

RESISTING LINGUISTIC GENOCIDE:
LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AND IMMERSION SCHOOLS IN LINGÍT AANÍ,
SOUTHEAST ALASKA

By

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ABSTRACT

RESISTING LINGUISTIC GENOCIDE: LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AND IMMERSION SCHOOLS IN LINGÍT AANÍ, SOUTHEAST ALASKA

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The issue of language revitalization is central to the viability of Alaska Native communities. In order to resist language loss and ensure that languages are transmitted to younger generations, immense social efforts are required. Immersion schools have the potential to create more self-determined educational paradigms that are defined by internal cultural values rather than external western ideals, while simultaneously working to create a new generation of fluent speakers. However, immersion education is hindered by state and federally-sanctioned requirements that reduce communities' abilities to sustain immersion schools, which this thesis argues is an issue of social justice. These state and federal requirements are in conflict with international and national laws and agreements that guarantee Indigenous groups the right to self-determined educational paradigms in the language of their choosing. In 2015, legislation was introduced to support the creation of immersion charter schools in the State of Alaska. With Alaska's assimilationist history, the very creation of such legislation signals a shift in Alaskan politics. Through interviews, textual and content analysis, participation observation, community action research, and grounded theory methodologies, I find that Tlingit

efforts to establish immersion schools are hindered especially by: 1) dominant culture teacher certification, and 2) required monolingual standardized testing.

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INTRODUCTION

Alaska Native languages embody unique cultural values, knowledge, and worldviews. In particular, these languages embody knowledge about specific geographies and ways of relating to place to which the English language not only remains blind, but actively erases (Thorton 2008). The loss of such languages is far more than the loss of information or unique grammatical structures. It is the loss of social and environmental insights (Hinton and Hale 2001). Currently, of the twenty remaining Alaska Native languages, only two are being passed down through parents teaching their children at home, one has lost all living speakers, and the remaining are in danger of meeting the same fate as fluent speakers age (Abley 2008; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998; W. Geiger 2015).

The present loss of Alaska Native languages is a direct consequence of laws, policies, and practices enacted by the United States government beginning in the late 1800s in order to force assimilation and wipe out Alaska Native cultures and languages (Dauenhauer 1997; Crystal 2000). Contemporary efforts in language revitalization, also known as reversing language shift,¹ represent an opportunity to empower individuals,

¹ “Language revitalization” can be a politically charged term; “reversing language shift” is the less disputed term. As McCarty (2013) argues, “linguistic naming and classification, while foregrounding important issues of endangerment, can create a logic whereby threatened languages are viewed as ‘dis-citizens’ in the world of languages...potentially undermining revitalization efforts” (179). I acknowledge this, and agree with McCarty’s argument; however, the community that I work with for this thesis chooses to use the term “language revitalization,” and so I have purposefully chosen to as well in order to be consistent.

shift thinking, and change how people relate to the world around them. However, none of this is possible without immense efforts to ensure these languages recover from the generational dislocation arising from more than a century of forced language assimilation and the traumas of colonization (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998; Hinton and Hale 2001). Contemporary concerns over the steady march toward the extinction of Alaska Native languages signal that the traumatic impacts of colonialism are far from over (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994). Continued language loss also signals that the colonial logic of assimilation continues today, shaping all Alaskans' relations to social and environmental issues.

In an attempt to combat language shift, immersion schools have been suggested. This is a proven method of combating language loss—Hawaii and New Zealand, for example, are often presented as “successful” cases of language revitalization (Twitchell 2015; Wilson 2012). However, opening and operating an immersion school is complicated by state and federal laws and regulations. In an effort to mitigate some of these issues, legislation HB 157 was drafted in the Alaska House of Representatives in the spring of 2015 that aims to support the creation of immersion charter schools. The creator of the bill, Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, from Sitka, stated the following about the proposed legislation:

The takeaway is very simple. To revitalize a language, you need immersion language education. You need children to be surrounded by an immersive language environment from a young age. And that is how you create a new generation of fluent speakers. That is how you turn the tide of language loss. (Schoenfeld 2015)

This bill has yet to advance out of the House Education Committee, but has the potential to move forward during the second session of the twenty-ninth Alaska State Legislature, which is convening at the time of this writing. While it is disappointing that the bill has not received much attention, the drafting of this legislation marks a fundamental shift in Alaskan politics when compared to decades of direct suppression of Alaska Native languages. One example, the 1915 Act “to define and establish the political status of certain Native Indians within the Territory of Alaska” (see Appendix A) required that in order for any Alaska Native person to become a legal citizen he or she must go through multiple examinations, including having “at least five white citizens” as references, and signing an oath in order to prove that “such applicant forever renounces all tribal customs and relationships,” including language (Territory of Alaska 1915, 54). Obviously, such legislation is a sharp contrast to any bills that work to support Alaska Native languages.

Alaska Native groups requesting realistic representation in the educational system is not a new development; however, such positive support from policy is. This shift creates an opportunity to study the changing relationship between education and politics in Alaska. The recent historical trend has been toward minimal, often trivialized, tokenized, stereotyped, and anachronistic inclusion of Alaska Native language, culture, and knowledge within the broader public school system (Dauenhauer 1997; Freed and Samson 2004; ICTMN 2015). For example, four “revisionist” history books that were slated to be introduced to Juneau School District’s 2014 curriculum were removed due to objections from Alaska Native community members over the “volumes’ fictional depiction of events such as boarding schools and the Trail of Tears [which] did not do the

tragedies justices, and in fact distorted them” (ICTMN 2015). Edith McHenry, a Tlingit resident of Juneau, objected to the books, stating the following:

The Juneau school board should strive for historical accuracy and not whitewash history for feel-good books that do more damage than good. Can you imagine a Native child being assigned one of the objectionable books? How could the child reconcile the innocuous version of boarding school life with the reality of his immediate and extended familial history? Equally as harmful would be a non-Native student or teacher who, upon reading [the book about boarding schools] walks away thinking that boarding schools were not so bad—that Native students and their families should “just get over it!” (2014, 2)

Fictitious, revisionary historiographies are damaging to Native and non-Native students, teachers, and communities. Immersion charter schools, however, have the potential to provide to a more self-determined educational paradigm, one that is defined by internal cultural values, rather than external western ideals (Hermes, Bang and Marin 2012; Hinton and Hale 2001; McCarty 2014) and one where fictitious representations of the Alaska Native experience would not be an issue.

Against this background, the purpose of this thesis is to understand the political and social barriers to education reform in Alaska. To do so, my research examines attempts to introduce immersion schools in Alaska, focusing on Southeast Alaska’s Tlingit language revitalization efforts as a case study. In particular, I seek answers to the following questions:

1. What efforts have been made to develop Alaska Native language programs?
2. How has the discourse around immersion schools, specifically regarding Alaska Native languages, been framed in Southeast Alaska?
3. Which policies foster Alaska Native language immersion schools and which policies stand in the way?

To answer these questions, I have used a mixed-methods approach, employing literature and policy analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participation in a language-learning group. I used grounded theory and community action research in order to remain open to questions that emerged through the process of research, and to help reinforce a strong social justice method. These methods and methodologies are discussed in depth in the Methods chapter of this thesis.

To give more context to my research questions and subsequent arguments, the next two chapters are Background and Literature Review. Through these chapters the reader gains a better understanding of the historical and academic context of issues of language, education, and politics both in Alaska and elsewhere. This thesis argues that language revitalization, specifically related to K-12 educational efforts, is an issue of social justice. In the Body chapter, I use HB 157 as a framework to examine 1) immersion schools, 2) teacher certification, and 3) standardized testing, so as to better understand what immersion programs can (or cannot) do for Tlingit language revitalization, and for presenting what stands in the way of their implementation in Southeast Alaska. Additionally, this chapter is used to contend that Alaska's education system is currently unjust and in direct violation of national and international agreements, laws, and treaties.

Importance

Alaska Native people have endured colonial and genocidal practices that have been carried out as an attempt to appropriate their lands, remove their cultures from the face of

the earth, and assimilate them into “civilized” Euro-American culture. It is important to note that Alaska’s Indigenous people, living in the forty-ninth state to be brought into the US, experienced these traumatic events in relatively recent times. Language can be seen as the key to preserving traditional Alaskan cultures and to creating a place where Alaska Native people can feel a strong sense of self-worth—particularly important in a state with not only the highest per capita rates of suicide (21.8 people per 100,000 compared to 11.5 per 100,000 for the whole of the United States), but where Alaska Native males ages fifteen to twenty-four are the demographic with the highest rate of suicide in the entirety of the US (a shocking 141.6 per 100,000) (Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, 1). Additionally, Alaska Native women deal with sexual assault and domestic abuse at unprecedented levels (Alaska as a whole is frequently the state with the highest rate of forcible rape in the country). These social ills are a repercussion of colonial practices and the intergenerational trauma that stems from them (Napoleon 1996). Clearly, immersion schools will not remedy all of these symptoms of trauma; however, reformed education and language revitalization can be steps toward self-determined healing.

BACKGROUND

The ability to maintain or revitalize languages in spite of over a century of cultural genocide and language suppression is a form of resistance to ongoing colonial practices. Adger defines “social resilience as the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change” (2000, 347). Attempts to revitalize languages are efforts at socio-ecological resilience. Resilience is increased through diversity—both in ecosystems and within humanity. In this way we can think about a diversity of languages and knowledge as adding to the capacity for resilience within humanity. As Hinton and Hale assert,

the loss of language is part of the loss of whole cultures and knowledge systems, oral literary and musical traditions, environmental knowledge systems, medical knowledge, and important cultural practices and artistic skills. The world stands to lose an important part of the sum of human knowledge whenever a language stops being used. Just as the human species is putting itself in danger through the destruction of species diversity, so might we be in danger from the destruction of the diversity of knowledge systems. (2001, 5)

The loss of Alaska Native languages is part of this loss of diversity within human knowledge, particularly human understanding of Alaska as a place.

Traditional knowledge of a place passed down through oral tradition is sometimes termed “place intelligence” (Thorton 2008, 10). This knowledge has frequently been framed as outdated and archaic when held by Indigenous groups (Deloria, Jr. and Wildcat 2001). The ongoing racist and colonial structures and rhetoric in the US reveal that ideas planted a century and a half ago are still working to the detriment of Alaska Native cultures and society (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994; Krauss 1980). The same

attitudes frequently are seen in the discussion of learning languages—world languages good, Native languages bad (bad for the students, and bad for the country). Often the rhetoric includes “we have to prepare students for the *real* world”—meaning that if students are proficient in the languages of global trade i.e. “the *real* world,” white educators have prepared them for the American vision of success. This is colonialistic thinking. Alaska Native languages have developed in their particular parts of the world over thousands of years and are inextricably tied to survival and communication in their places of origin (Berg 2015; Thornton 2008).

This chapter provides a short explanation of what has led to the ongoing language shift of Alaska Native languages, and specifically the Tlingit language. Much of this context relates to all Alaskan Native groups, but my focus is on Southeast Alaska and the Tlingit people and language. This focus is for several reasons: 1) because of the scope of a master’s thesis, I could not do justice to all of the groups of Alaska—in fact I do not claim to be doing justice for the entirety of issues related to the current status of the Tlingit language; 2) as someone who grew up in Lingít Aaní, I have a personal investment, along with important contacts who have a much greater understanding of current and ongoing issues than I possess; and 3) I have spent my life benefitting from the colonial occupation of Lingít Aaní, and as such, I hope that my work can contribute positively to my home, even if in only some minor way.

Language and Place

Important ties exist between a language and the place in which it develops. An example of the significance of place within Tlingit language is that of the term “kwáan”:

Tlingit occupants of a given geographic area, regardless of their moiety or clan, are known collectively as kwáan. This is a difficult word to translate, because it has no English equivalent. It refers to people of, or a person of, a place. It can refer to a birthplace in addition to, or as opposed to, a place of residence. It is the equivalent of *-ites*, *-ers*, and *-ns* in such English designations as Juneauites, New Yorkers, and Californians. Like the English endings, which are called ‘bound morphemes’ because they are always bound to a main word and never stand alone, the term kwáan usually does not stand alone in Tlingit, although it is gaining acceptance in English as a loan word. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994, 5, original emphasis).

A traditional Tlingit introduction would include a person’s kwáan, as the place you come from is an integral part of who you are (W. Geiger 2015; Thornton 2008; Twitchell 2015). Thus, kwáan is an identity and a territory (see Appendix B for a map of Tlingit kwáans).

Additionally, worldviews are contained within languages. The cliché of countless Inuit words for snow varieties is relevant here, in spite of any overuse or misuse—when a group inhabits a space for an extended period of time, languages develop dialectically with that place. Living in a place with frequent snow cover, it is important to be able to articulate exactly what you mean by snow, as slight differences may mean travel being more or less difficult, and different potential foods. As Keith Basso puts it, within a language “portions of a world view are constructed and made available, and a [Native] version of the landscape is deepened, amplified, and tacitly affirmed. With words, a massive physical presence is fashioned into a meaningful human universe” (1996, 40).

The language one uses changes what is meaningful within that human universe. Thornton ties living in a place to how we experience it:

Dwelling breeds a certain intimacy through everyday experience that is often profoundly different from the peak experience that may accompany a fleeting encounter with place...In Southeast Alaska this contrast is evident in the way that Alaska Natives and tourists encounter the same landscapes. While tourists tend to marvel in Muir-like mystical terms at the fabulous peaks, glaciers, fjords, and other physical features of grandeur, Tlingits, at least in their own locales, are more likely to perceive and characterize places in terms of the practical activities. (2008, 26)

Passing through a place requires no discernment between places perceived as beautiful and those seen as utilitarian—residing in them does.

This difference in perception and understanding can be seen through the disparity in the way places are named by Tlingit People and by Euro-Americans. The colonial practice generally has been to name places “discovered” by Euro-Americans after, as Alaska Representative Fred Dyson put it, “the Alma Mater of some rich tourist on a quasi-scientific expedition” (2002, 1). The Tlingit naming practice has been one of utility—a place is named for that which it is used for or what needs to be remembered about that place. For example, Gaanax can be translated to “Sheltered [Harbor]” (Thornton 2008, 48). Here the name reflects the function of a place, as opposed to its Euro-American name of Point Stewart.

Thornton further explores the connections of place and experience, taking a step farther, and connecting emotion to place:

A great virtue of looking at culture through the perspective and experience of place is that both individual and collective perceptions are embraced, and material and symbolic components of the environment are not artificially separated but rather inextricably intertwined. Similarly, in studying place feelings need not be

subordinated or divorced from cognition, for emotion is basic to the way we sense and think about our world. (Thornton 2008, 29)

This emotion is of the utmost importance when studying language shift in a place so connected to its language. Similarly, this quote is particularly compelling for research being done in a program, such as the Environment and Community Master of Arts in Social Science at Humboldt State University, that encourages students to be forthcoming with their positionalities and biases, instead of striving for objectivity (also true of work situated in post-colonial intersectional feminism, discussed in the Literature Review chapter, and the methodologies discussed in the Methods chapter).

Conflicting Visions: Russian and Early US Control and Education

The Russian occupation of Alaska, beginning in the mid-1700s, created little conflict over the language of education in Lingít Aaní, and had relatively minor effects on Alaska Native languages. In fact, it was the Russians who first created written forms of many Alaska Native languages (Krauss 1980). This is not to romanticize the period of Russian occupation, yet, in spite of the severe conflicts that occurred, the Tlingit people remained in control of the majority of Southeast Alaska, and no efforts were made to exterminate the people or their language (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994; Krauss 1980). As Russians were not settler colonialists; the concern was more with resources, and less with control of the area of Alaska. Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer note that “[t]here is no evidence of any campaign during the Russian period against Tlingit language, culture, or sense of personhood” (1994, 35). As it happens, many Russians learned the Alaska Native language of the area they inhabited, understanding that this

granted greater access to resources and a greater ability to spread their religion. The Russian Orthodox Sitka seminary required several years of Alaska Native language, and schools (which were not required for Native children) were bilingual, with Russian children learning Alaskan languages and Alaskan children learning Russian (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994; Krauss 1980).

Optional bilingual education came to an end with the “purchase” of Alaska from Russia by the United States in 1867 (the illegality of which led to ANCSA²). The US government initially ignored its new territory. However, when reports of turmoil between arriving settlers, Alaska Natives, and remaining Russians surfaced, a naval rule was installed. The US Navy became the enforcers of law and order, supporting Protestant rule (Dauenhauer 1997; Krauss 1980).

Sheldon Jackson, a strict Protestant, became a highly influential figure as the first General Agent of Education for the territory. His rise in power came at a time when US policy was shifting from dealing with the “Indian problem” through war, to dealing with it through assimilation into western society. Jackson began running Christian public schools aimed at “civilizing” Natives. Tlingit and other Alaskan languages were “too heathen and sin-ridden to express civilized Christian thought, and in Sheldon Jackson

² Because of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), Alaska Native groups do not have the same sovereignty over land that other Native American groups in the contiguous United States do. Instead, Native groups were given financial restitution for land usurped by the United States government, with a move away from the reservation system. This can be seen in two competing ways: on the one hand, the reservation system aided in extreme exploitation and oppression, and instead Alaska Native groups have corporations set up with financial assets that can be managed to their benefit; however, on the other hand, this is also a method for forcing assimilation, as well as a way to pacify any concerns over sovereignty.

School [in Sitka, Alaska] the use of Native languages was strictly forbidden”

(Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994, 45). According to Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, whose work spans multiple disciplines and over four decades of research and publication on Tlingit literature, language, culture, and history,

There has been no greater single contribution to the loss of Alaska Native languages and cultures than the American Protestant mission and the English-only educational philosophy of Sheldon Jackson and those around him in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their ideas became institutionalized in the American educational system, where they shaped public policy and attitude, and they remain powerful forces to the present day... The new American theology, philosophy, and policies were radically different from those of the bilingual Russian period. And whereas Russian Orthodox educational philosophy and practice made no lasting impact on public policy after 1867...the Sheldon Jackson legacy continues. (1994, 43)

English-only education plans were aided by one repercussion of the sudden influx of immigrants to the state: disease. Contact with western diseases left thousands of Alaska Natives dead—losing up to 60 percent of their people—from “[d]iphtheria, [i]nfluenza, cholera, smallpox, syphilis, measles, mumps, chickenpox, tuberculosis, and alcohol” (La Belle 2005, 3; Napoleon 1996), in turn creating thousands of orphaned children. In the 1930s and 1940s, what had begun as orphanages and day schools turned into a system of forced boarding schools that remained in operation into the 1970s (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994; La Belle 2005; Twitchell 2015). Alaska’s boarding schools had rampant emotional, physical, and sexual abuse—all while children were inculcated into the western worldview (La Belle 2005). (See Appendix C for excerpts from Jim La Belle’s “Boarding Schools: Historical Trauma among Alaska’s Native People,” a historical and first person account of the boarding school experience.)

