language loss.

Dr. William “Pila” Wilson, a leader in Hawaii’s language revitalization efforts for three decades, has said that language revitalization is about two things: 1) protecting the speakers you have while making new ones, and 2) making sure your language is the language of power and use. To put it plainly, the primary goals are to make sure there is a stable population of speakers—which most often means creating more speakers than are lost—and making sure the language is used in as many places as possible to communicate about as many things as possible. For languages to regain their place in populations that reside on that languages’ ancestral territory; language planning efforts should be specific, decisive, and informed by local, regional, statewide, and national power structures and social tendencies.

The situation of Alaska Native languages and their health and stability is complicated by colonialism, oppression, value shift, fragmentation, and systemic racism – all issues which are complex and interconnected. Stabilizing Indigenous languages is never about the language in isolation, because language stability requires dramatic social shift in the face of historical and ongoing marginalization and hierarchies of racial and therefore linguistic superiority. As linguist Margaret Noor states in her article on language activities in the language of Anishinaabemowin, “Ultimately, saving a language that is endangered as a result of racism is in fact a battle with racism itself. Families and communities can come together or disassemble as a result of making a commitment to face and change racism” (137). As we begin to examine best practices and explore methods of replicating them in Alaska, care should be taken to consider the ways that colonialism has impacted communities and the ways that colonialism creates ongoing oppressions for Indigenous languages and their speaking communities.



A Matrix of Language Health (X'unei Lance Twitchell, 2018)

While the social dynamics and stability of all languages vary dramatically, the path to language stability can be represented by Matrix of Language Health. A living language can be analyzed in the following areas:

**fluency** is how familiar the language is to its population; how likely is a person in the language community to understand what is being said or to communicate what they would like to say?

**normalization** is how familiar the language is with the landscape; how likely is a person to encounter the language in written and spoken forms in various places, and what expectations are placed upon people to know the language?

**reclamation** is the strategic identification of domains, which are places where the language should be taken; does the population know how to talk in detail about subjects (registers) in all the social and physical areas where it could be spoken (domains)?

**vernacular** is the likelihood that the language is the language choice in given situations—the day-to-day common language; how likely are speakers to use the language and stay in it regardless of domain or register?

All of Alaska's Native languages are now endangered and a few no longer have any proficient speakers. There are things that individuals, families, villages and towns, whole regions, and the State of Alaska can do to help revitalize Alaska Native languages.

## 5.2 Status planning

The first step in an organized program to improve the status of a language is to develop awareness that the language needs attention and work to improve its status. Talk with your family and neighbors, organize get-togethers to talk about what has happened with your language and which goals your community shares for your language’s future. Find more opportunities to use your language—in speaking, in signage—to increase community awareness of your language. Community members do not have to be proficient speakers to support other speakers and learners and to increase the level of language awareness in your community. Be supportive of everyone who is learning and speaking any amount of your language. Remember: People do not have to be fluent to be speakers; people simply have to start speaking their language as they are able!

“[T]he few speakers that are scattered throughout the region, if there was a way for them to meet face to face and do comparative work so that their descendants will know that we're all interrelated linguistically and that we have a lot to bring together even though we're from different dialects....

“But we’d like to see more—possibly our own radio station where we have our boive broadcasted for people who want to tune and... communicate across the airwaves... throughout the week. I don’t know what other regions... might have... already but in this area where it’s not in place..., it could be utilized for fluent speakers.” **Ggwitka Sperry Ash, Sugpiaq, Nanwalek**

## 5.3 Language-learning opportunities: individual classes

If people want to learn to speak more of an Alaska Native language, there may already be resources in their town or region. Look at the Appendix to this report and check for the latest information at: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/AKNativeLanguagePreservationAdvisoryCouncil/LanguagePrograms.aspx> to see known programs for language learning. But what if there is not one already? People may want to organize an informal language circle once a week, for speakers and learners at any level to meet and use the language. Informal language circles can be a great way to start. People may want to talk others in their community who want to see their Alaska Native language taught in the local schools and then, with them, go to their next school board meeting and tell them why they would like to see Alaska Native language classes offered. If people live in a community without any language speakers, there may be audio-video recordings available via the internet; gather a friend or two to watch these together and practice.

