

Debra Thompson

From: Nicole Hallingstad <nhallingstad@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2021 5:46 PM
To: Assembly
Subject: Assembly Support of AK Natives Without Land

Hi, I'm Nicole Hallingstad, born and raised in Petersburg. I sit on the board of directors for Sealaska Corporation, and I am asking the Petersburg Borough Assembly to support a bill for Alaska Natives Without Land.

Such a bill would transfer about 115,000 acres of lands to Native hands. Near Petersburg it would be 23,040 acres. The Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian used to roam all 23 million acres of Southeast Alaska, including the 17 million acres of what became the Tongass National Forest in 1908 without tribal consultation.

A bill transferring land to the 5 landless communities would return ZERO POINT FIVE (0.5) percent of those indigenous homelands. That is important to remember and I'll say it again... it's half of one percent of the Tongass.

Let me underscore Public Access to these lands. Public Access will continue, and access is legally protected on multiple levels:

- Section 17b of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 already protects prior and existing rights through the land and on trails and roads. This protection pre-exists any new legislation.
- Three pages of language in a new proposed bill reinforces the access protections under ANCSA. It guarantees public access for non-commercial recreation, hunting, subsistence and gathering.

A bill would also allow creation of an ANCSA Urban Corporation in Petersburg. This would be a corporation registered and ruled by the State of Alaska corporate regulations. The corporation's owners will be the shareholders of Sealaska who registered in 1971 through the community of Petersburg. There were originally 428 Petersburg shareholders.

- The new corporation would be an independent, autonomous for-profit company, governed by a board of directors who are shareholders of the company, and elected by the corporation's shareholders.
- The board would set the vision and hire management to execute toward that vision.
- Other Native corporations have diverse uses of their land:
 - Other urban and village corporations have successful tourism destinations; they own and occupy real estate; and all are taxpayers in their SE communities.
 - Remember, these are Native institutions led by Native people.

- We both utilize and revere the land.
- Protecting the land, habitat, subsistence, and water quality are values and tenets we live by.

The most direct and likely quickest benefit to Petersburg is the creation of a new company in town.

- This means New Jobs, with an employment base as diverse as the community.
- There is an economic multiplier effect of local corporate spend on services like accounting firms, legal counsel, insurance companies, building and equipment maintenance, and construction.
- Native corporations spend on Goods in their communities like fuel, utilities, supplies, catering, restaurants and hotels.

Longer term benefits include the tax base, local scholarships, and corporate sponsorships; most significantly, new industries as diverse as aquaculture, low impact tourism, carbon capture, contracting, joint venture partnerships and more.

For 50 years, Petersburg has been without the additional benefits an urban corporation would have added to the community.

When we talk about progress for Petersburg, there is no 'I' versus 'You'. There is no 'Us' versus 'Them'. It is WE. WE want a community with a strong economic base, jobs, education, and opportunities. WE want a thriving town where people can live and work and visit and enjoy. But that takes planning. We want to work together on viable plans for Petersburg.

Alaska Natives Without Land will never give up this fight. We are not going anywhere. We are backed by Sealaska. We have the support of Alaska's Congressional delegation. We have the collective strength and hope of our ancestors behind us, and the future of our children and their children ahead of us.

This legislation will eventually pass. And the record will be captured for history. Where will the Petersburg Assembly stand on this issue? Petersburg should stand for development, for opportunity, and for justice. Thank you, *Gunalchéesh*, for your time.

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