The goals of Sheldon Jackson and his supporters are still visible in the Alaskan education system—school subjects are taught almost exclusively from the Euro-American perspective. In my own experience with the Juneau Public School District, students learned a select few Tlingit stories in elementary school (if their teachers elected to teach them) and then had little to no formal interaction with Tlingit culture or history. In spite of having grown up in Lingít Aaní, my first lessons in Alaska Native history were in an elective university course, taught by interviewee and a leader in the language revitalization movement, X'unei Lance Twitchell. It is no wonder, with this lack of inclusion, that Alaska's education system continues to struggle with supporting its Native students.

In summary, the Russian and the US occupations of Alaska have had very different, but serious impacts on Alaska Native people. Dissimilar is the impact of US education on Alaska Native languages:

Bilingual education was the norm in Russian America, with proven good results. It was abolished in the American period, with the following results: Most Native languages are now on the verge of extinction, a very low level of self-esteem exists in most Native communities, and families and communities have suffered from extreme social upheavals. In contrast, the bilingual schools of Russian America attempted to build on indigenous talent and potential, channeling it to new fulfillment in new directions, such as literacy. In the American period, the schools had the express purpose of destroying Native language and culture, replacing them with Anglo-American language and values. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994, 45-47)

The rates of suicide and social problems in Alaska are inextricably linked to these efforts to eradicate Alaska Native cultures through education—efforts that persist in contemporary Alaskan education.

Contemporary Education

In recent years, attempts to incorporate some Alaska Native history into public school curriculum have been witnessed. However, this inclusion is mostly limited to elementary schooling, with trivialized, token representations. Nora and Richard Dauenhauer examine the inherent racism in the reductionism and simplification of Tlingit culture:

There is a danger of hypocrisy and of sending the message that Tlingit culture is “kid stuff.”... oral literature is often seen as children's literature. We take this as racism: the reduction of someone else's culture to a childish level, the diminishing or denial of the intellectual and spiritual value of another culture. It is relatively easy to introduce Tlingit materials in elementary school, but often impossible to do so in high school... We have nothing against children's literature, but we do protest the trivialization of serious, adult literature. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1995, 98)

The long-standing exclusion of Tlingit culture after elementary school shows that school districts are treating Alaska Native culture as child’s play—a youthful hobby at best that does not need to be discussed beyond simplified stories taught to children.

Furthermore, racist stereotypes of Alaska Native students allow teachers to justify poor educational efforts, instead of attempting to understand why students do not remain in or succeed in school (Freed and Samson 2004). Teachers and administrators frequently blame Native students for any failures and do not consider their own inadequacies in meeting the needs of the students (Freed and Samson 2004). The Dauenhauers point out that

[t]he enduring message of the system is, “You’re the wrong color, you speak the wrong language, you have the wrong culture, you have the wrong religion.” ... [P]olicy, administrators and school boards continue to debate the wisdom of

including Alaska Native languages, literature, and culture in the curriculum, while at the same time they continue to ponder (in well-worn phrases) the “low self-esteem” of “at risk” Native students. (1994, 62-63)

In order to combat this legacy of racism and to support languages that have suffered from the ideologies put in place by Sheldon Jackson and his supporters, immersion language schools have been proposed (AK State Legislature 2015, Schoenfeld 2015, Twitchell 2015). Immersion schools are seen as an opportunity to address the “low self-esteem” and high dropout rates of “at-risk” Native students. As the late Dr. Walter Soboleff, a Tlingit minister and Alaska Native languages professor, imparted, “In Tlingit culture, we never had suicides because we knew who we were. Now in the culture, there are those who say, ‘who am I?’” (Quinn 2011, 45). Immersion schools have the potential to create an environment where students know who they are—an environment with a more self-determined educational paradigm and a space for that language to live (Hermes, Bang, and Marin 2012; Hinton and Hale 2001; McCarty 2014). A place occupied by the language in question is particularly important when it comes to Alaska Native languages, as Alaska Native groups do not have sovereignty over any “tribal land” (see Footnote 2 regarding ANCSA), as some Native American groups do in the contiguous US.

Attempts to create immersion-supportive legislation come on the heels of the Official State Languages Bill (HB 216). In 2014 Alaska became the second state (after Hawaii) to recognize its Indigenous languages as “Official State Languages.” Previous to the passage of HB 216, Alaska’s sole official language was English due to a 1998 voter initiative (later declared partially unconstitutional by the Alaska Supreme Court),

sponsored by Alaskans for a Common Language (see Appendix D for the ballot language). HB 216 was a narrowly won victory for Alaska Native communities. There was frequent stalling on the part of the Alaska Legislature, and when the bill did make it out of the House, the Senate Majority leader, John Coghill (R-North Pole), stated that he was “not sure if those languages should be elevated to the same level as English under state law” (Kelly 2014). Inadequate alternatives such as an “Alaska Native Languages Day” were offered as a remediation for the legacy of colonialism that has led to Alaskan Native language shift (AK State Legislature 2014). Nevertheless, HB 216 passed on the last day of the regular 2014 legislative session after a fifteen-hour sit-in by a diverse group including Alaska Native elders who endured boarding schools, Tlingit language students, and concerned community members (see Appendix E for a copy of HB 216). This group was further made up of one of mentor X’unei Lance Twitchell, committee member Mike Hoyt, multiple interviewees, my brother, and myself. HB 216 passed the Alaska State House of Representatives unanimously five days earlier, and the Alaska State Senate eighteen to two. It is with this momentum that advocates of HB 157 hope to see the pro-immersion bill pass.

HB 157 (see Appendix F) and the creation of immersion schools can be a step toward avoiding crossing a resilience threshold for many Indigenous languages. Debatably, that line may have been crossed for the Eyak language (the next group north of Lingít Aaní), whose last living birth-speaker passed away in 2008 (Abley 2008). A change in thinking about education and Native languages could prevent the same shift for other Alaska Native groups who approach similar tipping points. Resilience for Alaska

Native communities, and additionally for all people, is increased through a diversity of worldviews and cultures. Thus, support for language revitalization is a benefit for the greater human heritage, and the resilience of humanity, not a “threat”, as the Senate Majority leader’s comment about English as a privileged language suggests.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Loss and Revitalization

According to Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, language revitalization “means to alter the current trend toward loss by taking decisive and appropriate action” (1998, 61). Language revitalization is resistance to ongoing “*Language shift*...[which] refers to the fact that over the last two or more generations, language use in most Native communities has shifted, and the shift is towards loss of the indigenous, tribal language in favor of national and world languages. Thus, Native American languages are being replaced by English” (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998, 61, original emphasis).

Language shift begins when a language is not used in governance or education in the country in which it is contained (Hinton and Hale 2001, 3). Considering that the world is made up of roughly 250 countries and 6,000 languages, very few languages encompass an entire nation (Hinton and Hale 2001, 19). In the case of Tlingit and seventeen other Alaska Native languages, the government does not use the language, schools do not use the language, and parents are not able or not willing to speak the language with children at home (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998; Twitchell 2015). These are the sites of language shift. Unlike language shifts that occur when communities move from their homeland to a new community, there is no other homeland for Indigenous languages—the place in question is their home (Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Hinton and Hale 2001).

Bauman's (1980) five categories of language status and matched strategies for retention are used by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer when examining issues in reversing language shift: "flourishing, enduring, declining, obsolescent, and extinct, with strategies of prevention, expansion, fortification, restoration, and revival" (1998, 59). Tlingit fits the obsolescent category as characterized by the following factors:

- 1) An age gradient of speakers that terminates in the adult population;
- 2) The language is not taught to children in the home;
- 3) The number of speakers declines very rapidly;
- 4) The entire (speaking) population is bilingual and English is preferred in essentially all situations;
- 5) The language is inflexible, it no longer adapts to new situations;
- 6) There is no literacy. (Bauman 1980, 11)

Thus restoration, or revitalization, is the appropriate resistance to the loss of the language. It should be noted that the work of "language warriors," such as X'unei Lance Twitchell, combats these factors (particularly factors five and six). However, in general the obsolescent category fits, with a few individual exceptions to the rule.

The concern becomes: how does one go about language revitalization? Fishman's (1991) eight stages of reversing language shift (see Appendix G) include steps that depend on the "severity of intergenerational dislocation" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998, 61; Hinton and Hale 2001). Based on these steps, in order to move beyond use only as a second language learned in school or basic literacy, to actual fluency, step 5a should be used, which encourages immersion schools as a tool for reversing language shift—a step not yet being taken by schools in the Juneau School District. As of the time of writing, Juneau's two middle schools are experimenting with offering Tlingit language as

an optional language course alongside courses such as French and Spanish. The outcome and longevity of this offering are yet to be seen.

However, the Dauenhauers (1998) along with Hinton and Hale (2001), have argued that while the integration of target languages into the school as a language course may be a step towards reversing language shift, it does not create a space for living, dynamic languages. Instead, it is simply one where Tlingit is spoken in a particular class. For language revitalization, languages need to be used by students outside of the classroom as well (Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Hinton and Hale 2001; Reyhner 2010). Immersion programs saturate so much of the students' lives that languages are not only learned and used in school, but students are more likely to use the languages outside of school with their peers. Additionally, many immersion programs require parents to improve their language skills simultaneously, bringing the language into the home. In this way a fluent generation can be regained as well as a living language (Hinton and Hale 2001, 9). This is not to dismiss the possible significance of including Tlingit language classes more broadly within the Juneau School District. The inclusion and normalizing of the language would allow immersion school students to speak with their non-immersion peers in and about the language, again supporting the language itself and supporting its use (Hinton and Hale 2001; Twitchell 2015).

Education and Language Politics

This thesis examines the convergence of education and politics in Alaska in relation to Alaska Native language revitalization. Recent attempts to incorporate a small amount

of Alaska Native history into public school curricula have been limited to elementary schooling, with misleading, even deceptive representations. This deficiency of Tlingit cultural inclusion indicates that school districts are treating Alaska Native culture as child's play. Racist stereotypes of Alaska Native students allow teachers to justify poor education efforts, instead of attempting to understand why students do not remain in or succeed in school. For example, in interviews of teachers, administrators, and students in Northwest Alaska, Freed and Samson heard one teacher state: "We [Americans] didn't conquer these people. We rescued them... And if [students] need to be [at their current grade level] for 13 years, then they will be there... Or until they drop out" (2004, 41).

As discussed in the Background section of this thesis, Sheldon Jackson and his fellow architects of Alaska education have constructed a system meant to degrade Alaska Native students, while blaming them for not assimilating correctly. Vine Deloria Jr., the late Native American scholar and activist, argues "that the very tradition and system of knowledge [of the core values of Western civilization is]...the problem" (Deloria, Jr. and Wildcat 2001, 9). Self-determined education, in the form of immersion schools, can provide a space for Tlingit language revitalization, which simultaneously raising students within the Tlingit worldview. Deloria, Jr. and Wildcat take the issue of education in the US a step further:

The problem with Indian education in America is really the problem of education in America, regardless of whether recipients of the education are, figuratively speaking, red, yellow, black, or white. Of course, the historically racist character of America education cannot and should not be minimized. Rather, the point ought to be made that the early formulation of Indian education as articulated by its architects, should have been seen as the "miner's canary," warning of problems

with the underlying assumptions implicit in Western civilization and its system of education. (2001, 9-10)

The impact of these messages to Native students is a continuation of colonial ideals compounded with intergenerational traumas.

Teresa McCarty's work with immersion schools on the Navajo Nation shows that "Native-language immersion systematically incorporates Native cultural content and culturally appropriate ways of teaching and learning. Most important, Native-language immersion not only engages students in learning the Native language, but also math, science, social studies, music, art, and even English *through* that language" (2014, 1). In fact, several Navajo immersion programs have reported that they have seen "immersion students perform[ing] as well on local tests of English as their non-immersion peers, and better in English writing and math" (McCarty 2014, 4). Moreover, social health was improved as immersion programs "brought parents and elders into the program, reinforcing intergenerational ties" (McCarty 2014, 4). Hawaiian immersion language programs have seen similarly positive results, with schools that have a record of 100 percent graduation and 90 percent direct-to-college rates (Twitchell 2015; Wilson 2012). Ultimately, Native languages do not hurt the academic performance of students—they enhance performance.

The challenges to implementing immersion schooling are educational laws and regulations, which inhibit the ability to create and maintain these schools (Hinton and Hale 2001, 9). No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which regulated standardized testing since 2001, for example, states the following:

Sec. 1111 (b) (2) (D) requires that state testing be consistent with professional standards and be demonstrably valid and reliable. Testing academic content through a language other than the one through which that content is learned is neither consistent with professional standards nor valid and reliable. (Wilson 2012, 35)

However, required English-language standardized testing is in direct violation of several national and international laws and agreements, e.g., the Native American Languages Act (1990) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007, although not endorsed by the US until 2010) (these and other bills and violations are discussed further in the Body chapter of this thesis). “Standardization and English monolingualism” continue to reinforce colonial standards and push for the steady march towards language loss (McCarty 2003, 147) while serving as “an instrument of internationally condemned forced assimilation” (Wilson 2012, 35) for Alaska Native students.

Social Justice and Language

The ability to maintain or revitalize languages in response to over a century of cultural genocide and language suppression is not only a form of resistance to colonial practices, but also an issue of social justice. According to Hodge and Kress, “language is an instrument of control as well as communication” (1993, 6). Tollefson, in his work *Language Policies in Education*, links linguistics and social justice, stating that “[c]ritical linguistics entails social activism: linguistics are seen as responsible not only for understanding how dominant social groups use language for establishing and maintaining social hierarchies, but also for investigating ways to alter those hierarchies” (2002, 4).

Tollefson goes on to discuss reading language policies with a critical linguistics lens, asserting that a

critical perspective toward language policy emphasizes the effect of precluding alternatives, making state policies seem to be the natural condition of social systems... Moreover, a critical perspective aggressively investigates how language policies affect the lives of individuals and groups who often have little influence over the policymaking process. (2002, 4)

As discussed in the Background chapter, Alaskan policies on Native languages have had the negative impacts described, while the status quo is maintained through a lack of critical perspective.

The link between social justice and language is reinforced in Macedo's discussion of Paulo Freire's work, stating that what is important within any research is that it must "approach the analysis of oppression through a convergent theoretical framework where the object of oppression is cut across by such factors as race, class, gender, culture, *language*, and ethnicity" (Macedo 2001, 15, emphasis added). In Alaskan politics, racist and classist agendas have been advanced through linguistic genocide.

In addition to the framework of critical linguistics, intersectional postcolonial feminism also views the language of school instruction and language revitalization as an issue of social justice. Intersection postcolonial feminism allows for the examination of the ways in which the people of Southeast Alaska have been

impacted by (post)colonial structures and relations of power. This framework emphasizes questions of how and why knowledge is produced, as well as the material consequences of knowledge production, demonstrating that knowledge (re)produced on the basis of power-over relationships acts as an instrument of power itself. (Urban 2008, 12)

Knowledge production is of the utmost importance when one group of people wishes to dominate another. This is clear in the othering of Alaska Native groups in order to forcefully take the land and resources of Alaska, as well as the legacy of fear that I have witnessed as a result of previous knowledge production, which is manifesting as racist opposition to the cultural renaissance currently occurring in Southeast Alaska. Trivialized representations of Alaska Natives and Alaska Native languages within school systems continue to advance colonial agendas. My research is an examination of one way that communities may choose to reject this legacy and move towards more self-determined, socially conscious pedagogies—immersion schools.

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to understand, through a social justice lens, the barriers to creating and maintaining Tlingit language immersion schools. Additionally, on a broader scale, this study aims to understand the consequences and continuing impacts of colonialism in Alaska, as well as barriers to Indigenous self-determined education. In order to examine these issues the methodologies and methods discussed below are employed.

Methodology

Methodologies are the ways in which I work to answer the research questions listed previously—they are my goals and procedures of inquiry. I have used a combination of case study, grounded theory, and community action research, in an attempt to hold as much of a participatory position as possible. The hope is to use this thesis as an instrument for the community in which I work, in order for the parties involved to gain necessary information through collaboration (specifically collaboration with educators and/or activists looking to create a Tlingit language immersion school, and the legislative office working to pass HB 157). Methodologies were chosen in order to maintain a strong grounding in, and a commitment to, horizontal knowledge production (as opposed to hierarchical knowledge production, horizontal knowledge production is inclusive and disseminated across groups, rather than down through power structures) (Janelle 2016; Sorrells 2010). While these methodologies do take away a

degree of personal control over the direction of this thesis, they are fundamental to the possibility of my work being of any value to the community whose life work is the continuation of the Tlingit language, as well as fundamental to a grounding in social justice.

Case study

A case study is the examination of a particular instance/place/occurrence (Newing 2011). More specifically, it “is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Noor 2008, 1602) in order to see what happened, why, and how (Noor 2008). Conducting a case study allows for a better understand of the specific issues surrounding the creation of Tlingit language immersion schools in Southeast Alaska, which then can be added to the broader understanding of education and language revitalization issues (Newing 2011). Here I take the view that “[c]ase studies are not a data gathering technique, but rather a methodological approach incorporating multiple methods, including interviewing, observation and document [analysis]” (Sterk and Elifson 2004, cited in Sorrells 2010, 39).

Attempts to create immersion schools in Lingít Aaní represent an example of what Bradshaw and Stratford classify a typical case “on the grounds that [this research] will provide useful insights into casual processes in other contexts” (2000, 43). In this way the case study of Tlingit language revitalization and education can add to the broader understanding of issues facing Indigenous languages and Indigenous education. The “purpose of a qualitative profile of one or more typical cases is to describe and illustrate

what is typical to those unfamiliar with the program—not to make generalized statements about the experiences of all participants” (Patton 1990, 173). Thus, this research is meant to illustrate what is taking place in the case of Lingít Aaní, and generally the issues with creating and maintaining Native language immersion schools, without homogenizing the experiences of those involved.

This methodology involved ten weeks of field research in Lingít Aaní in Southeast Alaska in the summer of 2015, where I conducted interviews with twelve key informants, and attended a public Tlingit language-learning group, while also analyzing policies, documents, and literature related to the case in order to conduct purposeful sampling for this case study. Patton states in regard to purposeful sampling that

[t]he logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to increase the effectiveness of a program in reaching lower-socioeconomic groups, one may learn a great deal more by focusing in depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives of a small number of carefully selected families than by gathering standardized information from a large, statistically representative sample of the whole program. (1990, 169, emphasis original)

Conducting this research as a case study allows for the illustration of this particular place and issue while also shedding light on broader issues of Native education and language in Alaska and the United States.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a methodological approach in which theories are derived from the data collected, as opposed to fitting collected data into existing theories (Charmaz

2002, 675). As Charmaz explains, “researchers collect data and analyze it simultaneously from the initial stages of research” (2002, 675). In this case grounded theory allows for a fluid research plan—allowing the data to move the study in the appropriate direction, not preconceived notions, or deductive approaches. Grounded theory encourages co-researcher methods of study and views being close to the social justice issue at hand and community in question as crucial elements of developing rigorous research (Charmaz 2005). Social justice, as opposed to simply social research, is foundational to grounded theory and is what makes this methodology ideally suited to this research.

