

Debra Thompson

From: Sarah Fine <sarahfine90@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 11:57 AM
To: Assembly
Subject: Local History - Support the Landless

Dear Assembly:

Please consider the following in regards to our local Tribal history, and choose to Support the Landless Legislation and our local Tribes.

Here are [Senator Murkowski's, Senator Sullivan's, and Representative Peltola's statements](#) in support of the Landless Legislation they are reintroducing together:

U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan (both R-Alaska), and Representative Mary Peltola (D-Alaska), [on June 8, 2023] issued statements on legislation that would allow the Alaska Native communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, and Tenakee to form urban corporations and receive land entitlements under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA).

The delegation's bill, entitled the Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act, would amend ANCSA to provide these five communities with the right to form an Alaska Native Urban Corporation and receive 23,040 acres, or one township, of federal land—just as ANCSA granted to other Southeast Native communities over 50 years ago.

“Our Landless legislation will provide for rightful Native ownership of lands that these five communities are entitled to under ANCSA. Alaska Native leaders in these communities are asking for no more than the opportunity granted to other Native communities 50 years ago. I urge colleagues on both sides of the aisle to look at the facts and help us get this done, so we can finally put an end to more than half a century of injustice in Southeast Alaska,” **said Senator Murkowski.**

“For years, Alaska Native residents in five southeast communities have been denied the land and opportunities afforded by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act,” **said Senator Sullivan.** “This is an injustice that Congress has a duty to rectify. I am hopeful my colleagues join the Alaska delegation in quickly advancing our legislation for our constituents.”

“The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was intended to recognize and address traditional land claims, enabling selection of lands to be used for the benefit of Alaska Natives. But for these Southeast Alaska Native communities, in Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell, this never happened. It is past time that we correct this unjust error. The Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act would make each landless community eligible for 23,040 acres of federal land, providing new opportunities for economic growth and self-determination. This is an overdue but important step in the right direction. I am proud to partner with my Delegation colleagues to introduce and advance this crucial legislation,” **said Representative Peltola.**

Locally, there is much helpful [historical information available on Tlingit & Haida's website](#) to help give background to this issue. There is a Page on Tlingit & Haida's website dedicated to [Tribal History on this Land since Time Immemorial](#).

There is also a Page specifically dedicated to the [Contemporary Political History and Tribal Recognition](#) which describes the past 100 years of history and why the Landless Legislation has been reintroduced today:

In 1929, at a convention in Haines the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) passed a resolution to sue the United States government for the creation of the Tongass Nation Forest and the Glacier Bay National Park without the permission of the indigenous people of Southeast Alaska. The suit was filed in the Federal Court of Claims and the ANB was later advised that only federally recognized tribes can sue the United States over aboriginal land claims. The ANB then petitioned the United States Congress to recognize the aboriginal people of Southeast Alaska as a tribe and on June 19, 1935, an act of Congress was passed to recognize the Tlingit and Haida people as a single tribe.

Note: In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was passed to set a standard for the federal government to recognize tribes in the Lower 48. The Alaska Native Brotherhood petitioned Congress to amend the IRA to apply to Alaska, and in 1936 the revision was made.

In 1975, the Indian Self-determination Act (PL 93-638) was passed requiring federal agencies, primarily the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to contract with federally recognized tribes to manage programs that are intended to benefit Native Americans. In Alaska, the BIA adopted an "Order of Precedence" for recognizing tribes for the purpose of contracting:

- Indian Reorganization Act tribes;
- Traditional tribes;
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act village corporations; and
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act regional corporations.

In 1993, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior amended the list of federally recognized tribes that are posted in the Federal Register to include all tribes in Alaska. The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska was left off of the list and petitioned Congress to restore the tribe to the list. In 1994, the President of the United States signed into law an Act that not only restored Tlingit and Haida to the list but also required that the Department of the Interior must consult with Congress before removing any recognized tribe from the list published in the Federal Register.

Thank you for your consideration. Please Support the Landless.

Sincerely yours,
Sarah Fine-Walsh