One of the shining lights in language-learning opportunities is the *Ilisaqativut* movement in the three regions where Inupiaq is spoken. Led by young people in their 20s and 30s who are serious students of the language, they are working actively to transcend the ANCSA-based division of Inupiaq country into three areas, are offering intensive, two-week, language learning opportunities in the regional hub towns of Utqiagvik, Kotzebue, and Nome, and shorter sessions in Anchorage, and all Inupiaq dialects are welcome. These young people find funding, recruit fluent speakers to teach, solicit input from the broader Inupiat community—all led by the emerging Inupiaq speakers.

“I guess my suggestion to the council would be maybe doing some research about how long it takes a person to learn a language, and then do a comparison of how many hours language teachers are in the school. And then we won't be in the dark of what the school needs to allocate for the language teachers.” **Joseph Marks, Tlingit, Juneau**

#### 5.4 Master-apprentice programs

A Master-Apprentice arrangement pairs an adult learner with an advanced speaker – usually an Elder. These programs are designed for languages with very few fluent speakers remaining, pairing them with speakers whose job is to spend at least ten or twenty hours a week, living completely in the language. The most successful examples have come out of California where the approach was designed by Julian Lang (Karuk) and UC Berkeley linguist, Leanne Hinton, in 1992. When master-speaker and apprentice-speaker are able to stick with this, the apprentice can develop advanced levels of conversational proficiency in two or three years.



*Language interviews with elders Margaret Bob, Ida Calmegane, Jane Smarch, Aggie Johnson in Teslin, YT (2018)*

### 5.5 Language-learning opportunities: language immersion programs

Language nests (for young children) and language immersion schools are the most powerful institutional means of teaching a language. Children (sometimes as young as a few weeks old, in the case of language nests) spend the day interacting with adults who speak to them only in the language. Language immersion schools have a fifty-five-year track record in North America for helping young children develop high conversational and academic fluency in an additional language while also developing academic fluency in a national language.

One reason for the small number of these programs is because language nests and language immersion schools require that there be highly proficient speakers, with training and experience for teaching children.

“One of the repercussions of having a lot of grant-funded projects is that... it's difficult to attract people if they know they only have a couple of years of funding or, in the best case, maybe five.” **Isiik April Counciller, Alutiiq, Kodiak**

Language schools are an area that are highly dependent on local support and control. The Council strongly supports the right of local communities to participate in deciding training and credentialing standards for language nest and language immersion teachers.

“One thing that I've thought about a lot is how teachers become certified. And maybe we need to be looking at how can we get more of our Alaska Natives certified as teachers, and not just a Type M Limited Certificate but full teachers that have all of the authority that all the other teachers have, to bring that into classrooms.” **Erin Monteith, Juneau**

Alaska Native language immersion schools have been operated in Bethel (Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, Central Yup'ik, 1995 to present, K-6th charter school); Hooper Bay (Central Yup'ik/Cup'ik); Kotzebue (Nikaitchuat Iłisaġviat, Iñupiaq, 1998 to present, private pre-school); Utqiaġvik (Iñupiaq, 1995 – early 2000s); K-4 partial immersion program in Mekoryuk (Cup'ig, 1999 to present); Nanwalek (Alutiiq/Sugt'stun, 1999-2002, pre-school, Nanwalek IRA Council); and at College Gate Elementary (Central Yup'ik) starting in 2019. Bethel's Yup'ik immersion program has had great success in teaching young people to be conversationally fluent and academically competent in Yup'ik alongside with English. **For more information on specific Native language programs, se Appendix E.**

“A lot of the teachers—the youngest teacher has been going on 30 years teaching the language.... It makes a difference in their lives in the pursuit of education or employment or their careers to have those positive connections to their culture and their family and their history, their place. And that would be my wish is to see our education system support our languages.” **Allan Hayton, Gwich'in, Fort Yukon**