Additionally, grounded theory requires a clear positionality and an understanding that research is not neutral—it is a reflection of our moral choices, which is why close relationships to co-researchers, and consistent self-reflection are imperative to socially just research. As Charmaz asserts,

Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life. That means giving close attention to empirical realities and our collected renderings of them—*and* locating oneself in these realities. It does not assume that data simply await discovery in an external world or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studied world. Nor does it assume that impartial observers enter the research scene without an interpretive frame of reference. Instead, what observers see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording empirical materials. (Charmaz 2005, 509)

Grounded theory encourages ongoing reassessments of data and research assumptions, which lends itself to this work as the majority has been done while waiting for the hearing of HB 157. Requiring that researchers locate themselves within their work, and remain close to it, is particularly relevant as a white woman doing work with an Alaska

Native community (Payne and Payne 2004, 90; further discussed in Literature Review chapter, Social Justice section). By understanding that I am biased by my privileged position I can work to counter that privilege to the best of my ability.

This research is issued with the understanding that changes may occur to the legal feasibility of immersion schools due to HB 157 awaiting a scheduled vote, and the changing approaches taken by the community of people working to open an immersion school in Juneau, Alaska—making grounded theory’s flexible methodology pertinent.

Community action research

Community action research (CAR) is a methodology that centers on a particular community and its needs (Ozanne and Anderson 2010, 123). Community members are collaborators, or co-researchers, and research is “guided by locally defined priorities, [and] CAR researchers try to solve practical problems and improve the well-being of people, particularly those who suffer from enduring social inequalities” (Ozanne and Anderson 2010, 124). This methodology strives for the education and empowerment of the entire community so that members can work to better their own social and economic conditions and “coproduce not only the research but also the programs of social intervention” (Ozanne and Anderson 2010, 124). CAR is

undertaken in the pursuit of social justice: the research has an ideological framework and concomitant intention. Those involved in a CAR project are deliberately taking a particular stand, either on the topic of interest or with a particular group of people. (Brown and Reitsma-Street 2003, 65)

In this case, working closely with the community of people advocating for Alaska Native language revitalization, Tlingit language immersion schools, and for HB 157, means

taking a stance. As discussed in more detail in the Literature Review chapter, language suppression and revitalization are innately issues of social justice—even more so when the loss of language and culture is the result of attempts to eradicate a people and their culture. CAR works to understand and eliminate injustices (Brown and Reitsma-Street 2003). By working together with my co-researchers I can gain insights from experts in this field, while contributing my own work to their efforts (including a presentation at the Alaska Native Studies Conference in April 2016).

Using the methods below I hope to bring in the voices of my co-researchers as much as possible so as to present the views of the community whose life work is advancing Alaska Native language revitalization.

Methods

This thesis draws on multiple methods, including semi-structured interviews, document and policy analysis, as well as participant observation in a weekly public Tlingit language-learning group.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are “conversations about the research topic in which the researcher imposes varying degrees of structure and direction” (Newing 2011, 56). Interviews are well suited for this research as they “are often used for studies in which participants are ‘experts’ from whom you hope to learn how certain practices, experiences, knowledges, or institutions work” (Secor 2010, 199). Semi-structured interviews are “pre-arranged interviews based on a prepared interview guide—a list of questions or topics to be

covered. The interview guide may act simply as a checklist to make sure that the key points are all discussed or it may be a list of questions that are asked in a sequence” (Newing 2011, 99). See Appendix H for my own interview guide. Importantly, semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured interviews, can deviate and rearrange questions as needed, providing “opportunities for in-depth, flexible engagement” with co-researchers (Secor 2010, 199). This also allows interviewees to direct the conversation and to share whatever information they may see as relevant.

Interviewing began with several people I know personally, and through whom I gathered more interviewees, i.e. snowball sampling (Secor 2010, 201). Snowball sampling was used in this case due to the relatively low number of people with relevant knowledge related to the research. Additionally, participant observation in the language-learning group provided similar opportunities to reach more research contributors. In spite of having a list of questions they were used more as a checklist and a way to begin conversations, after which I yielded control over the direction of the conversation to my co-researchers so that information they determined pertinent was covered.

Interviews were conducted with twelve individuals who have knowledge on language revitalization, education, education policies, immersion programs, and the specific legislation being created. This included educators, language learners, future immersion school educators, parents of future immersion school students, activist-scholars, and linguists, all who had relevant experience key to answering my research questions. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the participant(s) for future coding and reference.

Document and policy analysis

Document analysis is key to this research. Understanding the policy requirements for charter schools, the discourse around attempts to implement immersion schools, and what barriers to the creation of said schools has been done through literature and policy review. Document and policy analysis overlap with textual and content analysis. For both, “[t]he techniques of critically reading texts are shamelessly eclectic, borrowing practices from both within the discipline of geography and the humanities and social sciences more broadly” (Forbes 2000, 129). According to Forbes, “[t]exts are broadly defined, including government documents, academic publications, tourist guidebooks, maps, film, television, and the landscape; in fact any medium which can be interpreted for its meaning” (2000, 139).

This research has required engaging with several categories of text, including academic literature; international, national, state, local, and tribal policy; and newspaper and magazine articles. Document analysis provides insights into how this case is viewed from academic, governmental, and local perspectives, through these texts.

The HB 157 legislation that has been drafted, along with all papers and meetings related to the legislation, is public information, which made access simple through the Alaska State Legislative Information Office. Additionally, laws and regulations related to educational requirements that stand in the way of schools being taught in Tlingit are public federal, state, and local school district documents.

Participant observation

Participant observation is “a relatively unstructured interactive method” (Puri 2011, 85) in which the researcher participates “in the life of the study community and [makes] systematic observations” (Newing 2011, 56). This method allows the researcher to gain a first-hand account of community life, while developing relations of trust and empathy with the community (Allsop et al. 2010; Newing 2011). “Being there” and “stepping into other’s shoes” fosters a deeper understanding of an issue or group than simply asking questions can (Allsop et al. 2010, 209).

For the purpose of this research I spent ten weeks in and around Juneau, Alaska—part of Lingít Aaní—and attended a weekly public Tlingit language-learning group. This group provided an opportunity for observation, developing relationships with possible co-researchers, and understanding who is choosing to participate in Tlingit language learning efforts. The language-learning group is free and open to anyone interested in learning the Tlingit language. The unstructured group meets Monday nights from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the downtown Juneau Public Library. Different members take turns leading the group, generally with the more advanced speakers taking charge, but all participants are welcome to put forward ideas for any given week’s class. Fortunately for me, knowing several of the members who lead and attend the language group (one frequent leader of the group is my brother) allowed me to fit in and not require the “warming-up” time that is often discussed in regard to participant observation research (Allsop et al. 2010).

BODY

I view the obliteration of Alaskan Native Languages by English as an unnecessary final chapter in the continuing conflict in American History, the “winning of the West.” The physical genocides of the nineteenth century were replaced in the twentieth by cultural genocide in the classroom: “Cowboys and Indians” moved into the schools, and the extermination and removal were replaced by assimilation.

—Michael Krauss, *Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present, and Future*

Alaska has an opportunity to shift its education towards inclusivity, while fostering healthy students of all races. Currently, Alaska is experiencing rampant social issues—suicide, reported rape, alcoholism, incarceration, and early death rates (through both “accidents” and poor health) lead the nation—the brunt of which is being borne by the Alaska Native community. As Alaskan educator Paul Berg asserts in recent paper,

The causes of this health and social crisis in Alaska can be found in both the events of the past and in our current policies and practices. Historically—thrift of land and food resources, disease, political domination, overt racism, and the policy of forced removal of Native children from their families to boarding schools have left a legacy of suffering in the Alaska Native community. But the forces of cultural oppression are not merely legacies of the past. The attitudes and practices of a colonial past also intrude into the present. (2016, 3)

Modern education in Alaska abolished involuntary boarding schools with their physical and sexual abuse; however, psychological damage is still being done to Alaskan Native students through systemic racism within Alaskan education. Alaska’s education system needs a paradigm shift—one away from the ongoing colonial policies and practices, towards socially just, inclusive self-determined education. Carlisle et al. define social justice education “as the conscious and reflexive blend of content and process intended to enhance equality across multiple social identity groups (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual

orientation, ability), foster critical perspectives, and promote social action” (2006, 57; Dover 2009). Alaska Native language immersion schools can create an environment where students question dominant narratives of Alaskan history, feel empowered, and enhance identity.

The call for language revitalization, through immersion schooling in Alaska, is part of a broader, international movement that is gaining momentum. Self-governance, especially through education, is part of this international moment for Indigenous Peoples rights. Hawaiian, Maori, Gaelic, and Hebrew have all made momentous progress towards reversing language shift, and have done so largely through immersion schooling (Hinton and Hale, 2001; Kipp 2009; McCarty 2003; Wilson 2012). This international Indigenous movement calls for the support of languages and for socially just education for Indigenous students (see Hinton and Hale 2001; McCarty 2003, 2013; Wilson 2012).

Immersion schools are a chance to support cultures and languages that have suffered from colonial practices—frequently advanced through education. This thesis argues that immersion schools have the potential to combat intergenerational trauma and social ills through the strengthening of community ties, while concurrently working to revitalize languages and to create self-determined pedagogies.

Language revitalization, specifically in the context of K-12 education, is an issue of social justice. My investigation of attempts to introduce Tlingit language immersion schools in Southeast Alaska explored the following research questions:

1. What efforts have been made to develop Alaska Native language programs?

2. How has the discourse around immersion schools, specifically regarding Alaska Native languages, been framed in Southeast Alaska?
3. Which policies foster Alaska Native language immersion schools and which policies stand in the way?

Using the mixed-methods approach discussed in the Methods chapter to investigate these questions, two major constraints emerged: 1) complications of teacher certification, and 2) issues with monolingual standardized testing.

Current teacher certification and standardized testing requirements are impediments to immersion schools, and are even in violation of agreements such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. As I will develop below, these certification processes and requirements reinforce systemic racism through an inability to recognize the validity in any worldview other than the dominant, Anglo-centric one. The remainder of this chapter will explore these concepts by examining relevant laws, policies, and practices, culminating in the current situation in Lingít Aaní.

Policy and Legislation

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was endorsed by United States in December 2010 (three years after its adoption by the UN General Assembly). Article 14 states that,

- 1 Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
- 2 Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
- 3 States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living

outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (United Nations 2008, 7)

Article 14 guarantees Indigenous Peoples the rights to self-determined, self-governed education within the language of their choosing, and declares that states will take action to support this education. The US, along with the State of Alaska, is not supporting Indigenous People and their languages. Instead, as discussed in the earlier chapters, current education in Alaska only superficially includes Alaska's first people, and education is not self-determined or self-governed. Based on Article 14, it would seem that Alaska Native immersion schools are an obvious counter to the years of forced language and cultural assimilation.

Article 13 of UNDRIP declares:

- 1 Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
- 2 States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means. (2008, 7)

Currently, no “effective measures” are in place. The ineffectiveness of any existing measures is evidenced by the quickly fading numbers of Native language speakers—Tlingit has approximately sixty remaining speakers out of a population of 20,000 (Twitchell 2016). Rights to revitalize and transmit language and knowledge systems are hindered by federal testing requirements and state teacher certification. The State of Alaska is not protecting rights to revitalize, and not hearing its Indigenous People in calls for political language support. The state should be fully backing the creation of Alaska

Native immersion schools and programs, as the State of Hawaii did when its language revitalization efforts began to progress in the 1980s (‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2014).

Native American Languages Act

Alaska’s current education policies contravene more than Section 14 of UNDRIP. The 1990 US Native American Languages Act (NALA) should, in theory, guarantee support for Alaska Native languages and Alaska Native students. Section 104 declares that “[i]t is the policy of the United States to—(1) preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages” (1990, 1155). Section 104, 1 echoes the rights declared in UNDRIP; however, here the rights to “preserve, protect, and promote...and develop” languages are declared by the US as federal law—much more enforceable than a UN declaration.

Section 104 goes on to state that it is US policy to

(2) allow exceptions to teacher certification requirements for Federal programs, and programs funded in whole or in part by the Federal Government, for instruction in Native American languages when such teacher certification requirements hinder the employment of qualified teachers who teach in Native American languages, and to encourage State and territorial governments to make similar exceptions... (1990, 1155)

If the federal government is truly encouraging the states to grant exceptions to teacher certification requirements, in order to ensure such requirements do not hinder the employment of Native language teachers, this encouragement is being treated as a suggestion rather than a mandate by the State of Alaska.

Furthermore, according to Section 104 of NALA, it is US policy to

(3) encourage and support the use of Native American languages as a medium of instruction in order to encourage and support—(A) Native American language

survival, (B) educational opportunity, (C) increased student success and performance, (D) increased student awareness and knowledge of their culture and history, and (E) increased student and community pride... (1990, 1155)

The above section of NALA is a recognition that the US is cognizant of the fact that instruction within Native languages provides support for the survival of languages, and for the success of students through improved education opportunities, and through increased pride.

Section 102 of NALA declares that support for Native languages is in the best interest of the US and its states:

The Congress finds that...

- (6) there is convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity is clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child or student;
- (7) it is clearly in the interests of the United States, individual States, and territories to encourage the full academic and human potential achievements of all students and citizens and to take steps to realize these ends;
- (8) acts of suppression and extermination directed against Native American languages and cultures are in conflict with the United States policy of self-determination for Native Americans... (1990, 1154)

This section recognizes that student achievement and communities are strengthened through the support of Native languages—the US is aware and states in public law that support of Native languages benefits students academically, and benefits both students and communities through an increase in pride and self-respect. Thus, the US government is aware that immersion schooling can be a step towards healing traumas within Native communities. Additionally, if it is in the “best interests” of the governments of the US and Alaska to support Alaska Native languages and students, then support given to Native languages must become effective.

US support of Native languages in education—through measures such as immersion education—is defeated by federally required standardized testing. Section 104 of NALA also states that it is US policy to “(4) encourage State and local education programs to work with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes, and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect” (1990, 1155). Unfortunately, “encourage” leaves room for interpretation by the US government and the individual states. However, the outcome of whatever urging exists is clear—the State of Alaska, and the Juneau School District are not working to implement an immersion school with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA).

Section 104’s declaration that the US “(5) recognize[s] the right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior” (1990, 1155) could prove highly relevant if immersion schools were run under the umbrella of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) (a strategy beyond the scope of this thesis, but discussed briefly in the Conclusion chapter). Activists in Juneau are beginning to look into the possibility of BIE schools—which falls under the Department of the Interior.

Section 104 also includes that policy will

(7) support the granting of comparable proficiency achieved through course work in a Native American language the same academic credit as comparable proficiency achieved through course work in a foreign language, with recognition of such Native American language proficiency by institutions of higher education as fulfilling foreign language entrance or degree requirements; and
 (8) encourage all institutions of elementary, secondary and higher education, where appropriate, to include Native American languages in the curriculum in the

same manner as foreign languages and to grant proficiency in Native American languages the same full academic credit as proficiency in foreign languages. (1990, 1155)

Support for Native languages being given the same academic credit and recognition as world languages means that the calls to include more Alaska Native language support within Alaska's public schools, discussed below, could both support Native languages and student success, while still preparing students for college acceptance.

Though US policy "encourages" self-determined Indigenous education, and promotes the same behavior in the states, numerous obstacles to immersion schools still exist. The status quo of benefitting from the oppression of Native Alaskans continues through no meaningful action when stated support and actual practice diverge. Declarations of support are made to appease those calling for action without follow through. This disconnect can be seen in the signing of UNDRIP without changes in support for Native self-governance, and for the passing of NALA without enforcement provisions. Additionally, the divergence can be seen in the behind-the-scenes dialogue I heard while pushing for the passage of HB 216; illustrated by one representative asked X'unei Lance Twitchell, a key advocate of the bill, "If we give you this are you going to be happy? Will you be done asking for things?" Alaskan politicians are looking to do the bare minimum in order to silence calls for support, while disrupting the status quo as little as possible, and treating requests to uphold the law as inordinately burdensome. The condescension in "are you going to be happy? Will you be done asking for things?" is far from "promoting self-determination."

UNDRIP and NALA are referenced in literature occasionally (Berg 2011, 2016; Wilson 2012); however, there is a case to be made for bringing suit against the State of Alaska. UNDRIP is a declaration, making it not legally enforceable; nevertheless, it does set a standard that the United States officially supports. Conversely, NALA is federal law—unfortunately, unlike No Child Left Behind (NCLB), NALA does not have enforcement provisions, leaving those who violate the law without repercussions (McCarty and Diaz 2013). Through my research, I saw UNDRIP and NALA cited as reasons that immersion schooling should be achievable. What I did not see was any application of UNDRIP and NALA to push for legal changes; however, the coalition of people pushing for Tlingit language immersion schooling are mostly educators and language advocates (discussed further below). I conclude that a lawyer needs to be using NALA, with UNDRIP as further political support, to the advantage of immersion schools.

Every Student Succeeds Act

With the expiration of NCLB, the federal government was left with the option to renew it or create new legislation. NCLB has now been replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in December 2015, which is essentially a redesign of NCLB under a new name. The act modifies but does not eliminate periodic standardized testing. Testing will still take place for students in grades three through eight, but stipulations attached to not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) have been removed. Instead, states are expected to create their own long-term goals and consequences for not meeting these goals. Title I (Accountability Goals and Measurements) gives states control

to create opt-out provisions for having less than 95 percent test participation rate (previously required with AYP)—this could prove highly beneficial for Alaskan immersion schools, if the Alaska State Legislature moves forward with HB 157.

ESSA Title VI (Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education) creates an opportunity for immersion schools to receive grants from the federal government for creation and expansion. Additionally, there are specific provisions allowing for the application for grants for preschool development, and specifically language nest³ preschools—which is significant for immersion school plans in Juneau.

Alaska HB 157

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins makes clear the intent of HB 157 (an Act relating to language immersion charter schools, relating to teacher certification, and relating to standards-based assessments in language immersion charter schools and language immersion programs) in the sponsor statement of the bill (see Appendix F for the most recent version of the bill):

HB 157 creates a charter school designation with the specific mission of delivering a curriculum in a foreign or Native language, and holds these schools to a strict immersion standard. It requires fully certified teachers in these charter schools to have the specialized skills necessary to successfully teach in an immersion setting, and it includes provisions that will put in the classroom language speakers who know how to teach but may not be able to get the necessary formal qualifications to become fully certified. HB 157 also allows teachers in immersion charter schools that teach an Alaska Native language to be certified through processes developed by local communities. (2016, 1)

³ A language nest is an immersion based approach to early childhood education, which is generally run in a home-like setting. This method was first used in New Zealand for Maori language revitalization.

The bill can address some of the issues, associated with teacher certification and standardized testing within immersion schools that choose to designate themselves as charter schools, and within language immersion programs within other schools.

