TITLE: SUPPORTING NATIVE FOSTER FAMILIES

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and Youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and Youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: Native children are happiest and healthiest when they are living with their families and communities, where they can learn the values of their culture, are included in hunting and subsistence activities, and have better self-esteem, there is less ‘othering’; children are valued; they know their extended families, and more. For thousands of years our communities have stepped in to protect our children and families; and

WHEREAS: Native families are currently underrepresented in the foster system, while Native children are overrepresented. Statistics from the Department of Family and Community Services show there are 2,596 children in State Custody, of which 1,809 are Alaska Native (AN) or American Indian (AI) for a disproportionality rate of 70%, while AN/AI children make up only 28% of the population 18 and under; and

WHEREAS: Systemic racism and unconscious biases continue to exist within the current foster care system, creating additional barriers that prevent Native families from participating and supporting children. Few organizations have taken a holistic look at the child welfare system in Alaska to identify gaps and barriers affecting Tribes, Native communities and Native families from participating in the present child welfare system, the Tribal Child Welfare Compact, or other programs; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference, call for Native Leadership across the state to do a holistic study of the needs of Native foster homes and families to identify existing gaps and barriers and identify action steps to resolve these challenges.
NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference urge Alaska Tribes and the State of Alaska to do a study to identify the needs of Native families outside of the Office of Children Services system who support Native children through traditional support systems and that this resolution once passed be transmitted to the Alaska Governor, Department of Family Services and OCS, and Alaska Tribes.

Submitted by:
Evelyn Ayalhuq Williams (Inupiat) North Slope Region
Náajeyístláa Breylan Martin (Lingít - T'akdeintaan) Southeast Alaska Region
Heather Gatti (Xadaas/Lingít) Southeast Alaska Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for the cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: Drug addiction is a crisis that requires urgent attention and support, especially in rural communities without equitable allocation of recovery resources; and

WHEREAS: Another challenge faced by individuals seeking help for their addiction is lack of transport from our rural communities to urban hubs. These remote areas may not have sufficient transportation options to facilitate the journey to Anchorage, where there are more treatment facilities and resources available. This lack of transport is a barrier to individuals trying to access the care they need, which can further exacerbate the problem of drug addiction; and

WHEREAS: The inequitable and limited availability of recovery services, hospitals and healthcare facilities in rural communities creates a significant barrier in addressing drug addiction. Having more these services available and properly supported in the area can prevent people from dying from an overdose and other needs. It would not only increase the accessibility of care but also provide a local support system for those in need and a comprehensive network of assistance that includes counseling services, support groups, and outreach programs. It would also assist with creating a supportive environment in overcoming their addiction.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference call for a collaborative effort from
various organizations, including government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations to address drug addiction by investing in equitable recovery, transportation infrastructure, expanding healthcare facilities, and enhancing support systems in rural Alaska and that once this resolution is passed that it be transmitted to the appropriate Alaska Native health care entities in support of their efforts to combat these challenges.

Submitted by:
Amelia Marie Aguilan (Ahtna - Naltsiine clan), Ahtna Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE
2023 ANNUAL ELDER AND YOUTH RESOLUTION 23-03

TITLE: ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: There is a need to better support the Department of Education and Early Development and school districts across the state to address the historic and current unmet needs and disparities experienced by Alaska Native students and communities throughout the entire state; and

WHEREAS: The lack of support for culturally based and respectfully conducted education is affecting the quality of education available to all students throughout the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS: Addressing these systemic issues needs to take place at a state and local level by the State Board of Education and local school districts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference that the Department of Education and Early Development create an Alaska Native Tribal Education Commission, made up of Alaska Native representatives that reflect the Native community from across the state, to advise the department on ways to improve the quality of education available to Alaska Native students, school districts and all students; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED by the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference that the creation of this Alaska Native Tribal Education Commission be created before the end of 2024, with appropriate funding to support its work moving forward and that once this resolution is passed it be transmitted to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education and Early Development, and the Alaska Legislature, and the appropriate Alaska Native entities.
Submitted by Mary “Nilakukgei” Marks (Lingít - Kaagwaantaan Clan of Juneau, Alaska), Southeast Alaska Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE
2023 ANNUAL ELDERS AND YOUTH
RESOLUTION 23-04