## 5.6 Which language programs are appropriate for our community?

The answer to this question depends upon the current status of your language, that is, which generations speak the language largely determine what your options are. A common problem, with only a few elders as fluent speakers, is thinking that first priority is putting the elders into elementary classrooms for several minutes a day in each class. This cannot lead to fluency for learners quickly enough. Rather, master-apprentice language teams are the best practice when the only fluent speakers are 70+ years old; make new, fluent, L2 speakers ages 20-60 as quickly as possible! The new, fluent speakers can then effectively 1) train their own apprentices and 2) teach children and families in organized classes. So which generations speak your language in your community?

- Language is still spoken by almost everyone of all ages
- Language still spoken by about half of the children
- Language is still spoken only by those over the age of 20
- Language is still spoken by all generations over the age of 40
- Language is still spoken by all generations over the age of 60
- Language is spoken only by those over 75-80
- Language no longer has fluent speakers

**For languages that are still spoken in their community by almost everyone of all ages,** the best support for the continued vitality of the language starts with language policy and planning to increase the public and private use of the language in the community and use the language as the primary language of instruction, pre-school through at least third grade (perhaps through high school), with formal instruction in the national language starting in upper elementary grades.

**For languages still spoken in their community by about half the children as their first language,** language policy and planning toward increasing the normalization and use of the language and toward either an early total immersion program in the Native language or a *dual language immersion program* may be the most appropriate first steps. Dual language immersion programs aim for 50% first language-speakers of each language and match up students into pairs (with adjacent seats or desks), so that each student is receiving one half of their day's instruction in their own, first language, and half of the day in their second language; student partners help each other out. Both immersion school models require that teachers 1) be highly fluent in the immersion language, 2) be highly trained and certificated teachers, 3) ideally be very experienced teachers, and 4) receive specialized pre-service and in-service training in how to teach students effectively in a language that the students do not yet speak well.

**For languages still spoken in their community by all generations over the age of 20,** language policy and planning provide assistance to young and middle-aged adults in earning their teaching credentials and becoming language nest and language immersion teachers is an excellent option. This, along with increasing public use of the local language, so that young people can see its value in the daily life of their community, will reinforce the overall use of the language and its acquisition by children.

**For languages still spoken in their community by all generations over the age of 40,** language policy and planning should be directed toward normalizing the use of the language in the community and assisting middle-aged adults in earning their teaching credentials and becoming language nest and language immersion teacher. If possible, establishing Master-Apprentice partnerships for highly motivated young adults will help increase the number of speakers, increase inter-generational use of the

language in your community, and potentially add to the pool of future language immersion teachers. Holding regular “language circles” where language learners can practice with each other can be very useful.

**For languages still spoken only by those over the age of 60**, language policy and planning should be directed at increasing the presence of the language in the community, hosting language circles where adult learners can practice speaking in the language with highly proficient speakers, and the establishment of Master-Apprentice partnerships for the highly motivated language learners. Once some of these apprentices having become highly proficient speakers themselves, they potentially can step into the roles of language immersion teachers.

**For languages that are still spoken only by a very small number of elders over the age of 75 or so**, the most urgent need is to match up highly motivated language learners as apprentices with the elder speakers. Other language options can be helpful but, unless the community can create new, highly effective speakers of the language in very short order, it becomes very difficult to have any effective language programs in schools. With success by apprentice speakers, who then train other apprentice speakers, these communities can aim to start language nests and language immersion programs in the future.