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, author of the bill, responded to questions for the motive behind the bill, and discussed the complications of teacher certification and immersion schools: “This bill is a vehicle to address the unique character of immersion schools and enhance the ability for teachers to meet the certification demands. It is important to understand that a qualified teacher, who has English as a second language, may find it difficult to achieve a state teaching certification” (AK State Legislature 2016, 1). In immersion schools with the aim to revitalize or maintain languages, the pool of possible teachers is a concern. In the case of Tlingit, with approximately sixty fluent speakers remaining, who are largely elders, requirements such as a bachelor’s degree could be the difference between a sufficient number of qualified Tlingit-fluent teachers, and thus revitalization, or an inability to act. This bill does not address issues of teacher certification outside of immersion schools and language immersion programs; however, it does support Alaska Native language immersion schools by taking steps to mitigate the current problems with teacher certification and standardized testing.

Section 8 of HB 157 reads: “The department shall, to the extent permitted by federal law, allow students enrolled in language immersion charter schools...or other language immersion programs to take statewide standards-based assessments in the language of instruction of the language immersion charter school or language immersion program.” This is significant when combined with the changes to testing brought about

by ESSA, but, as I will discuss below, is far from ideal. Preferably, there would be a federal exemption for Native language immersion schools when it comes to standardized testing, but potentially, states can now create their own loophole.

So what do these legislative changes mean for immersion schooling in Lingít Aaní? HB 157 has been heard twice by the House Education Committee this legislative session (as of this writing) and has been held by the committee for further discussion both times. At this time, it does not appear this legislation will move forward. However, with or without the support of this legislation, language activists and supporters are moving forward with a Tlingit language immersion program in Juneau.

“A Growing Tragedy”

Father Michael Oleksa, an author, professor, Russian Orthodox minister, and advocate for Alaska Native education, describes many Alaskan schools as “killing machines” (Bates and Oleksa 2011). In response to this branding, Paul Berg, a national Native education specialist, former teacher, and frequent consultant for a western Alaska school district augments:

Although this may seem like a rhetorical exaggeration, it is not. The statistics bear witness to the growing tragedy. In the three villages I have worked with intensively for the past five years, half the males born in 2014 will not survive beyond the age of thirty due to suicide, homicide, self-destructive “accidents,” alcohol, drugs, and “gone missing.” (Berg 2011, 3)

By ignoring Alaskan Native rights to self-determined education, the State of Alaska is supporting the perpetuation of these “killing machines” that have led to the emotional, psychological, and physical harm of Alaska Native people. Berg argues that the

“education system we have imposed on the traditional Native people of Alaska—with content designed to destroy local language, knowledge, culture, and sense of identity—matches the definition of a colonialist education system” (2011, 3), which in our interview he described as “frankly, evil” (2015). The colonization of Alaska Natives and resulting trauma are maintained through Alaska’s education system.

As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, the messages sent to Alaska Native students have dire consequences. Alaska’s suicide and reported rape rates consistently lead the nation, and disproportionately affect Alaska Natives. Alaska Native men make up 37 percent of the state prison population, but only 8 percent of Alaska’s population (Prewitt 2013). Berg notes,

Alaska also suffers from alcoholism, an epidemic of domestic violence, sexual crime against women, and a host of physical and social diseases. The negative statistics spike in the rural regions and fall most heavily on the [I]ndigenous Native people. The state’s response to these stark realities has been piecemeal. Each dysfunction is treated as a separate social or health problem. If there is alcoholism, the state will set up an alcoholism treatment program. For suicide the state will send out counselors and develop a statewide suicide prevention program. Unfortunately, many of these well-intentioned interventions have experienced little success. The most successful interventions have involved holistic approaches to wellness and significant involvement of the Native community. (Berg 2016, 2)

The State of Alaska and other well-meaning organizations attempt to treat the symptoms of trauma endured by Alaska’s first people, without ever addressing or acknowledging the root causes of the crisis. “The behavioral and health dysfunctions plaguing Alaska are not discrete, unrelated social phenomena. The reality is that in many cases, alcoholism, suicide, and domestic violence are not the social problem—they are the symptoms of a much deeper, poorly understood, and often denied societal problem” (Berg 2016, 2)

which the State of Alaska continues to perpetuate in part through standardized, genocidal education. Additionally, the state chooses to ignore the deeper societal problems that Berg stresses.

By combating suicide and other social epidemics through generic grants for suicide awareness organizations, the creation of “suicide awareness week,” and “end sexual assault” public service announcements, the State of Alaska ignores the disproportionate suicide, alcoholism, gun violence, rape, and incarceration rates amongst different groups within Alaska. These efforts may make the non-Native population feel like genuine white saviors; however, by ignoring the historical and ongoing traumas at the root of Alaska’s social ills, the State of Alaska operates within and maintains current systems of racism, classism, and colonialism. The path toward revitalizing Alaska Native health and wellbeing begins at the root of today’s problem—the current education model, which extends colonialism today. Participation from the Alaska Native community to determine their own education is a crucial step toward healing the 15 percent of the population that is Alaska Native and creating Alaska Native immersion schooling can be a vital component of the new approach.

Teacher Certification

Currently, colonialism within education is further maintained by importing outsider teachers:

Ninety-five percent of the teachers [in Alaska] are non-Natives who are not familiar with the local, language, culture, knowledge base, history, or learning styles of the children. The classes are conducted in English. The children are taught with textbooks and materials designed and written for students living in the

lower 48 states. Educational evaluation is conducted with standardized tests. Standardized tests standardize people. The local cultural, linguistic, and environmental setting in which the children live is considered marginal to unimportant by the outside teachers and school administrators. However, there is an important meta-lesson which the children learn from this arrangement. They see that the outside educators are given the best jobs, the best housing, the highest pay and the most status in the community. The Anglo outsiders are the successful people. (Berg 2011, 2-3)

The exclusion of Alaska Native models in teachers, content, and language, degrades students' self-worth. An example is the common roles Berg observes and shared with me in our interview: Native people can help in classrooms and be janitors, but only white people get to be teachers and administrators—a common hierarchy, especially in rural Alaska (2015). Furthermore, Alaska Natives are rarely mentioned within curricula, which reinforces the message that standard education is not for or about Alaska Natives. By ensuring Native students do not succeed or feel supported while in school, the State of Alaska is also securing a persistent deficit of Alaska Native teachers. Instead, certified teachers must be imported, which continues the cycle of outsider teachers teaching for white students' interests.

Dominant western culture defines what requirements must be met in order to be a certified as a teacher in Alaska. Requirements are defined without incorporating qualifications the Alaska Native community sees as important for individuals teaching their children. In our interview, Berg stated the following about certification:

Teacher certification is not a qualitative licensing. It is a cultural licensing. It ensures people from the dominant culture—or who have been certified by the dominant culture—get to be the teachers... [Alaska Native People have] had teachers for 10,000 years. They just didn't have that piece of paper. That's cultural certification. So what we need is Indigenous certification. Let's ask the people what they want. (Berg 2015)

Berg's point is frequently overlooked. As discussed in the Background chapter, a common reaction from policymakers to critique of Alaska Natives education is the need to prepare students for the "*real world*"—this colonial thinking does not consider what the real world might be for Alaska Native students. Not considering Alaska Native lifestyles as part of the "*real world*" perpetuates the erasures of communities, and Indigenous Peoples.

Rural Alaska has a difficult time retaining teachers in schools. Annually, approximately 400 new teachers are hired from outside the state, most of which leave after one or two years (Boots 2014). Much of Alaska is rugged, isolating terrain, which is challenging for outside teachers to adapt to. In fact, very few outsider people can thrive in these places. In contrast, Native Alaskans have existed, survived, and, precontact, thrived in these locations.

Alaska Native groups have adapted to their landscapes over thousands of years. One way they prospered in rugged Alaskan landscapes was through language. For example, Berg described taking part in a community caribou hunt. Caribou are herd animals that appear in the hundreds to thousands. Hunters need to quickly communicate about individual caribou within the herd— "try doing that in English" Berg joked, "It's impossible." However, Yup'ik has developed alongside these practices and allows hunters to easily communicate which individual animal they mean to shoot (Berg 2015). Alaska Native people possess the skills and language to survive in the landscapes of

Alaska, due to thousands of years of experience and intimacy with Alaskan landscapes (Thornton 2008).

Another issue associated with rapid turnover of teachers is the repeated message this gives to students—teachers are not invested in them. Freed and Samson quote the personal experiences of one Alaska Native woman, who, as a child with a new teacher, experienced this lack of investment:

I was so excited to be getting a new teacher that I asked my mother if I could dress up and go with the other children to meet her plane. The plane landed on the lake and a white lady in a dress and high heels stepped out, looked around and left with the plane. I felt so bad because I thought it was something I did. She didn't stay any longer than the plane did. (quoted in Freed and Samson 2004, 36)

Today, the same message is sent when educators only last one or two school years. It also means that school districts are in a never-ending cycle of spending money to recruit, incentivize, and train replacements for teachers. Money that districts could be using to improve education for students is spent sending representatives to job fairs around the country. Instead of paying to import young teachers who will not remain in the state, Alaska Native people could be playing a larger role in classroom education in their own lands. A shift to Native instructor inclusion in the classroom necessitates an overhaul of the current colonial education model, which promotes institutionalized racism, and drains the state and school districts of financial resources.

Importing teachers and administrators is expensive. Incentives include high wages, subsidized housing, and student loan forgiveness. Additionally, the districts spend considerable amounts recruiting new teachers. For example, the Northwest Arctic School district spent approximately \$85,000 in 2013 on recruitment work alone (Boots 2014).

Berg, who does sensitivity training with new teachers for the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta School District to help imported instructors from the contiguous US relate to their Alaska Native students, recalled that “in the [Yukon Kuskokwim] Delta, it’s costing the state \$41,000 or \$42,000 per year per student to produce a system that produces mass suicides... where does that money go? Mostly non-Native people. It’s a cancer program for the middle class. The Iñupiaq and Yup’ik are an industry for the middle class” (Berg 2015). Alaska is spending the second most on education per student in the nation (an average of \$18,175 per student in 2013 versus the national average of \$10,700 per student (US Census 2013)), with devastating results for students and for communities.

Moreover, outsider teachers, administrators, and policymakers frequently inaccurately think of Alaska Natives as immigrants. According to Berg, “An education system which is designed by and for the immigrant population can be toxic for [I]ndigenous students living in their homeland” due to the fact that “[a]n education system [which is] controlled, administered, and taught by outsiders with a standard curriculum which devalues the local language, culture, knowledge base, stabs at the heart of Alaska’s [I]ndigenous cultures,” resulting in Alaska’s current social crisis (2016, 5). Illustrating this lack of understanding during the debate over Alaska’s Official State Languages Bill (HB 216), Alaska Representatives Doug Isaacson (R-North Pole) and Lynn Gattis, (R-Wasilla) stated that “their [immigrant] grandparents had to give up their language of origin because English is spoken in America. Gattis said her family quit speaking Russian while Isaacson said his family quit speaking Norwegian,” to which Representative Benjamin Nageak (R-Barrow), who is Iñupiaq, responded “We weren't

from another country... We were here for a very long time when the Russians came” (Coppock 2014).

What these legislative members fail to grasp is the difference between voluntary and involuntary language shift. Gattis and Issacson’s families’ voluntarily decided to give up their original languages. No children were forcibly taken from their homes to ensure they learned English. No one was beaten for speaking another language or had his or her mouth washed out with soap for it. No one lost track of their families or the ability to communicate with them while away at a boarding school filled with abuse and neglect.

Gattis and Issacson are not two people misinterpreting a simple difference; these words are part of a dangerous mind set—a mindset that when passed along without the incorporation of Alaska Native history encourages ignorance that promotes the attitude of “it was a while ago, just get over it.” I heard this phrase growing up in Lingít Aaní, and my Juneau School District education reinforced the message by never mentioning Alaska Native history. In kindergarten, first, and second grades we heard reductionist versions of Tlingit stories, and had a simplistic version of a ku.éex’ (potlatch),⁴ and then Tlingit culture and history were rarely ever encountered again in my public education. As discussed in the Background chapter, Nora and Richard Dauenhauer declare this, rightfully, racism. Reducing a culture “to a childish level” and then never offering an

⁴ A ku.éex’ is a complex public celebration or mourning ceremony held approximately one year after a funeral. “Probably ‘party’ is the most common English term used in Tlingit communities... The general Tlingit term is k[u].éex’, deriving from the Tlingit verb stem ‘to call’ or ‘invite’. The word ‘potlatch’ reputedly entered English from Chinook jargon... Many knowledgeable Tlingit people consider the term both misleading and not authentic... highly respected Tlingit elder, Walter Soboleff, advised us to ‘take this word and sink it in the deepest water’” (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990, 36).

explanation beyond that leaves students with the impression that simple Raven stories are all that Tlingit culture is made up of. The messages students do receive beyond Raven stories lead to victim blaming:

this victim-blaming is legitimated by pointing at high rates of alcohol abuse, poor hygiene, and lack of middle-class child-rearing practices, all of which are viewed as manifestations of the minority group's deficiency... The process of blaming the minority group for its own failure effectively screens from critical scrutiny the way in which the educational system causes school failure among minority students. (Cummins 1992, 3)

Alaska Native people are blamed for not assimilating correctly, for not dealing with intergenerational trauma correctly, and dominant culture is free of any blame. Beyond the scope of this paper, but important to note are the issues with not meeting the dominant culture's expectations of "Native," which serves as yet another "manifestation of deficiency" and an excuse for assimilationist racism (see Ray 2013; Sturgeon 2008). The process of victim blaming normalizes racism.

Victim blaming is one symptom of a disassociation within dominant culture. As Berg contended in our interview,

There is a disconnect between cause and effect. A disassociation. Our colonialistic cultural system teaches us non-Native folk to disassociate. Education is the means by which a culture perpetuates itself. We cut that off [for Alaska Natives]. We teach teachers who come from the lower forty-eight—who don't have a clue about the language, the culture, the learning style—and teach lower forty-eight curriculum. Then we have all these suicides. 'But that has nothing to do with us!'...the symptoms are within the Native community. The dysfunction is within the white community. (2015)

Alaska's elected officials, teachers, and administrators frequently promote the "disconnect between cause and effect." Victim blaming combined with the disconnect and dysfunction described by Berg undermines Alaska Native students' chance at a

socially just education. Students' communities are the only potential sources of support, as Alaska Native students are abandoned by Alaska's education system.

It must be noted that Alaska does have socially just teachers who support and include both Native and non-Native students. However, these are teachers who have chosen to make Alaska their home, not instructors that have been temporarily imported to the state. The reason this thesis topic is even of interest to me is largely due to wonderful, inclusive teachers from which I benefited. Additionally, multiple interviewees for this research are current or former teachers who are glowing examples of multicultural, inclusive teachers. In fact, as shown below, the progress moving towards just education paradigms is coming almost exclusively from self-motivated teachers, while most policymakers do little to nothing. However, again, these are all people who were raised in or have chosen to live long-term in the communities in which they teach. In Alaska, loyalty to place necessitates an appreciation for language loss, and a recognition that language loss is a colonial trauma.

Standardized Testing

Systemic racism in the monolingualism of standardized testing and in the structure of the tests prevails, as this passage from a study on Alaska Native education, commissioned by the First Alaskans Institute, shows:

Critics of standardized tests blame the testing instruments. The tests are generally geared for white middle-class students and do not account for American Indian/Alaska Native language systems, "which rely on nonverbal communication, undetailed verbal accounts, non-competitiveness, soft speech patterns, and mythology rather than science"... Even tests that rely heavily on nonverbal skills invariably involve "timed tasks that require rapid, organized

thought [which is] incongruent with the Indian concept of a continuous present"... Other American Indian/Alaska Native values, such as interdependence, collective decision-making, and group cohesiveness may not be accounted for in current assessment tools... (McDowell Group 2001, 15)

Thus, even students who are fluent in English, or even if tests are translated, this model of assessment fails Alaska Native students, and builds failure into the structure of immersion schools.

Monolingual standardized testing hinders the running of immersion schools, while simultaneously hindering Native student success. Standardized testing, which is introduced in grade three, works against the common immersion school model of total immersion within the target language, in this case Tlingit, through grade four. At that time English is then introduced as part of daily learning (Twitchell 2015).

As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, total immersion through grade four has delivered good results. Hawaiian and Navajo immersion students frequently outperform English-only students in high school testing (McCarty 2014; Wilson 2012). However, grade three through eight required monolingual standardized tests consistently rate immersion schools as underachieving due to the later introduction of English. As previously discussed, schools with 100 percent graduation rates and 90 percent straight-to-college rates are being labeled as underachieving—a designation that can affect funding allocated to the school (Wilson 2012). One interviewee pointed out a frustrating absurdity: "What's crazy is there are exemptions currently for schools that teach in Spanish. So we're really trying to take a stance of equality and say 'you know if you're going to grant an exemption for that you should grant an exemption for Native American

schools”” (Twitchell 2015). The lack of exemptions to standardized testing for Native language schools works against the intentions of UNDRIP and NALA. Thus, Native students are hindered by teachers, administrators, and politicians thinking of Native students as immigrant students, while not being granted any of the benefits of being that go along with immigrant designation.

Native language immersion schools are not granted exemptions to federally required standardized testing, in spite of the fact that schools teaching English as a second language to children are (Wilson 2012). When Hawaiian immersion parents protested testing by simply not having their children take the test, the schools were threatened with funds being withheld from the entire State of Hawaii. However, when white, middle-class New York State parents used the same method of protest to the exams, the federal response was that they did not plan to take any action (FairTest 2015). An exemption to federal standardized testing would mean that Native language immersion schools would not have to worry about funds being withheld for students’ test scores, and the schools could focus on teaching within a Native worldview.

Translated tests have been attempted with poor results. The Hawaiian immersion school mentioned above tried translated testing after threats of education fund withholding for the State of Hawaii. The author of the Hawaiian language test was unqualified and did not consult with the schools (Wilson 2012). Moreover, the test was still written through a western, English-language lens—this sort of assessment is foreign to an Indigenous worldview (McDowell Group 2001). Translating “contains the implicit assumption that the cultural beliefs and practices referred to as ‘traditional knowledge’

conform to western conceptions about ‘knowledge’” (Nadasdy 1999, 1); however, this assumption is incorrect. Additionally, “[s]tandardized tests rarely recognize intertribal differences” (McDowell Group 2001, 15). Asking students to use the Hawaiian language, while operating within the English worldview, defeats the purpose of immersion schools.

The combination of imported, rotating teachers, and standardized testing has serious consequences for Native Students, especially in rural Alaska. The push to meet AYP means that inclusive teaching, which supports multiple worldviews and is historically truthful, is not a priority—preparation for test taking is:

For the Native students, especially those living in the hundreds of small isolated villages along the coasts and river systems, the focus on multiple choice testing has caused serious problems. One of these problems is illustrated by an experience I had several years ago in a small village located on the banks of the Yukon River. The school building included a large home economics kitchen that remained idle. When I enquired as to why this resource remained unused, one of the school staff informed me that food processing and preservation were not included on the standardized tests, so the home economics classes were cancelled. The school’s curriculum had been narrowed to focus on the skills measured by the tests required by the state. The basic subsistence skills of the village along the Yukon River were not being taught in the school! This pattern is repeated in many rural schools. The focus on testing has narrowed the curriculum, eliminating classes such as food processing, small engine repair, Native language, and local history. (Berg 2012).