TITLE: SUPPORTING ELDERS AND CULTURE BEARERS IN THE CLASSROOM

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: A.S. 14.30.420 is available throughout the state for students to have access to their Indigenous languages; and

WHEREAS: Resolution 21-01 was passed at the 2021 Elders & Youth Conference to encourage Elders in schools for Cultural Enrichment and Language enrichment; and

WHEREAS: Schools rich with Elders have youth that are solid with their identity and are strengthening their leaders. Schools lacking in cultural and language enrichment should learn from schools with strong Alaska Native cultural and language enrichment to mirror methods of Elder/culture bearer mentorship and engagement in the schools.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference that schools in need of this mentorship take action to do so by adopting this practice of bringing Elders and culture bearers into their schools across the state to empower and utilize AS 14.30.420 to its fullest potential, and that once this resolution is passed it be transmitted to Alaska school boards and the State Board of Education.

Submitted by:
Cyndi Ayuryaar Reeves (Yup’ik)

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
TITLE: IN SUPPORT OF THE SAVE OUR SISTERS MMIP PROPOSAL

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous women and girls, in particular, face disproportionate rates of violence, including abduction and murder, which are often not adequately addressed by law enforcement agencies; and

WHEREAS: The Save Our Sisters Proposal seeks to improve coordination within the Department of Justice, state agencies, and local governments to enhance the AMBER Alert communications network in cases involving missing or abducted tribal members above the age of 18. This proposal would also facilitate the development of memoranda of understanding between Tribal Nations, States, and localities, allowing for the utilization of America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alert networks to locate missing or abducted tribal members above the age of 18 reported missing, abducted, or imminently in danger; and

WHEREAS: The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples crisis is national in scope and requires immediate action on the tribal, national, state, and local levels as it is of the utmost urgency.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference stand alongside multiple Tribal Nations, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the National Congress of American Indians in their support of the Save Our Sisters Proposal as a critical step in addressing the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People; and
NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference request Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan and Congresswoman Mary Peltola to introduce the Save Our Sisters proposal in their respective legislative bodies and that once this resolution is passed that it be transmitted to their offices and that it be made available for Tribal Nations, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the National Congress of American Indians in support of their efforts.

Submitted by:
Mary Ann Mills, Kenaitze
Ronette Stanton, Kenaitze
Bernadine Atchison, Kenaitze
Hailey Mitchell, Kenaitze
Brenda Smith, Kenaitze
Zoey Mitchell, Kenaitze
Daniel Blankenship, Kenaitze
Sam Schimmel, Kenaitze

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
TITLE: SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN RURAL ALASKA THROUGH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect to Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: The education system in rural communities faces distinct, unique, and inequitable challenges, based on location; and

WHEREAS: Teachers struggle to prepare and adapt to these unique environments, geographic and weather conditions, adjusting to village and rural resources that are so different from the areas they may come from, limited access to urban-style resources, and cultural differences in these areas. The high turnover rate of teachers because of their problems adjusting to rural Alaska negatively impacts the quality and consistency for students and the education provided to them; and

WHEREAS: Long-term teachers in our villages and regional hubs provide stronger relationships, cultural understanding, and academic achievement in school.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference request the Department of Education and Early Development create a comprehensive training and professional development program for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in rural communities; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference urge the Department of
Education and Early Development to form collaborative partnerships between school districts and local communities to provide housing needed for teachers and ongoing support to teachers in rural Alaska, to include mentorship programs, peer training, and access to resources that address these specific challenges in rural communities, and that once this resolution is passed that it be transmitted to the Department of Education and Early Development, the State Board of Education, and made available to Alaska Native education advocates to support their efforts in seeing these programs developed, deployed, and achieving the desired impact.

