

# Summary of Recommendations by the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council: 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*

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For its 2022 Biennial Report, the Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory 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, 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 (A.O. 300)* still stands, and make a formal commitment to the health and future of Alaska Native languages.

**LEG:** Restore full funding to the ANLPAC; develop standing legislative 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 an annual Alaska Native Languages Day.
2. Reconfirm the Linguistic State of Emergency (A.O. 300) 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, & 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.

### #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 historically have been 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.

### #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.

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

|                       | 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 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 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.