Students living in rural Alaska need the skills to be able to survive in their landscapes, such as food processing and preservation. If Alaskan education wants to prepare Native students for the “*real* world,” there must be recognition of what the real world is for students.

Language learner, decolonial ethics scholar, and my brother, Will Geiger, has observed and recalled to me regular verbal support for language revitalization, while seeing no direct action:

The weird thing is there is a ton of direct, announced support for these things, [but nothing done]. The cynical idea is that people outwardly and maybe even subjectively posit these things and maybe identify with “oh yeah, language revitalization, and also cultural revitalization are great”—people make that sort of statement in order to maintain it in its troubling state... Predominantly white people and people with substantial political and economic power are happy to affirm the value of Indigenous languages and cultures in order to not do anything about them. (W. Geiger 2015)

The point is that affirming language and cultural revitalization outwardly has become an integral part of the process of language and cultural loss. Again, the declaration of support in order to maintain inaction can be seen in the debate leading up to HB 216 (discussed in the Background chapter and above). Legislative members were happy to tell attendees of committee meetings prior to HB 216’s hearing how much they “really appreciated” what people were trying to do, “*but* what if we had a day to honor them,” or made them the “ceremonial state languages”? As Representative Wes Keller (R-Wasilla) demonstrated, “I’m really struggling with the format of this bill... It might deepen a wedge we don’t need” (Coppock 2014). Representative Keller is using languages as an excuse to maintain institutionalized racism.

The fear associated with anything that is not white, western culture has contributed to creating policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—which works in direct opposition of NALA—and the original installment of English as Alaska’s official language (see Appendix D for a copy of the 1998 voter initiative). Representative Keller

views the promotion of Native languages as threats against English, which those concerned about the promotion of Indigenous languages seem to view as threats against “their way of life,” while blind to how anyone who is not a middle class white person’s “way of life” has been impacted by white, western culture—this is historical amnesia and subsequent hypocrisy. X’unei Lance Twitchell, a language activist, Tlingit speaker, and professor of Alaska Native languages, discussed with me the perceived threats against democracy through the learning of languages other than English:

Yes, right, the threats. Against democracy and America. But what that results in is things like No Child Left Behind, which measures schools, and teachers, and students primarily by their English proficiency. So you can have a school [such as in Hawaii] that has a twenty year history of a 100 percent graduation rate and nearly a 90 percent college placement rate—directly out of high school straight to college—in an environment where the numbers look like Alaska Native numbers now, where half the kids don’t graduate and you just have this tremendous rate of failure in the education system—so you can have a school like that, but it’s ranked as one of the worst schools in the state because those children are being tested in English. (Twitchell 2015)

Language is being used as an excuse to oppress Native worldviews. Standardized testing means that worldviews, other than the dominant one, are labeled as insufficient regardless of student success and social health. Language and cultural revitalization are not something to be feared, they are something to be celebrated.

Moving Forward

As someone who grew up in Lingít Aaní, I experienced firsthand the racist expressions coming from other school children, miscellaneous community members, and, most disturbingly, from other children’s parents. The stereotype of “drunk Natives outside bars” was a reoccurring trope. In high school, kids looking to buy alcohol would

go looking for just that stereotype all while mocking village accents and reducing Alaska Native people to a caricature, never considering the role their privileged, white, middle-class existence played in the lives of those who they sought out for help buying cheap alcohol.

Steps have been made towards more place-based learning and cultural inclusion, but, regardless, if you are an Alaska Native child, Alaska's education system is hostile. While the white students are expected to complete schooling and then head to college, the expectation from Alaska's education system, for Native students, is that they will end up in the special needs learning programs (McDowell Group 2001). When your school experience is one of low expectations for you, but not your peers, how can you survive, let alone flourish? Alaska's Tlingit Lieutenant Governor, Byron Mallott, made the same point, stating that "[w]hen people grow up knowing that their way of life has been marginalized, they are deeply affected in their souls" (quoted in Berg 2016, 1).

Changes in Alaskan public education are needed, particularly the inclusion of immersion schools. Berg proposes "that Alaska recognize the skill and knowledge which exists within the Native cultures of Alaska" and that "[a]n important first step in this process is to recognize that there are, and have been for a millennia, 'teachers' in the Native villages. We can begin to recognize this reality by creating a process which includes, rather than excludes, Native teachers in the certification process" (Berg 2011, 6).

Currently, Alaska has a special Type M certification for the specialty areas of Alaska Native language or culture, military science, and vocational or technical course.

However, this is not full certification—it “is basically a certification waiver, and does not carry either the recognition nor authority of regular teacher certification” (Berg 2011, 6).

Berg, who, again, is a Native education specialist with more than forty years of experience as a teacher, recommends the following:

Local people who meet [to be determined cultural] qualifications can be certified as teachers, especially to teach the lower grade, K through sixth. A university education is not essential, nor at times even helpful, in teaching many of the skills these children need. As an experienced teacher, I can teach any person of average intelligence the nine essential teacher skills in six weeks. (Note: University education professors cannot do this. They are not practicing classroom teachers and lack both the skill and the knowledge base to accomplish this task.) I can envision an ideal village school where grades K through sixth are being taught by local Native teachers. From seventh through twelfth grades, the teaching staff is mixed, with local Native teachers and non-local educators. The students from these schools are fluent in both the local Native language and English. They are bilingual and bicultural. They have a firm cultural identity embedded in their Alaska Native heritage and their American national citizenship. And they are not committing suicide in droves! (Berg 2011, 6)

In summary, current teacher certification requirements are not improving conditions in Alaskan schools—they are hindering positive social circumstances. A shift such as the one recommended by Berg would simultaneously improve education in Alaska—making it a more socially just—and relieve a great deal of financial burden on the state and school districts.

Urban Alaska (which is made up of the three cities with populations exceeding 10,000 people—Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau) has a less obvious issue of teacher importation and turnover. However, the retention that occurs in urban areas can be read as a subtle way of continuing to disadvantage Native students. Non-Native students are more concentrated in urban areas; thus the non-Native students are largely the ones

benefiting from this retention. For Native students in urban areas the increase in instructor retention alleviates the lack of teacher investment seen with high teacher turnover, but cultural inclusion is left up to individual teachers.

One positive finding from my fieldwork was the change in inclusion and attitudes within parts of the Juneau School District. Juneau School District's two middle schools began offering Tlingit language classes beginning the current school year, and two of the elementary schools offer a Tlingit Culture Language and Literacy (TCLL) program (which works to include language and cultural teachings; there is a study coming out on the improvement in health associated with Alaska Native children who take part in this program (Taff 2016)). Additionally, one interviewee who teaches middle school math and science said he has received a great deal of support for trying to include more Tlingit language in his own classroom, from local Tlingit heritage nonprofits, from the school, and from Tlingit elders:

There's a lot of support out there, where we've had elders come in [to the classroom]. This year, actually, I did moon phases, and I had [respected elder] Lyle James come into my classroom and cover it with them [in Tlingit], and now he's teaching a Tlingit language class at Dzantik'i Heeni [Middle School] next year, as a funded—grant funded—but I mean, it's a language class for kids... it's cool to see that, because language is so important in all of it. But, I didn't see it as much [growing up in Juneau]. (White 2015)

White, like myself, grew up in Juneau and got his education in the Juneau School District. It is significant that with this background he is now teaching in Juneau and making a self-motivated effort to be inclusive of Tlingit culture and language in his classroom. While these minor inclusions of language do not produce fluency, these changes within the Juneau School District are important for other reasons, including

creating an environment where Native and non-Native students hear truthful histories of the place they live (discussed further below).

White also discussed how education has moved towards a place-based model:

How do you teach a kid to understand why something's important? You make it relevant; you make it right in front of them.... [W]e teach the survival unit. It's like, why do you need to learn this? Because you need to know how to survive in Alaska... And I don't think we had the same amount of it. Or at least when they [taught] it, they weren't purposely doing it [to teach place-based]. Where now, you're [including some] language, and you're having a Tlingit language class as an elective in middle school. (White 2015)

White said the positive response in students is clear, and the blatant racism that we both witnessed from time to time growing up has changed:

When we had Lyle come in there was a kid who knew a lot of the moon phases—the moons are kind of named for the salmon, when the salmon run, or the berry moon, or you know harvesting. You could see that kid really respond well—he is Tlingit and he knew these things, and he was really happy and proud to stand up there and say these things. I mean, as a teacher you want to keep that as a pretty respectful environment anyways, but I haven't seen kids necessarily the way it was when I was younger. I think it's more understood and accepted, but in some cases it's like this is *here*. If you don't appreciate that, you don't appreciate this place. (White 2015)

The changes noted by White are steps in the direction of more socially just education, with recognition of Alaska's first people. However, one teacher electing to include more Tlingit language in his classroom does not mean that suddenly Alaskan education is a positive environment for Native students; though, it can mean that the environment is less hostile than twenty years ago.

In addition to an overhaul of Alaska's teacher certification system, there needs to be a dramatic shift in the way that student evaluation is performed. A First Alaskans Institute (FAI) education survey calls for alternative assessment in the form of

performance-based indicators such as “student portfolios, interviews, projects, teacher observations and other performance measures more relevant to Native Americans” (McDowell Group 2001, 16). Furthermore, performance-based evaluations allow teachers to examine

student performance on specific tasks that are important for life... The increased use of performance-based assessment may help give American Indian and Alaska Native students more legitimate evaluations of their knowledge and skills. Performance-based assessment is also considered a tool for schools using language and culture as integral parts of the total curriculum... (McDowell 2001, 16)

Within immersion schools, standardized testing makes no sense. As Twitchell points out, “you don’t need standardized testing in immersion schools. Because even if you say ‘well let’s just translate the test’ then you’re not even testing the content that the community feels is important, or that the school feels is important” (2015). In place of standardized testing, Twitchell, who has done his PhD work with Hawaiian language revitalization experts, suggested in our interview:

Yeah, so the government has spent millions of dollars trying to translate tests and they just get really awkward. So I think you could develop a test, in English, that you give the students—maybe give it to the first time for practice when they’re juniors, and give it to them to pass when they’re seniors, and that’s fine. You can have wonderful skills in English, [students’] speaking skills are flawless; sometimes they have a hard time with spelling because English is so bizarre... (Twitchell 2015)

Whichever assessment method Alaska chooses to employ, any would be an improvement to the current testing regime, and an aid to immersion schooling.

In Juneau, a small group of people are collaborating to work toward the opening of a Tlingit language immersion school, to be named Haa Yoo X’atángi Kúdi (HYX’K).

However, getting H̄YX̄'K off the ground has proved to be difficult for many reasons, including the inherently emotional nature of one's language and culture being endangered. The group is made up of teachers, tribal employees, tribal leaders, educators—both current and retired, and educational administrators. There have been efforts to get school board members involved, but no commitments as of this writing (Twitchell 2015). This coalition faces many barriers to opening and running the proposed school, as discussed during our interview:

I think overall there's a lot of apprehension to just go for it. Some folks will say we don't have enough speakers and my response is usually to say "If we don't do this then we'll never have more speakers than we do right now. We'll just keep losing them and we'll develop people who can talk about the language, but who have a hard time really engaging in the language." And then, some of the current teachers are, you know, we're basically asking them to gamble their whole careers on the success of this school, so I can understand why someone might hesitate when they've worked so hard to build up what they have. (Twitchell 2015)

Even with the occasional hesitation, enough people are on board and ready for action that the first step of the school will be in operation this coming school year (fall 2016). The school will begin with a preschool language nest, as many Hawaiian immersion schools have, and then expand as those students age, adding a grade to the school until the original language nest students are in grade twelve. At that time, the plan is for the school to be fully operational as a K-12 Tlingit language immersion program.

"Without our languages, we are darker-skinned, card-carrying white people who know how to fish, hunt, dance but cannot speak with our ancestors," Twitchell recently stated at a Native Issues Forum in Juneau (Phu 2016). Regarding the preschool that will open this fall, Marvin Adams, vice president of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida

Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), followed with “[t]his type of activity will allow us to have a say in what we teach our children” (Phu 2016). The language nest now has the commitment of fulltime a Tlingit language teacher.

Obviously, without adjustment in statewide policies of teacher certification and student testing, maintaining HƳX’K will be challenging. Due to the newness of ESSA it is unclear how states will interpret the law and any exemptions to expected 95 percent student participation rates on standardized testing. If HB 157 or a similar bill were to move forward, the state would be taking a stance that translated testing is acceptable; however, it also remains to be seen how that translation would work (would the tests be direct translations, could there be modifications to attempt to assess students in their own worldview?).

In the meantime, Juneau offers middle school Tlingit language courses that, as discussed above, will not create fluency, but nonetheless do provide benefits. Going into my fieldwork I had preconceived notions of what Alaska Native language work within the current school model could do. As discussed throughout this thesis, anything less than immersion cannot create a generation of fluent speakers who are capable of operating within the target language’s worldview.

However, there are important reasons to include Alaska Native languages within the current school model, as Juneau School District middle schools started doing this year. Will Geiger identified benefits of this addition in our interview:

I think we get caught up in certain attempts at language instruction being ineffective, only insofar as they aren’t producing fluent speakers, but middle school Spanish and French don’t do that—they don’t produce fluent speakers of

Spanish and French. You have to be really motivated and continue on long after that to actually [gain fluency]. And, I think, Tlingit is not only going to challenge kids intellectually, but it will pose all these different questions about race and class and history that are going to be really beneficial for kids at that age. So, I think they should teach it. I don't think it's going to produce fluent speakers, having middle school Tlingit classes, but that doesn't mean it's a failure. (W. Geiger 2015)

This follows what White illustrated earlier with the changes in blatant racism within Alaskan education, more inclusion means more recognition, which for Alaska Native students means a more positive learning environment. Additionally, the above quote gets to the point of raising questions—by including Tlingit language and discussing language revitalization, the obvious next question from students is “why is this language endangered?” This single question could create a learning environment with more legitimate Alaska Native history than I ever received in my K-12 education with the Juneau School District. Again, this sincere inclusion of Alaska Native history, culture, and language supports Alaska Native students, and removes some of the messages of “[y]ou’re the wrong color, you speak the wrong language, you have the wrong culture, you have the wrong religion” (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1994, 62).

However, the inclusion of language courses in two middle schools is a very small step. In order to expand this positive momentum, the State of Alaska needs to require genuine inclusion of Alaska history, a history which does not begin with the arrival of Russians or Euro-Americans. Twitchell suggests,

I think that State of Alaska, if they were serious about language revitalization and not just preservation, but just to answer the question of really how do we make sure these languages are alive and healthy is they'd say wherever you graduate [high school] from in Alaska, if there was a language that was spoken there before English, then we need to have two semesters in that language. I think it's not

going to hurt anybody. And it's going to show that there's value in those languages. People continue to come back with the argument that focus on these languages is somehow going to create some form of racism which is just insane. (Twitchell 2015)

Twitchell's suggestion of Alaska Native language inclusion could be the first meaningful step towards socially just education in Alaska. Instead of being stuck in the past, Alaska could lead the way in both reparations and social justice education.

In conclusion, current teacher certification is a continuation of colonialism; standardized testing does not work and reinforces systemic racism; erasing Alaska's first people from the curricula is blatant racism; and superficial language inclusion, while important, does not revitalize languages. The State of Alaska's methods of addressing the consequences of its colonial education model must expand beyond addressing the symptoms of a social crisis that the state maintains through education. What Alaska needs is socially just, inclusive education that supports all Alaska Native students. What Alaska Native languages need, and deserve, after the last century and a half of genocidal practices carried out by the State of Alaska and its education system, is the ability to create and maintain language immersion schools. Both of these needs require a complete retooling of teacher certification and student assessment practices. In order to accomplish this paradigm shift of education in Alaska, teachers, administrators, and policymakers need to reevaluate what education means, who it is for, and what is best for Alaska Native students. Haa Yoo X'atangi Kúdi, and other Alaska Native language immersion schools, can provide an environment where for the first time since the American occupation of Alaska, Alaska Native students can hear within the education system that

“you’re the right color, you speak the right language, you have the right culture, and you have the right religion.”

CONCLUSION

I have argued that language revitalization through immersion schooling in Alaska is an issue of social justice. Additionally, I have argued that state-sanctioned teacher certification and federal standardized testing requirements work in opposition to UNDRIP and NALA, and furthermore, that teacher certification and standardized testing requirements reinforce racism within Alaskan education. Alaskan education is currently a hostile environment for Native children, and maintains the growing social crisis within the state.

Alaska's current colonialist education model has broader implications. This case study points to the continuation of systemic colonial thinking within Alaska, and to issues of Indigenous education throughout the US. By endorsing UNDRIP and by having federal law such as NALA, the US acknowledges that Indigenous groups deserve self-determined and governed education, and that bringing Native languages and worldviews into the classroom supports healthy students and communities.

Standardized testing exemptions under ESSA have yet to be determined, due to the newness of this law. This is an opportunity for the State of Alaska to create its own exemption for immersion schooling and beyond; standardized testing is notorious for being an ineffective assessment measure and a disruption to education, which is why a group of New York State parents, discussed in the Body chapter, also boycotted federal standardized testing. The State of Alaska is in a position to embrace social justice

education, by taking advantage of the power given to the State through ESSA, and by following through on NALA's teacher certification recommendations.

I have focused on Juneau, Alaska as a case study. For Juneau, one of the most promising next steps in the quest for self-governed education is to move forward with the development of Haa Yoo X'atangi Kúdi (HYX'K) immersion school, regardless of State of Alaska and Juneau School District approval. This step involves investigating the possibility of running HYX'K under BIE jurisdiction. This creates an interesting relationship, as BIA and BIE have been complicit in a great deal of assimilationist propaganda and abuse. However, if the school operated outside the control of the State of Alaska and the Juneau School Board, a number of financial and administrative constraints would be removed. Additionally, as touched on in the previous chapter, this would open up possibilities under NALA, and for funding under ESSA. The BIE has two methods of running schools: 1) directly and 2) subcontracting out to a tribe. It has yet to be seen if the second method can work for HYX'K, but this is one of the most promising options for self-determined, Tlingit language immersion education.

The State of Alaska can take the stance that Alaska Native people and the support of their languages are central concerns. The alternative is to continue to be complicit in the destruction of Alaska Native languages and people. This moment in the international call for Indigenous rights is an opportunity for Alaska to work to begin countering the century and a half of forced assimilation and cultural and linguistic genocide, while empowering individuals and working to heal communities. Alaska Native language revitalization through immersion schooling is an opportunity for Alaskan education to be

a leader in the Indigenous rights movement, rather than continuing to be part of the great mass of ineffectiveness.