“I’d like to see grassroots ideas that really foster what people are passionate about, specifically Inupiaq language. And because I think what we all know in each of our communities, each of our regions, the fluent speakers are passing a lot quicker than we are learning and preserving our languages. So, we’re at the crossroads where we need to promote grassroots efforts, which require very little budget; you just have a place and you do it.” **Josie Bourdon, Inupiaq, Nome**

“There is trauma connected to language loss, and healing associated with language revitalization. This historical trauma was passed from one generation to the next. The first generations of language speakers were punished for speaking in their first language. In turn, they spoke to their children in English.” **Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle, Inupiaq, Nome**



*Haa Yoo X'atangi (Lingít language nest) students working on puzzles in Juneau, AK (2021)*

## Appendix G: Language Needs Assessments (LNA)

### For use by Alaska Native Communities

Adapted from *British Columbia Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages, 2010*

Assessing the status of a language within a community is an important step in language revitalization planning and goal setting. By completing LNAs, communities assess the status of their language by identifying resources, resource people, support, and projects in their communities and by identifying gaps in these areas. Based on these gaps, communities can decide on their priorities and set goals accordingly. In addition, LNAs help build a strong case for grant proposals. This also helps how much we as a people ought to think seriously about our roles in order to maintain our heritage languages.

**1) Language Information**

Language:

Language Dialect(s):

**2) Challenges and Opportunities**

Challenges to implementing language and cultural projects:

Opportunities for implementing language and cultural projects:

**3) Community Population**

Date of your community's most recent population poll:

Month:

Year:

Population living in your village or region:

Population outside of your region:

Total population:

Information source:

Additional population information:

**4) Community language fluency\* information: Number of Speakers**

\* “Highly proficient” is defined as the ability to converse in the language on almost any topic that the speaker knows about. L1 = people who learned the language by age three; L2 = people who learned the language after that.

\* “Conversational” is defined as the ability to keep a conversation going in the language for at least five minutes although the speaker may soon reach limits of what they can talk about.

**If you have more up-to-date or more accurate information on numbers of speakers in your community, please email [anlpac@alaska.gov](mailto:anlpac@alaska.gov) or phone (907) 269-3646.**

	# of L1 highly proficient speakers	# of L1 dormant speakers	# of L2 conversational speakers	# who are learning the language
Total #				
Age 0-4				
5-15				
15-19				
20-24				
25-44				
45-54				
55-64				
65-74				
75-84				
85+				

**5) How many certified language teachers are in the community? \_\_\_\_\_**

**6) Do you have a tribally operated school? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No / If “yes,” complete the following:**

	School 1	School 2	School 3
Total #			
Ages 0-4			
5-14			
15-19			
20-24			
25-44			
45-54			
55-64			
65-74			
75-84			
85+			
Hours per week spent on languages			

**7) Immersion Class: Do you have immersion classes with more than 20 hours per week taught?**

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No / If “yes,” complete the following:

**Immersion Program**

Name:

Location:

Total # of participants:

**Age Range:**

**Number of Students in age group:**

Students aged 0-4

5-14

15-19

20-24

25-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

85 and over

**Average hours per day**

**Average days per week**

**Average weeks per year**

**8) Do you have a Head Start Program? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No / If “yes,” complete the following:**

**Head Start Program**

Name:

Location:

Total numbers of participants:

Number of hours per week spent on language instruction:

How is the program connected to the other languages programming in the community?

**9) Curriculum and Resource Assessment: Resources**

Language recordings/oral history archived (multimedia)

Finalized writing system

Curriculum materials developed

**Yes**

**No**

**10) Curriculum and Resources Assessment: Multi-media**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Access to a cultural language center		
Access to the internet		
Access to Alaska Native Language Archive		