Submitted by
Jayden Lampe (Iñupiaq/Utqiagvik), North Slope Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
TITLE: FULLFILLING ANCSA’S PROMISE TO THE FIVE LANDLESS COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our people, and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities, and

WHEREAS: The United States Congress omitted, without explanation, five Alaska Native villages from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, representing nearly 25 percent of the Southeast Alaska Native population, who have been unable to heal and rebuild due to the delay in the return of some of their homelands that they been part of for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS: More than 50 percent of the Elders from these communities, now known as Landless Communities, who fought and sacrificed so much for Native land claims have passed away since 1971, never having recovered from the dehumanization and trauma from the failed promise of federal legislation never realized and the resulting taking of their homelands; and

WHEREAS: Emil Notti stated to the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood, “Alaska Native land claims will not be settled until the Landless Communities receive their land,” illustrating the importance of brothers and sisters across Alaska lifting one another up in the ongoing effort for Indigenous Land Back.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference, call upon the 118th United States
Congress to pass Senate Bill 1889 and House Bill 4748, and finally recognize the villages of Haines, Tenakee Springs, Petersburg, Wrangell and Ketchikan by amendment to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and that once this resolution is passed for it to be transmitted to the Alaska Delegation and all other members of the US House and Senate, as well as all appropriate committees.

Submitted by K’alaagáa Íílhángaa Nathaniel Blake (Xadaas, Lingít, Ahtna, Iñupiaq), Southeast Alaska Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE
2023 ANNUAL ELDERS AND YOUTH
RESOLUTION 23-08

TITLE: IN SUPPORT OF ALASKA HOUSE BILL 99, SENATE BILL 108, 2SLGBTQIA+ NON-DISCRIMINATION

WHEREAS: The First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and youth representing our diverse Alaska Native cultures and language groups in order to enhance and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of our peoples; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the Conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural knowledge transmission, strengthen statewide relationships, amplify the power of our participants as leaders today, and advance solutions to challenges faced by our Native peoples and our communities; and

WHEREAS: In 2022 the State of Alaska walked away from its commitment to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ Alaskans from discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation in the areas of public accommodations, government services, housing, and lending, stating that in order to offer these protections there should be a statutory change; and

WHEREAS: Since time immemorial, Alaska Native communities have included 2SLGBTQIA+ members and family, and they have celebrated them and lifted them up, and now these members are much more likely to face discrimination when no Alaska Native should face discrimination, and entities such as Central Council of Tlingit & Haida, the Alaska Regional Coalition, which includes the Tanana Chiefs Council, Kawerak Inc, Maniilaq Association, and Chugachmiut have all offered resolutions or statements of support for these bills, recognizing their importance, and the work of ANB, ANS, AFN, Roy and Elizabeth Peratrovich is not yet done and is being rolled back while the state, municipalities, public accommodations, lenders, and landlords can discriminate against our 2SLGBTQIA+ siblings based on their status as authentic Alaska Natives; and

WHEREAS: The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood were founded to overturn the discriminatory and racist practices that harmed Alaska Natives in every community, and the historical origin of the Alaska Federation of Natives was to advocate and speak for Alaska Native
Communities and urge action at the State and federal level; and that our hard won civil rights should be zealously protected, and the erosion of our sibling’s liberty and status as a protected class can only mean the erosion of our own liberty and other protected classes.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the participants of the 2023 First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference that these bills have this Conference’s full support for Alaska House Bill 99 and Senate Bill 106, to protect our 2SLGBTQIA+ family members, neighbors and siblings. We call on the Alaska Legislature to pass these bills, and Governor Dunleavy to side with all Indigenous peoples, especially those part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and that once this resolution is passed that it be transmitted to the Alaska Legislature, and made available to Alaska Native entities to support their efforts in seeing this bill pass.

Submitted by:
Oliver Tyrrell (Yupik and Iñupiaq), Southcentral Region

CONFERENCE ACTION: PASSED ON OCT. 18, 2023