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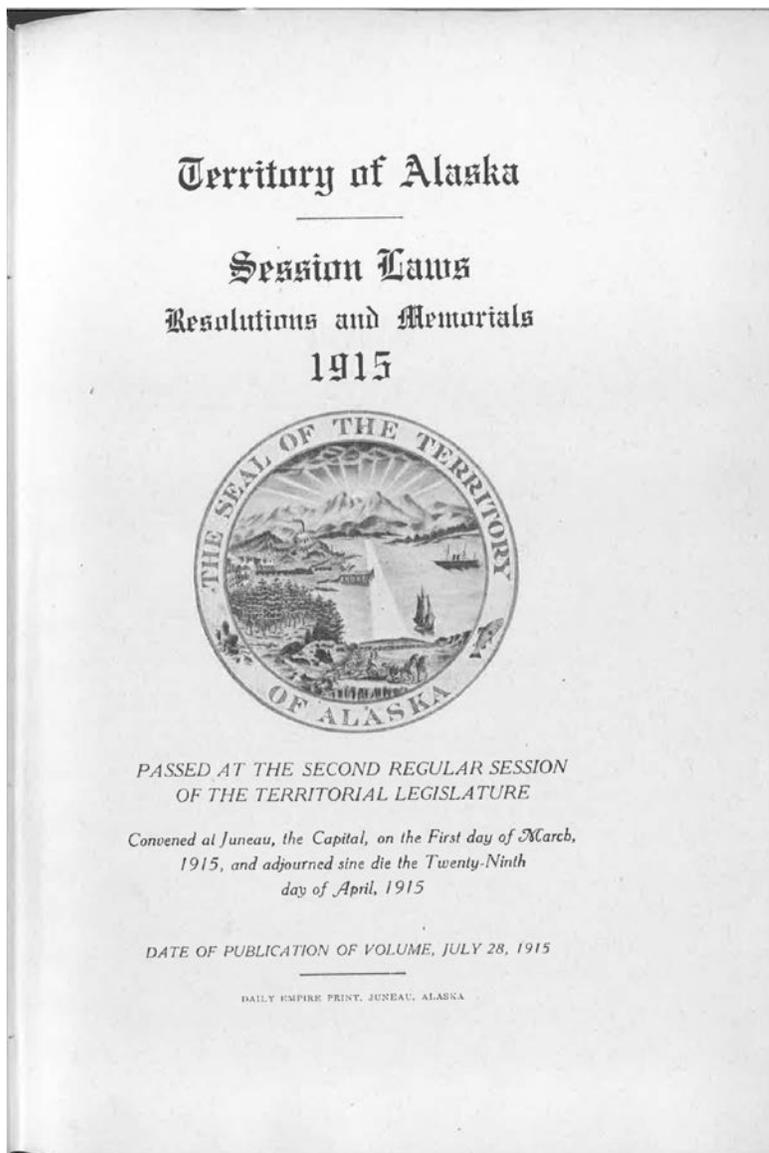
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: 1915 Alaskan Act

An Act to Define and Establish the Political Status of Certain Native Indians within the Territory of Alaska (Territory of Alaska 1915).



School Board
to meet and
agree upon
school budget

purposes is not made and fixed separately, and as soon as a city council and a city school board shall have organized after their election, the two bodies shall meet and agree upon an estimate of the amount of money necessary for school purposes for the coming school year, over and above the fifty per cent of all license money payable to the school treasurer according to the Organic Act.

The minimum amount of this estimate shall be furnished the school board by the city council from time to time during the current school year as it becomes necessary for the school board to expend the same for maintenance of schools.

The city council shall also take this amount into consideration when determining the amount of money necessary to be raised by tax for school and municipal purposes and when fixing the number of mills upon each dollar of taxable property within the incorporated limits of the town.

School Board
to account to
Council monthly
for moneys
expended
Emergency
clause

Section 2. That the school board shall give an itemized accounting to the city council each month for moneys expended during the previous month.

An emergency is hereby declared and this amendment shall take effect immediately on its passage and approval.

Approved, April 26, 1915.

CHAPTER 24.

AN ACT

[S. B. 21.]

To define and establish the political status of certain Native Indians within the Territory of Alaska.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska:

Native Indians,
citizens under
provisions of
Sec. 6, Ch. 119,

Section 1. Every native Indian born within the limits of the Territory of Alaska, and who has severed all tribal relationship and adopted the habits of a civilized

life in accordance with Section Six (6), Chapter One hundred and nineteen (119), 24 Stat. at Large Three hundred ninety (390), may, after the passage and approval of this act, have the fact of his citizenship definitely established by complying with the terms hereafter set forth.

Section 2. Every native Indian of the Territory of Alaska who shall desire a certificate of his citizenship shall first make application to a United States Government, Territorial or municipal school, and shall be subjected to an examination by a majority of the teachers of such school as to his or her qualifications and claims for citizenship. Such examination shall broadly cover the general qualifications of the applicant as to an intelligent exercise of the obligations of suffrage, a total abandonment of any tribal customs or relationship, and the facts regarding the applicant's adoption of the habits of a civilized life.

Section 3. Any native Indian of the Territory of Alaska who shall obtain a certificate in accordance with Section two (2) of this act, which certificate shall set forth that a proper examination has been duly held and the applicant found to have abandoned all tribal customs and relationship, to have adopted the ways and habits of a civilized life and to be properly qualified to intelligently exercise the obligations of an elector in the Territory of Alaska, shall thereupon obtain an endorsement upon said certificate by at least five white citizens of the United States who have been permanent residents of Alaska for at least one year, who were not members of the examining board as provided in Section 2, to the effect that such citizens have been personally acquainted with the life and habits of such Indian for a period of at least one year and that in their best judgment such Indian has abandoned all tribal customs and relationship, has adopted the ways and habits of a civilized life, and is duly qualified to exercise the rights, privileges and obligations of citizenship.

24 Stat. L., p. 390, may have fact of citizenship established.

Examination

Certificate to be endorsed by five white citizens.

Application to
District Court

Section 4. Upon securing such certificate as provided by sections two (2) and three (3) of this act properly signed in ink, the applicant shall forward the same together with an oath duly acknowledged to the effect that such applicant forever renounces all tribal customs and relationships, to the United States District Court for the Division in which the applicant resides praying for the granting of a certificate of citizenship.

Hearing

Section 5. Upon receiving such application the Judge of the District Court shall set a day of hearing on such application which shall not be less than sixty (60) days from the date of receipt of such application, whereupon the Clerk of the District Court shall post a notice in his office containing the name of the applicant and the facts set forth in his application, and the date set for the hearing upon the application, and shall immediately forward a copy of such notice to the applicant, whereupon the applicant shall post such notice or a copy thereof in a conspicuous place at the Post Office nearest to his or her residence.

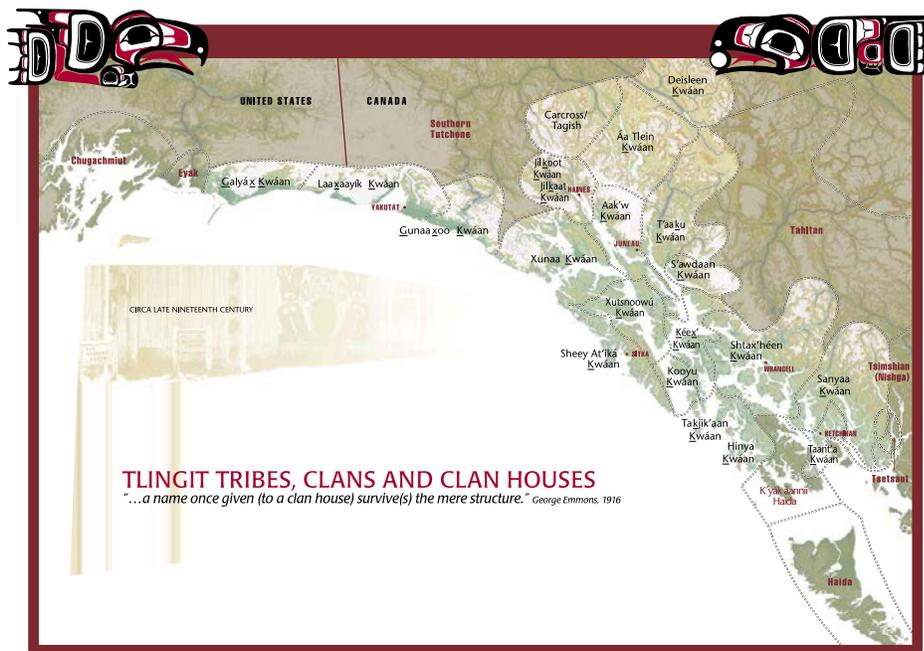
Final certificate.

Section 6. Upon approval of such application by the Judge of the United States District Court for the Division in which the applicant resides, the said Judge shall issue a certificate, certifying that due proof has been made to him that the said applicant is "an Indian born within the Territorial limits of the United States, and that he has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life." Said certificate, when presented in court or otherwise, shall be taken and considered as prima facie evidence of the truth of the statements therein contained.

Approved, April 27, 1915.

Appendix B: Map of Traditional Lingít Aaní

(Tlingit Readers Inc. 2003)



II. The History of Boarding Schools in Alaska

A. Background

Within a few short years of purchasing Alaska from Russia in 1867, the United States government began to exercise its educational dominion over its indigenous inhabitants. The first Native groups to be affected were the Thlinget, Haida, and Simpsian in Southeast Alaska. This occurred because the seat of the new government was located in the Southeast community of Sitka. Despite Alaska's vastness, the U.S. government then began to extend its educational program to the rest of the territory, which occurred within a generation.

In time, as a result of gold seekers looking for "yellow metal," Alaska soon came to also represent a new economic frontier for America and the rest of the world. Tens of thousands of miners flocked to Alaska in search of instant riches. At about the same time, America's established churches began to send missionaries to Alaska's many villages in order to mine the aborigines for the spiritual gold of Christianity. In time, the religious industry soon partnered with the U.S. and territorial governments in educating and converting Alaska's indigenous populations.

B. Educational Policies

The educational policies that took place in Alaska in the late 1800s and early 1900s were a continuation of U.S. government policy that began in 1879 as a result of western expansion in the continental United States. These new policies focused on treaty-making that put Indians on reserves and educated Indian children in boarding schools.

By the late 1870s, the American public grew weary of the Indian wars and wanted another solution to the "Indian problem." Swapping genocide of the American Indian for their total assimilation into Western society became the new government mantra. In order to accomplish this, educational policies were developed. First, boarding schools were established on and off reservations. In the west, as well as in Alaska, government agency representatives often forcefully took children away to boarding schools hundreds and even thousands of miles away from their homeland.

This educational policy was an attempt to assimilate and acculturate indigenous children into Western culture, and America's "melting pot." Boarding schools needed to be far enough away to discourage families from easily visiting their children, since family members would only hinder and detract from the goals of assimilation. The educational policy was also aided and abetted by many of America's religious communities, which had begun to establish boarding schools of their own.

At these government and religious run boarding schools, Native children soon learned to read and write the English language. They were also taught American, European, and world history from a Western perspective, as well as the principles and doctrines of Christianity. Educators and the government wanted children to put away their parents' weapons of war in order to learn new skills and jobs, such as farming, carpentry, and animal husbandry. It would be easier to control an Indian with a hoe in his hand rather than with him on horseback, waving a rifle. Corporal punishment and other forms of harsh discipline were meted out consistently and



forcefully to Native children who attempted to speak their language or practiced traditional ceremonies and songs.

C. Government Schools in Alaska

In Alaska, Native tribes had fought no major wars against the United States. There were a few skirmishes with the military in Southeast Alaska and the naval bombardment of Angoon village. The United States government did not attempt to put Alaska's indigenous population onto reservations. It did, however, import a small tribe of Canadian Tsimsian and create a reservation called Metlakatla.

For the most part, as the U.S. Government focused on the Alaska territory, Alaska Natives became the beneficiary of their change in policy—from annihilation of American Indians to pacification and assimilation. One day, the Alaska Native people must pay tribute to their lower 48 Indian brothers who helped change that policy through loss of many lives and loss of their lands. The government, however, continued to exercise the same educational policies in Alaska, which was to assimilate the indigenous population.

In 1886, Sheldon Jackson was named "General Agent of Education" for Alaska. In his lengthy and seminal report to Congress, Jackson said much was still needed to be done. Of Alaska's Inuit population, he stated, *"They are savages, and with the exception of those in Southern Alaska, have not had civilizing, educational, or religious advantages."* Jackson stated that the Indians of Southeast Alaska were no longer savages, but had been civilized and given proper education and religious advantages. At the time of Jackson's statement, almost 20 years of Presbyterian schools had been in existence in many Thlinget and Haida villages. Elsewhere in his report to Congress, Jackson stated that Alaska's indigenous population was uncivilized: *"He must try to educate them out of and away from the training of their home-life. They need to be taught both the law of God and the law of the land."*

Jackson's statement that *"...the best and brightest can go to the larger training schools,"* paved the way for Alaska Native children to be placed in boarding schools. It was Jackson's report to Congress in 1886, which requested \$50,000 to begin the process, that set the stage for educating Alaska's Native people. Until then, missionary groups had been footing the bill. It was payback time.

D. The Roots of Historical Trauma

1. Western Illnesses and Diseases

In the meantime, the rush of miners and missionaries continued their influx into Alaska, looking for gold and souls. With them, they brought the insidious Western diseases and illnesses that had already decimated other indigenous groups, beginning in 1492 with Columbus' "discovery" of the new world. The consequence of those illnesses and diseases gave Alaska Native children an unexpected start.

Thousands of Alaska Natives died. They died from Diphtheria, Influenza, cholera, smallpox, syphilis, measles, mumps, chickenpox, tuberculosis, and alcohol. As Western diseases were introduced, waves of death swept over indigenous peoples and villages. Harold Napoleon, in his book *Yuuyaraq, The Way of the Human Being*, referred to this time period as the "great deaths." Native people simply had no immunity to these diseases, and the Shaman and traditional





healers had nothing in their repertoire of healing skills to cure them. Thus, these catastrophic illnesses became the first leading cause of historical trauma, followed by boarding schools.

2. The Introduction of Boarding Schools

Thousands of children who survived the initial onslaught of disease and illness became orphaned when their parents and grandparents died. Out of necessity, missionary groups and the federal government began establishing orphanages. In many respects, the "great deaths" jump-started boarding schools in Alaska. It is in this context that boarding schools are the second leading cause of major trauma among Alaska's indigenous people, with the great deaths being the first. It must be remembered that boarding schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs only ended in the mid 1970s. The trauma is still being felt today by thousands of Native people who are entering elder status, many without having healed from their experiences. It must also be remembered that boarding schools began with the separation of children from their parents, and that nearly every official act had a negative or traumatic affect on them both.

Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, some orphanages and government-run "day" schools gave way to large boarding schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), an agency of the US Department of the Interior and the ever-present affiliated armies of catholic and protestant missionaries. It was during this time period that boarding schools were scattered all across Alaska. The government's policy of assimilation through education and religious indoctrination was in full swing.

The assimilation process began by separating children from their parents. Authorities told most parents that they had no choice but to give their children over to the BIA so that they could be provided a proper education. Any parent who resisted this mandate was threatened with jail. Some of these schools were hundreds, if not thousands, of miles from their home village. Many children were sent to places foreign to them. In many cases, kids from the arctic and sub-arctic plains were sent to mountainous and forested regions of the State. The Wrangell Institute Boarding School, deep in the heart of the Southeast Panhandle, was one such place.

Boys and girls, as young as five years of age, were taken from their homes and sent away to the elementary school of Wrangell Institute. The youngest of these children had never been away from their home or village before. Many would not understand why their parents would let them go and why strangers would come and take them away. Oftentimes, children were not told what was to become of them because their parents did not know either. The authorities came and loaded thousands of children from hundreds of villages across Alaska onto boats, skiffs, dog teams, and sleds for shipment to rural centers for redeployment to larger gathering places like Fairbanks and Anchorage. About 400 would go to Wrangell. Many left their homes speaking only their traditional languages.

A Yupik schoolmate, now in his late 50s, recalled what his older sister, who did not have to go to boarding school, said, "There were no school-age children in the village, it was eerily quiet that winter."

A cadre of BIA employees, Native and non-Native alike, would meet the aircraft coming in from rural centers, which began an annual fall ritual. From a roster, the employees would determine the names of the children and their village of origin and then tether them together by small pieces of rope. Sometimes a rope held a few kids, other times ten to 15. BIA personnel would affix a yellow tag on thin wire to each child's coat, bearing that child's name and flight data and





destination. Hundreds of tethered children wearing yellow tags dotted waiting rooms across Alaskan airports. Their faces represented Yupiit, Inupiat, Athabascan, Aleut, and Suqpiat heritage.

Many children wore pensive, frightened looks on their faces. The sights, sounds, and smells surrounding them were foreign and menacing. Some were crying, rocking themselves back and forth in their seats, and calling out for their mothers and loved ones in their Native languages. Still other kids shivered and shook from fear, apprehensive of the BIA officials, their eyes darting around, seeking anyone familiar. The younger children would blink their eyes tight, perhaps wanting to make their immediate surroundings disappear.

In this day and age we take air travel for granted; we travel as passengers on many types of aircraft and see airplanes in the air and on the ground at airports. Many of us do not think twice about boarding an airplane. That was not so for many Native children traveling by air for their first time between the late 1940s and mid 1960s.

Many children had never seen an airplane up close, let alone ridden in one. Even scarier was flying in large two and four-motor aircraft into Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau. Strapped in their seats, some of the kids screamed with fright at the roar of the engines or as they lost sight of the ground. For these children, airplanes came to represent unknown forces that took them to alien places, then returned them in the spring profoundly changed.

The children who arrived in Juneau were met by still more BIA officials who placed them onto small seaplanes destined for Wrangell. Those flights were even stranger because the kids experienced a water take off and landing for the first time. Seaplanes such as Widgeons and PBYS constantly flew back and forth between Juneau and Wrangell, delivering the elementary school aged children and ending their long and arduous travels. This annual fall exodus from hundreds of far flung villages would repeat itself for more than two generations.

Arriving on the beach in the town of Wrangell, the children were met by still more BIA officials who herded them onto busses for the five-mile drive to an isolated outpost. For many children of the arctic and tundra, the scenery along the drive was equally dramatic and frightening. Mountains and tall trees, which they had never seen before, overwhelmed their senses. This experience added to the trauma of being separated from their family, and of traveling for days in a foreign craft to a strange town.

Wrangell sits deep in a rain and wind swept archipelago. The Wrangell Institute Boarding School was built into the base of an imposing island mountain backdrop. Turning 180 degrees, the landscape tiers downward to a dirt road running perpendicular to the school that meets the beach and water. The campus itself was surrounded on three sides by tall green Sitka Spruce, averaging more than 100 feet in height.

The main campus was comprised of three interconnecting pale yellow buildings. Built in the 1930s, the buildings' architecture appeared Victorian in nature. The three-story school sat in the center of the complex and extended left and right down open hallways to the two-story boys and girls dorms, respectively. In the back of those structures were smaller buildings comprised of the commissary, the maintenance building, and a clinic.





For nine, sometimes ten, months this structured array would house some 400 boys and girls who had come from upwards of three time zones away. They had reached their physical destination, and the destination of forced acculturation and assimilation was just ahead.