**11) Community-developed Language and Cultural Resources**

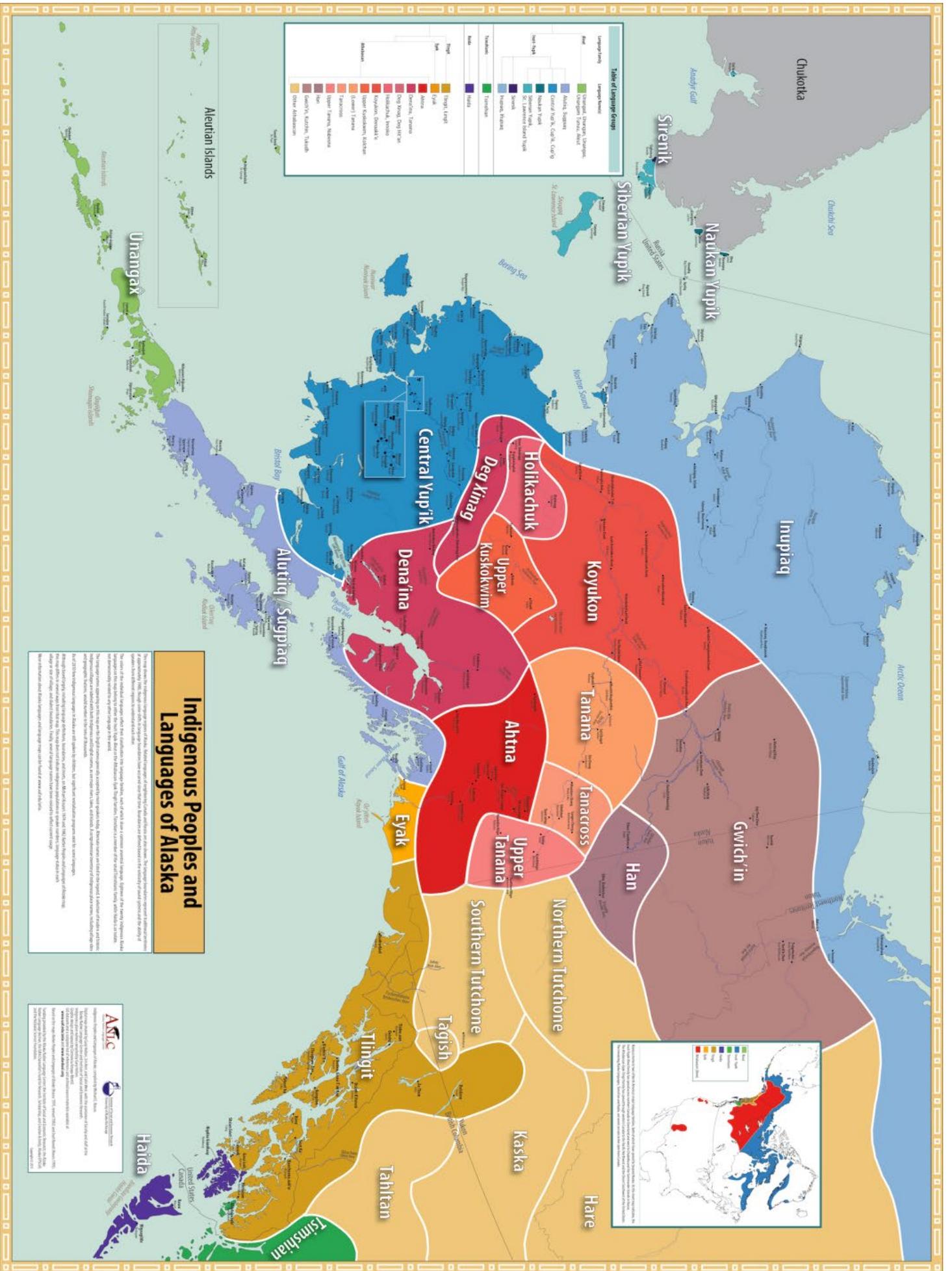
<b>Resource Title</b>	<b>Target Group (children, youth, adults, etc.)</b>	<b>How is the resource used (i.e., in school, Head Start, adult language classes, etc.)?</b>

## Appendix H: UNESCO Scale of Language Endangerment, modified

Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
safe for now	language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted
 vulnerable	most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
 definitely endangered	children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
 severely endangered	language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
 critically endangered	the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
 dormant	there are no fluent speakers left

ALTERNATIVE SCALE: From UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Danger

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/>



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/anlc/collections/search/resultDetail.xml?id=G961K2010>