At the dorms, the pace quickened. Children were met in numerous receiving lines for processing into living quarters and into school. In separate dorms, both girls and boys were put through a series of separate functions. In the first line, boys that came in that day were ordered by BIA men and women employees, called "matrons," to strip naked. Of course, many children did not understand any English at all. In still louder voices, employees barked orders, "take off your clothes!" Still no response from many kids. In exasperation, staff rushed over to these children and practically ripped the clothing off their little bodies. Children, already traumatized by their trip, were screaming and crying. There were no attempts at providing any modicum of modesty by the staff. Shivering with fright and cold, standing on a concrete floor, kids as young as 5 and 6 removed everything they had on. They were ordered to place them in a bag along with anything else that was brought along for the trip.

The next line was for haircuts. Each boy, regardless of the length of his hair, had his head shaven, cropped "G.I." style. The electric clippers were pressed firmly next to the scalp and whirred loudly in their ears.

In the girls' dorm, hair was shorn closely above the shoulders. In some Athabascan cultures, the cutting of hair was a sign of mourning after passage of a loved one in the village. The cutting of hair of Athabascan girls became an annual rite of spiritual sacrilege.

Back in the boys' dorm, naked kids were ordered to form another line for cleansing. The first part of the bathing process entailed passing through a liquid chemical bath on the genitals and feet. The caustic purplish mixture was painful and irritating. The second part of the bath consisted of going through a narrow door that opened into a large shower area of eight to ten nozzles coming out of three walls. There was a large center drain where all of the water disappeared into. Groups of children were ordered into the open ended shower stall to bathe. Some of the matrons forcefully used short scrub brushes on children who were reluctant or frightened of the spewing hot water coming out of the walls. The brushing was so hard that they howled with pain and the skin of some kids turned pink. Children witnessing that event did their best to bathe with the large bars of lye soap handed out to them and save themselves from a violent scrubbing.

The next line was for government issued clothing. Most kids came only with what they had on. Everyone was fitted with similar pants, shirts, socks, and shoes. Later, in the clinic, boys and girls who need spectacles were eventually given horned rimmed glasses. The glasses all looked the same.

The next process was the issuance of numbers, which were central to about everything that was done at the institute. Each child was issued and ordered to memorize a two or three digit number that would stay with them the rest of the year. This number was written on each child's government issued clothing in indelible ink. One's number was also associated with a similarly numbered, open-ended box. Bedding, linens, and towels, as well as mail, were placed there. A child was generally harshly scolded or spanked for forgetting their number.

Some matrons would refer to kids only by their assigned number, never by their name. For some kids, this was their only public identification for the entire school year. Kids returning to





Wrangell Institute for any number of years would accumulate multiple numbers over time. Years later, at a forum in Sitka, Alaska, a Yup'ik lady from Bristol Bay recalled that one particular girl's dorm matron only referred to her by her assigned number for the entire year, never by the name her parents had given to her. Now in her late 50s and approaching elder status, the Yup'ik woman says that she will always remember how impersonal the matron was to the girl. That was all she had recalled.

In both dorms, children in grades 1 through 4 were housed on the first floor. The older kids, in grades 5 through 8, were housed on the second floor. The dorms were arrayed in a barracks style fashion with a large center aisle which glistened with floor polish. Each room was separated from the others by an open-ended partition. The kids could stand on the top bunk and peer over into the next room, and the tiniest children could slide beneath the partitions.

Each dorm room consisted of four bunk beds, for a total of eight cots. Each bed had a thin mattress and pillow. Sheets, pillow cases, and an olive drab army blanket made up the bunk. Brown metal dressers and study desks complemented the room. Children would later have to pass inspection by having a glove-clean room and bunk beds tight enough to bounce a quarter on. If the room was not in shape, demerits were handed out, and those in the room were given extra duty.

"Lights out" was generally by 9 p.m. or 10 p.m., depending on whether it was a school night. Newly arrived children, especially the youngest, would begin to cry as soon as the dorm's lighting was brought down. It would start out with one child who would whimper softly, then grow louder until it became a deep sob. This usually caught on to the next child, and then the next, until the entire floor of children were wailing for their moms and loved ones. "Mamma, mamma, mammal!" the children cried in unison. One by one they would cry themselves to sleep. In the morning, when they would awaken, their eyes would be puffy and tear stained. This would repeat for nights on end. Slowly, however, this would diminish over time and, towards the middle of the school year, no one cried. Perhaps it was because crying did not bring their mothers to them, and the memories began to fade. Nine months is forever to a five year old. In the spring, when they would go home, they would need to become reacquainted with their parents who had become strangers.

The aim of government-run boarding schools for American Indian and Alaska Native children, of course, was for total assimilation and acculturation into the dominant society. At Wrangell Institute, the process was brutalizing and thorough. Native children were to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic in English. It was primarily taught in school but reinforced in all facets of daily life. At the same time, there was a constant message that Native cultures, heritage, and languages were of no use, including singing, dancing, and drumming.

It did not make any difference where a student was on campus. Even out on the school grounds, if a student was caught speaking his/her Native language he/she received a wide range of punishments. Students had their mouths washed out with soap, were put in closets, or were ordered to sit in classroom corners on high stools wearing dunce caps. Some students were spanked or whipped with belts and "cat-o-nine tails," or had their knuckles rapped by night sticks and rulers.

This constant punishment for speaking one's language, and the berating of a child's indigenous culture, finally took its toll. Many children who returned home for the summer understood less of their home language. Many came home speaking only English. Some were ashamed to be





associated with their language and culture. After many years of elementary boarding school at Wrangell, upwards of eight years, some children lost parenting role models; there were no father figures to emulate, no mother figures to emulate. They came home estranged from their parents.

As was mentioned, the BIA's boarding school program lasted for two generations, well into the 1970s. Religious-run boarding schools lasted much longer. In many cases, the government and the established churches collaborated on assurances that children would also receive religious instruction. By the 1970s, thousands of elementary and high school Inupiat, Yupiit, Athabascan, Aleut, Suqpiat, Thlinget, Haida, and Tsimtsian children were sent to the dozens of religious and BIA-run boarding schools across Alaska and the lower 48 states. The process of acculturation and assimilation came close to doing what was intended--turning Native children into the likeness of Western European children.

The Yupiit culture of the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta and the Inupiat culture of the North Slope seemed to have survived the educational onslaught better than other groups. Most other cultural groups suffered a significant loss of children who could speak and understand their language.

The moral impacts of those bygone educational policies are evident today. There are many boarding school-era students who have faced a loss of cultural identity, language, and tradition. They suffer from post traumatic stress disorder due to the indignities and traumas of years in boarding school. Since the mid 1970s, these individuals have made up the high percentages of alcohol-fueled statistics: accidents, domestic violence, murder, and suicide. Many have passed through the criminal justice system. They have been living on the margins of both societies, caught between the Native world and the Western world. And they have passed this legacy on to their children and grandchildren, never healed from those emotional wounds.

Many of the survivors of the Great Deaths that Harold Napoleon talked about were now burdened with the erosion and loss of cultural identity and language for having attended boarding school. The result was the compounding and acceleration of indigenous trauma over which they had no control.





III. A Personal Journey

I know the reports about boarding school to be true for I have lived it. As I was writing I found it difficult to remain calm and dispassionate. As individuals who have gone through the boarding experience, we need to tell our story. It is part of our history that has not been completely told. At the same time, as an Inupiaq, we were taught not to call attention to ourselves. This creates a dilemma: on one hand it is extremely important to account for what happened, but on the other hand it is difficult to bringing attention to one's self. It is certainly not in my nature to take credit for what happened, but it is important enough that I must relate my boarding school experiences. Therefore, I apologize if I offend anyone in the process.

Today I am nearing my 59th birthday. Yet the memories of boarding school are as clear as if they happened yesterday. There are many Native people who went to boarding school before me and many more after me. They all have their stories to tell.

I was eight years old, and my brother was six, when we were sent away to Wrangell Institute Boarding School in the fall of 1955. I was 18 years old when I graduated from Mt. Edgcombe boarding school in 1965, and was on my own. I had spent ten long years in the government's boarding school system.

Boarding school taught me that everything I knew about my culture, language, and world view were evil and must be pushed away. Wrangell Institute Elementary school did its best to eradicate everything I identified with as an Inupiaq. After six years at Wrangell, graduating at age 14 in 1961, I was happy to get away from a place of routine punishments and abuse.

As a young child I witnessed countless acts of cruelty against other children. There was emotional abuse, psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

I saw a grown man beat a twelve year old boy into unconsciousness. It will be forever seared into my memory. The force of the man's fist against the young boy's jaw splayed the boy's mouth open to his ear. His cheek just fell open. He quickly blacked out from the force of the blow. Blood gushed out everywhere, his jaw broken in a number of places. The sight of the young boy with his mouth wired shut was a constant and daily reminder of that violent scene.

Scenes of torture also occurred. A young Yupik lad and I (we were both about 10 years old) were wrestling, as young boys will do, when a matron on duty ordered us to stop. The matron grabbed both of us by the collars and dragged us off to the showers. We were instructed to undress; he said we were to be punished for wrestling. We were ordered into the open shower stall. Blocking the doorway, the matron grabbed a fire hose nearby, turned it on and directed the beam of spray towards me and my friend.

The water came from a mountain dam of ice and snow melt. The water was barely above freezing. The matron adjusted the spray for full force and affect. The shock of water blew us around inside the open shower stall. We could not escape from it. We tried to dodge the spray but the matron followed our every move. We could barely breathe from the coldness of the water, and the force of the spray was beginning to peel off some of our skin. The assault seemed endless. My friend was already suffering from an ear infection and the cold water penetrated into his eardrum, causing him to scream louder. The matron just laughed at our pain and yelling. Clearly, he was enjoying inflicting pain on two little boys.





As an adult I still get flashbacks to that time in the shower room. The memory of it comes back at unexpected times. It will come when I take a shower, especially if the water is a little cold. It will come at times when I see fire hoses turned on, or whenever I feel claustrophobic and can't breathe. I always remember it when I see scenes of the 1950s and 1960s of black people being hosed down during the civil rights movement in places like Birmingham, Alabama.

At night the sexual molestation and assaults came. Shortly after "lights out," some of the men who worked as teachers, administrators, or matrons would come into the dorm rooms to pick out their prey. Occasionally a female matron would select a child for sex as well. Sometimes the molestation appeared random, while other times certain boys became favorite targets.

After years of receiving this unwanted attention, some of the boys began molesting the younger children themselves. Sometimes it was the stronger kid who overpowered a weaker one. In six years, I can recall being molested twice—once by an administrator and another time by a stronger kid. I felt alone, afraid, and ashamed. The perpetrators would whisper in their victims' ears, threatening them not to tell. If it wasn't happening to you it would be a matter of time before you witnessed it happening to another child. Generally, it was the more vulnerable and younger children who were selected. Sometime the assaults occurred in the children's beds, while other times they were led out to the bathrooms or the janitor's closet.

I felt the trauma of those assaults well into adulthood. Yet I could not or would not talk about what had happened to me for many years. As a parent myself, I became super protective and watchful. Often, my fear and anger would come out when I did not know where my kids were, and I would punish them for not telling me. I never told them of the secrets. Over the years, I ran into others who had been at the boarding schools and suffered the same fate. We knew what had happened to us, but in our awkward and embarrassed silence we would just exchange nods of acquaintance. For me, the shame was still there, and the anger. A lot more abuse occurred there, but I wanted to share only a few examples.

Mt. Edgecumbe was a continuation of Wrangell except without the violence and punishment. Yet we were prevented from going home on holidays or funerals. In 1963 my sister died and I was denied funeral leave.

We learned world, European, and American History from a Western perspective. Any references to the American Indian or Alaska Native were simply footnotes in their history books. No history was offered of indigenous peoples and nations. No Alaska Native history. Everything that I learned about the world was shaped in the Western image. I came away from boarding school confused and ashamed about my identity. And institutionalized. After ten years of boarding school, I believed that I was peripheral only to the whims of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; my life would evolve only around the government.

All sense of parenting left me; I had no role models. So, when my own children were born, I parroted what I saw. When my kids misbehaved (such as breaking a rule from my school's past), I took out my belt or whatever was handy and whipped them. And I did it with lots of anger. It took some years for my wife, who managed to hold on to traditional ways of child rearing, to show me a more nurturing and caring way to raise children. I look back on that time with some shame and remorse.





As an Alaska Native, I drank to have a good time. Alcohol was also a great way to numb my hurts and pain from the past. I was promiscuous and alcohol was a good way to mask my behavior. I had the best of both worlds. Or so I thought. My mother and father died from alcoholism so I vowed not to go that far down the booze road. But it crept up on me, caught me by surprise. In November 1985, just before thanksgiving, I was arrested for a DWI crime. I avoided jail but lost my license for 90 days. For me, this was my day of reckoning, my rock bottom. The arrest led me to closely examine my life and how damaging I was becoming to my wife and family. Over the years I began to realize the underlying causes of my self-destructive behavior; it was the many unresolved traumas that I had experienced while in Wrangell Institute.

Without first healing myself, I got involved in the Sobriety Movement, thinking this was the way for others to heal and deal with their pain. I wasn't "walking the talk," so to speak, and every time I was asked to relate some experience in a public forum, I couldn't. I choked up and couldn't get the words out. Clearly, I needed to find a way to come to terms with my past, my behavior, and with alcohol. How was I expected to be a leader in the so-called "Wellness Movement" when I hadn't even gone through a personal healing experience.





V. Conclusion

Many will never tell the story of their experiences; it is too painful for them. A Yup'ik man, now in his sixties, said that he remembers seeing me in Wrangell but cannot remember seeing himself there; the trauma for him was too great. Hopefully, the attempt to tell my story, humble as it is, will give others courage to tell theirs.

Thousands of Native people went through boarding school everywhere in Alaska and in the lower 48 states. Many still carry the wounds from that era. While a church was able to help some of us heal, there are many organizations, Native and non-Native, who can also sponsor healing events in their communities. I encourage you to call on the Episcopal Diocese of Fairbanks to help you with your ideas for healing in your area.

Many former students of boarding school have wonderful stories to tell of the positive experiences they went through. However, those that did not have such a positive experience are now reaching elder status in their communities. There will come a time when there will be a discussion of where they might spend their final years. Hopefully, it will be at home with loving relations and care givers. For others, there may be a decision to place them in an assisted living or elder care facility. However, it must be done with an understanding of what they may have gone through in an earlier life, perhaps a life in a boarding school.

If such a decision is made, there should be efforts to conduct a cultural needs survey and to ascertain an understanding of any boarding school experiences. Placement into an assisted living facility should be culturally relevant and appropriate to that individual's tribal affiliation. Programs, services, and food should be commensurate with that person's life ways.



Appendix D: Alaska's 1998 Official Language Measure

1998 Voter Initiative to have English as Alaska's Official Language

Ballot Measure 6

Requiring Government to Use English

BALLOT LANGUAGE

This bill requires the state to use English in all government functions and actions. State records must be in English. "The state" means the legislature, all state agencies, local governments, school districts, public corporations and the university. Those entities may use non-English languages for international trade, emergencies, teaching languages, court suits, criminal inquiries, for elected officials to talk to constituents or to comply with federal law. Costs of non-English records must be identified. Persons who speak only English may not be denied state jobs or services. The bill does not affect private sector use of non-English languages.

SHOULD THIS INITIATIVE BECOME LAW?

Yes []

No []

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY SUMMARY

This measure will make English the official language of the State of Alaska. English will be the language to be used by each public office in all functions. This measure will apply to each office of the state, to public corporations, and to local governments.

The government may use another language for some things. They are as follows:

- (1) for health and safety or when there is an emergency;
- (2) to teach the language to students who know English;
- (3) to teach English to students who do not know it well;
- (4) to promote foreign relations, trade, tourism, or sporting events; (5) to protect rights of persons charged with crimes;
- (6) to serve the needs of the court system;
- (7) to investigate crime and protect the rights of crime victims;
- (8) to the extent necessary to comply with federal law, including the Native American Languages Act; (9) to go to or observe a religious function;
- (10) to use a term of art, name, or phrase as part of a statement in English;
- (11) if the elected official or the official's staff can speak the language, to talk to a constituent.

A person who is not a public officer or employee may make a statement to the government in another language if it is changed into English and made a part of the record. The costs to do that and the cost of producing things in other languages will be a line item in the budget of each government office.

Most of the time the government may not require a person to know another language for a job. But, the government may require a public employee to know another language if it

is needed to do an act that the government is allowed to do in a language other than English. No person may be denied a government service or benefit because the person knows only English. The government may not stop the use of another language in a private function. A person may sue to enforce this measure. The provisions of this measure are severable.

FULL TEXT OF PROPOSED LAW

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Alaska:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose

The people of the State of Alaska find that English is the common unifying language of the State of Alaska and the United States of America, and declare a compelling interest in promoting, preserving and strengthening its use.

Section 2. Official Language

The English language is the official language of the State of Alaska.

Section 3. Scope

The English language is the language to be used by all public agencies in all government functions and actions. The English language shall be used in the preparation of all official public documents and records, including all documents officially compiled, published or recorded by the government.

Section 4. Applicability

This Act applies to the legislative and executive branches of the State of Alaska and all political subdivisions, including all departments, agencies, divisions and instrumentalities of the State, the University of Alaska, all public authorities and corporations, all local governments and departments, agencies, divisions, and instrumentalities of local governments, and all government officers and employees.

Section 5. Exceptions

(a) The government, as defined in Section 4 of this Act, may use a language other than English when necessary for the following purposes:

- (1) to communicate health and safety information or when an emergency requires the use of a language other than English,
- (2) to teach another language to students proficient in English,
- (3) to teach English to students of limited English proficiency,
- (4) to promote international relations, trade, commerce, tourism or sporting events,
- (5) to protect the constitutional and legal rights of criminal defendants,
- (6) to serve the needs of the judicial system in civil and criminal cases in compliance with court rules and orders,
- (7) to investigate criminal activity and protect the rights or crime victims,
- (8) to the extent necessary to comply with federal law, including the Native American Languages Act,
- (9) to attend or observe religious ceremonies,
- (10) to use non-English terms of art, names, phrases, or expressions included as part of communications otherwise in English, and
- (11) to communicate orally with constituents by elected public officials and their staffs, if the public official or staff member is already proficient in a language other than English.

(b) An individual may provide testimony or make a statement to the government in a language other than English, if the individual is not an officer or employee of the government, and if the testimony or statement is translated into English and included in the records of the government.

Section 6. Public Accountability

All costs related to the preparation, translation, printing, or recording of documents, records, brochures, pamphlets, flyers, or other material in languages other than English shall be defined as a separate line item in the budget of every governmental agency, department, or office.

Section 7. Non-Denial of Employment or Services

(a) No governmental entity shall require knowledge of a language other than English as a condition of employment unless the requirements of the position fall within one of the exceptions provided in Section 5 of this Act, and fluency in another language is a bona fide job qualification required to fulfill a function included within one of the exceptions.

(b) No person may be denied services, assistance, benefits, or facilities, directly or indirectly provided by the government, because that person communicates only in English.

Section 8. Private Sector Excluded

This Act shall not be construed in any way that infringes upon the rights of persons to use languages other than English in activities or functions conducted solely in the private sector, and the government may not restrict the use of language other than English in such private activities or functions.

Section 9. Private Cause of Action Authorized

Any person may bring suit against any governmental entity to enforce the provisions of this Act.

Section 10. Severability

The provisions of this Act are independent and severable, and if any provisions of this Act, or the applicability of any provision to any person or circumstance, shall be held to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected and shall be given effect to the fullest extent practicable.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

A common language is common sense. That is why you should vote YES on Ballot Measure 6 to make English the official language of Alaska government.

This initiative has been overwhelmingly supported by Alaskans from all 40 voting districts and from all cultures, religions, and political parties.

Your fellow Alaskans support this bill because they know it makes sense. First, as our state population is becoming more diverse, this bill will help keep Alaskans unified by a common language. Second, in the Alaska tradition of limited government, this bill will prevent the increased bureaucracy and costs due to offering documents and services in multiple languages.

Opponents will try to scare you with misrepresentations and lies about what this bill does. Our response is simple: Read the actual text of Ballot Measure 6. You will see that it is a limit only on the government. Private citizens will still be able to use any language they

want, anywhere, at any time.

Everyone agrees Alaska Native languages must be preserved and protected, so this bill has a specific exception for the Native American Languages Act. No matter what opponents say, this bill will have no impact on public or private use of Alaska Native languages!

The bill also has commonsense exceptions for things like public health and safety, police work, international trade, and the teaching of foreign languages.

There are 105 languages spoken in Alaska homes. Our diversity can be a strength, but only if we have one common language so everyone can talk to everyone else. Learning English empowers people to get better jobs and to integrate into Alaskan society. Mastery of English helps immigrants increase their incomes by 30%. We need to help people learn English, not discourage them.

As Americans and Alaskans, we share a commitment to democracy, equality, and freedom. But that shared commitment is only possible if we have a common language that allows us to talk to each other. Like our flag, the pledge of allegiance, and our national anthem, English as our official language is a symbol. These symbols remind Americans and Alaskans of every race, religion, and background of what we all have in common.

We Alaskans pride ourselves on common sense. We know, for example, that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Right now our state government uses English most of the time. By making English the official language, we make sure that Alaska will not end up like California, where they offer driver's license exams in 33 languages. Other states may offer routine documents and services in dozens of languages, but that does not make sense for Alaska.

Please join your fellow citizens in voting YES on Ballot Measure 6. Remember that English unifies our state, and this bill will prevent future problems. For Alaska, a common language is common sense.

Alaskans for a Common Language Edgar Paul Boyko
(907) 274-1600, (888) 722-1699

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION

Proponents of Ballot Measure #6 would have you believe that this law proclaiming English to be the "official language" of Alaska is as harmless as proclaiming the bald eagle to be the official bird of the United States. Don't be fooled! This law will have severe consequences for the many non-English speaking residents and citizens of Alaska.

1.) The proposed English-Only law does NOT protect Native languages. Although the proponents would have you believe that the Native American Languages Act protects Alaska Native languages from this English-Only law, that is incorrect. The courts have held that the Native American Languages Act is not enforceable against state and local governments. If Ballot Measure #6 passes, the business of local government, such as city council and school board meetings, in many Native villages would have to be conducted in English rather than in the local language which is easily comprehended by all.

2.) There is no need for an English-Only law in Alaska. For all practical purposes,

English already is the common language in Alaska. This proposed English-Only law merely fosters divisiveness by saying to our indigenous and non-English speaking residents that they are not accepted in Alaska, even though many non-English languages and cultures predate English. The key to unity in Alaska is not to punish persons with either limited or no English proficiency by effectively precluding them from receiving essential government services and denying them access to the political process. The way this law is drafted, if a non-English speaking resident calls a government agency on the phone or goes into a government building seeking assistance, the government employees who greet this individual are prohibited from communicating in any language other than English even when they know the other language. This English-Only law will have the undesirable effect of making government less efficient and less responsive to the needs of Alaskans.

3.) The proposed English-Only law is based on unfair and inaccurate stereotypes of immigrants and indigenous peoples. This law falsely presumes that today's immigrants are not learning English and thus threaten the primacy of English as our common language. Nothing could be further from the truth. Today's immigrants are striving to learn English as quickly as possible in order to acquire citizenship, succeed in business or succeed academically. Classes in English as a second language are over-subscribed and have long waiting lists. If anything, we should increase funding for classes to teach English rather than pass punitive laws which would in effect bar non-English speakers from receiving many services to which they are entitled.

4.) The proposed English-Only law is unconstitutional. This law violates Alaskans' constitutional rights to speak in the language of their choice and to petition their government for redress of grievances. Furthermore, this law violates Alaskans' constitutional right to equal protection of the laws.

Vote NO on Ballot Measure #6. The bond that unites our nation and our state is not linguistic or ethnic homogeneity but rather a shared commitment to democracy, liberty, equality, and tolerance.

Alaska Civil Liberties Union

Jennifer Rudinger, Executive Director (907) 276-2258

**Alaska Division of Elections Home Page 1998 Official Election Pamphlet
Introduction Page**

Appendix E: Alaska's 2014 Official State Languages Bill

**LAWS OF ALASKA****2014****Source**
CSHB 216(STA)**Chapter No.**
_____**AN ACT**

Adding the Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unangaḡ, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages as official languages of the state.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

THE ACT FOLLOWS ON PAGE 1

Enrolled HB 216

AN ACT

1 Adding the Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unangaꜣ, Dena'ina,
 2 Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana,
 3 Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages as official languages
 4 of the state.

5

6 * **Section 1.** AS 44.12.310 is amended to read:

7 **Sec. 44.12.310. Official languages [LANGUAGE].** The English, **Inupiaq,**
 8 **Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unangaꜣ, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag,**
 9 **Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana,**
 10 **Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages are**
 11 [LANGUAGE IS] the official **languages** [LANGUAGE] of the State of Alaska.

12 * **Sec. 2.** AS 44.12.310 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

13 (b) The designation of languages other than English as official languages of
 14 the state under (a) of this section does not require or place a duty or responsibility on

-1-

Enrolled HB 216

1 **the state or a municipal government to print a document or record or conduct a**
 2 **meeting, assembly, or other government activity in any language other than English.**

Appendix F: Alaska's Charter Immersion School Bill

29-L.S0324AS

HOUSE BILL NO. 157

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS

Introduced: 3/20/15

Referred: Education, Finance

A BILL**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to language immersion charter schools; relating to teacher**
 2 **certification; and relating to standards-based assessments in language immersion**
 3 **charter schools and language immersion programs."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 *** Section 1.** AS 14.03.255(c) is amended to read:

6 (c) A charter school shall operate under a contract between the charter school
 7 and the local school board. A contract must contain the following provisions:

- 8 (1) a description of the educational program;
 9 (2) specific levels of achievement for the education program;
 10 (3) admission policies and procedures;
 11 (4) administrative policies;
 12 (5) a statement of the charter school's funding allocation from the local
 13 school board and costs assignable to the charter school program budget;
 14 (6) the method by which the charter school will account for receipts

HB0157a

-1-
 New Text Underlined [DELETED TEXT BRACKETED]

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- 1 and expenditures;
- 2 (7) the location and description of the facility;
- 3 (8) the name of the teacher, or teachers, who, by agreement between
- 4 the charter school and the teacher, will teach in the charter school;
- 5 (9) the teacher-to-student ratio;
- 6 (10) the number of students served;
- 7 (11) the term of the contract, not to exceed a term of 10 years;
- 8 (12) a termination clause providing that the contract may be terminated
- 9 by the local school board for the failure of the charter school to meet educational
- 10 achievement goals or fiscal management standards, or for other good cause;
- 11 (13) a statement that the charter school will comply with all state and
- 12 federal requirements for receipt and use of public money;
- 13 (14) other requirements or exemptions agreed upon by the charter
- 14 school and the local school board;
- 15 **(15) a clause requiring compliance with AS 14.03.257 if the charter**
- 16 **school is a language immersion charter school.**

17 * Sec. 2. AS 14.03 is amended by adding a new section to read:

18 **Sec. 14.03.257. Language immersion charter schools.** (a) A language

19 immersion charter school may be established for the purpose of producing bilingual

20 students, revitalizing endangered languages, or providing an education consistent with

21 one or more indigenous or foreign cultures. Except as provided in (d) of this section, a

22 language immersion charter school shall provide at least 50 percent of the school's

23 instructional hours for each grade level in an indigenous or foreign language. Except

24 as otherwise provided in this section, the requirements of AS 14.03.250 - 14.03.290

25 apply to a language immersion charter school.

26 (b) An application to a local school board under AS 14.03.250 for the

27 establishment of a language immersion charter school must state that it is an

28 application for a language immersion charter school, identify the language or

29 languages in which the school will teach, and describe the percentage of the school's

30 instructional hours for each grade level that will be provided in each language of

31 instruction.

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1 (c) The academic policy committee of a language immersion charter school
 2 shall consist of parents of students attending the school, school employees, and
 3 individuals who either are proficient speakers of the language of instruction of the
 4 school or have substantial knowledge of the culture of the people that historically
 5 spoke the language of instruction of the school.

6 (d) If a language immersion charter school does not provide at least 50 percent
 7 of the school's instructional hours for each grade level in an indigenous or foreign
 8 language, the academic policy committee of the language immersion charter school
 9 shall work with the department to develop a plan describing how the school will reach
 10 the goal of providing at least 50 percent of the school's instructional hours for each
 11 grade level in an indigenous or foreign language. The academic policy committee of
 12 the language immersion charter school shall submit the plan to the department for
 13 approval.

14 (e) A teacher at a language immersion charter school shall possess

15 (1) a teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20.015, 14.20.017,
 16 14.20.020, or 14.20.022 and an indigenous or foreign language immersion
 17 endorsement issued under AS 14.20.021;

18 (2) a limited teacher certificate for language teachers issued under
 19 AS 14.20.026; or

20 (3) a teacher certificate issued by an Alaska Native tribe and
 21 recognized by the department under AS 14.20.028.

22 (f) Notwithstanding (e) of this section, a person who possesses a teacher
 23 certificate issued under AS 14.20.015, 14.20.017, AS 14.20.020, or 14.20.022, but
 24 does not possess a language immersion endorsement issued under AS 14.20.021, may
 25 teach classes in English at a language immersion charter school.

26 * Sec. 3. AS 14.20 is amended by adding a new section to read:

27 **Sec. 14.20.021. Teachers at language immersion charter schools.** (a) The
 28 department shall issue an indigenous or foreign language immersion endorsement to a
 29 person who

30 (1) applies to the department on a form approved by the department;

31 (2) possesses a teacher certificate under AS 14.20.015, 14.20.017,

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1 14.20.020, or 14.20.022;

2 (3) demonstrates the ability to conduct classroom activities entirely in
3 the indigenous or foreign language; and

4 (4) completes a course or program of study in language immersion
5 education; if the course or program of study is provided by an entity other than an
6 institution of higher education, the course or program of study must be approved by
7 the department.

8 * Sec. 4. AS 14.20.025 is amended to read:

9 **Sec. 14.20.025. Limited teacher certificates.** Notwithstanding
10 AS 14.20.020(b), a person may be issued a limited certificate, valid only in the area of
11 expertise for which it is issued, to teach Alaska Native [LANGUAGE OR] culture,
12 military science, or a vocational or technical course for which the board determines by
13 regulation that baccalaureate degree training is not sufficiently available. A limited
14 certificate may be issued under this section only if the school board of the district or
15 regional educational attendance area in which the person will be teaching has
16 requested its issuance. A person who applies for a limited certificate shall
17 demonstrate, as required by regulations adopted by the board, instructional skills and
18 subject matter expertise sufficient to assure [ENSURE] the public that the person is
19 competent as a teacher [. THE BOARD MAY REQUIRE A PERSON ISSUED A
20 LIMITED CERTIFICATE TO UNDERTAKE ACADEMIC TRAINING AS MAY
21 BE REQUIRED BY THE BOARD BY REGULATION AND MAKE
22 SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN THE ACADEMIC TRAINING].

23 * Sec. 5. AS 14.20.025 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

24 (b) A limited certificate issued under this section is initially valid for one year.
25 The department may extend a limited certificate issued under this section for an
26 additional four years if the school board of the district or regional educational
27 attendance area that requested the issuance of the limited certificate requests that the
28 certificate be extended and certifies that the person has demonstrated skills in
29 classroom instruction, curriculum development, and student assessment. The
30 certificate may be renewed in accordance with regulations adopted by the department.

31 (c) The board may not require, as a condition for extending or renewing a

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1 limited certificate under (b) of this section, that a person complete additional academic
2 training.

3 * Sec. 6. AS 14.20 is amended by adding a new section to read:

4 **Sec. 14.20.026. Limited teacher certificates for language teachers.** (a)
5 Notwithstanding AS 14.20.020(b), a person may be issued a limited certificate to teach
6 in a language other than English if the board determines by regulation that there is an
7 insufficient number of certified teachers in the state capable of teaching in that
8 language. A limited certificate issued under this section is valid for teaching any
9 subject in pre-elementary school through grade eight and for teaching the language in
10 which the person demonstrates proficiency under (b)(4) of this section in pre-
11 elementary school through grade 12.

12 (b) The department shall issue a limited teacher certificate to a person under
13 this section if

14 (1) the academic policy committee of a language immersion charter
15 school established under AS 14.03.257 or the school board of the district or regional
16 educational attendance area in which the person will be teaching requests that the
17 department issue the certificate;

18 (2) the person demonstrates, as required by regulations adopted by the
19 board, instructional skills sufficient to assure the public that the person is competent as
20 a teacher;

21 (3) the person demonstrates subject matter expertise as required by
22 regulations adopted by the board if the person is teaching a subject other than the
23 language in which the person demonstrates proficiency and is teaching the subject in
24 grades four through eight; and

25 (4) the person demonstrates proficiency in an indigenous or foreign
26 language; a person meets this requirement if the person demonstrates the ability to
27 conduct classroom activities entirely in the indigenous or foreign language.

28 (c) A person who possesses a limited teacher certificate issued under this
29 section may teach a subject other than the language in which the person demonstrates
30 proficiency under (b)(4) of this section if the person completes a course or program of
31 study in language immersion education. If the course or program of study is provided

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1 by an entity other than an institution of higher education, the course or program of
2 study must be approved by the department.

3 (d) A limited certificate issued under this section is initially valid for one year.
4 The department may extend a limited certificate issued under this section for an
5 additional four years if the academic policy committee of the language immersion
6 charter school or the school board of the district or regional educational attendance
7 area that requested the issuance of the limited certificate requests that the certificate be
8 extended and certifies that the person has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction,
9 curriculum development, and student assessment. The certificate may be renewed in
10 accordance with regulations adopted by the department.

11 (e) The board may not require, as a condition for extending or renewing a
12 limited certificate under (d) of this section, that a person complete additional academic
13 training.

14 * Sec. 7. AS 14.20 is amended by adding a new section to read:

15 **Sec. 14.20.028. Recognition of teacher certification for Alaska Native**
16 **language immersion teachers by Alaska Native tribes.** (a) Notwithstanding
17 AS 14.20.020, the department may recognize a teacher certificate issued by an Alaska
18 Native tribe under this section if

19 (1) the Alaska Native tribe submits a description of the Alaska Native
20 tribe's certification procedures to the department;

21 (2) the certification procedures include an evaluation by the Alaska
22 Native tribe of the applicant's

23 (A) language proficiency;

24 (B) knowledge of the subject matter the applicant will be
25 teaching;

26 (C) instructional skills, including instructional skills specific to
27 language immersion education;

28 (3) for a teacher certificate described under (b)(2) of this section, the
29 school board of the district or regional educational attendance area in which the public
30 school is located requests that the department recognize teaching certificates issued by
31 the Alaska Native tribe; and

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1 (4) the person who possesses the teacher certificate submits
2 fingerprints and fees in accordance with AS 14.20.020(c).

3 (b) A teacher certificate issued by an Alaska Native tribe and recognized
4 under (a) of this section is valid for teaching

5 (1) at a language immersion charter school established under
6 AS 14.03.257 if the language of instruction at the school is the language historically
7 spoken by the Alaska Native tribe; and

8 (2) a class at a public school that is not a language immersion charter
9 school if the language of instruction for the class is the language historically spoken
10 by the Alaska Native tribe.

11 (c) The department may not recognize a teacher certificate issued by an
12 Alaska Native tribe if the person who possesses the teacher certificate has been
13 convicted of a crime, or an attempt, solicitation, or conspiracy to commit a crime
14 involving a minor under AS 11.41.410 - 11.41.460 or a law or ordinance in another
15 jurisdiction with elements similar to an offense described in this subsection.

16 (d) The department may not impose requirements that are not described in (a)
17 of this section on an Alaska Native tribe for issuing teacher certificates.

18 (e) In this section, "Alaska Native tribe" means a tribe that is recognized by
19 the United States Secretary of the Interior to exist as an Indian tribe under 25 U.S.C.
20 479a (Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994).

21 * **Sec. 8.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to article 9 to read:

22 **Sec. 14.30.430. Testing in language immersion educational programs.** The
23 department shall, to the extent permitted by federal law, allow students enrolled in
24 language immersion charter schools established under AS 14.03.257 or other language
25 immersion programs to take statewide standards-based assessments in the language of
26 instruction of the language immersion charter school or language immersion program.

Appendix G: Reversing Language Shift

Fishman's eight stages of reversing language shift:

- I. Language revitalization to attain [bilingualism]
 1. Reconstructing Tlingit and adult acquisition of Tlingit as a second language.
 2. Cultural interaction in Tlingit primarily involving the community-based older generation.
 3. The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother-tongue transmission.
 4. Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.
- II. Language revitalization to transcend [bilingualism], subsequent to its attainment
 - 5a. Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Tlingit curricular and staffing control
 - 5b. Public schools for Tlingit children, offering some instruction via Tlingit, but substantially under Anglo-American curricular and staffing control.
 6. The local/regional (i.e. non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among Tlingit and among Anglo-Americans.
 7. Local/regional mass media and governmental services.

8. Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations
at higher and nationwide levels.

(Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998, 61)

Appendix H: Interview Guide

Beth Geiger

E&C Thesis Work

Proposed Interview Questions

1. In what way are you involved in language revitalization efforts/education/education politics/immersion schooling?
2. Why do you (or don't you) see Tlingit language revitalization as important?
3. Do you see immersion schools as a way to reverse language shift?
4. What other means do you see as effective or important?
5. What advantages or disadvantages do you see in separate immersion programs instead of bilingual public education?
6. Do you have anything you would like to discuss relating to language revitalization efforts/education/education politics/immersion schooling that I have not already asked about?

Appendix I: Map of Alaska Native Languages

(Krauss, Holton, Kerr, and West 2011)

