

Alaska State Legislature

Senator Georgianna Lincoln



State Capitol
Juneau Alaska 99801-1182

Phone: (907) 465-3732
Fax: (907) 465-2652

E-mail:
Senator_Georgianna_Lincoln@legis.state.ak.us

Standing Committees:
Resources
Transportation

Budget Subcommittees:
Natural Resources
Corrections
Public Safety
Community &
Economic Development

Senate District R

Alatna
Alcan
Allakaket
Aniak
Anvik
Arctic Village
Beaver
Bettles
Big Delta
Birch Creek
Boundary
Canyon Village
Central
Chalkyitsik
Chenega bay
Chicken
Chistochina
Chitina
Chuathbaluk
Circle
Coldfoot
Copper Center
Cordova
Crooked Creek
Delta Junction
Dot Lake
Dry Creek
Eagle
Eagle Village
Evansville
Eyak
Fort Greely
Fort Yukon
Four Mile Road
Gakona
Galena
Georgetown
Glennallen
Grayling
Gulkana
Healy Lake
Holy Cross
Hughes
Huslia
Kaltag
Kenny Lake
Koyukuk
Lake Minchumina
Lime Village
Livengood
Lower Kalskag
Manley Hot Springs
Marshall
McCarthy
McGrath
Medfra
Mendeltna
Mentasta
Minto
Nabesna
Nenana
Nikolai
Northway
Nulato
Paxon
Pilot Station
Rampart
Red Devil
Ruby
Russian Mission
Shageluk
Silver Springs
Slana
Sleetmute
Stevens Village
Stony River
Takotna
Tanacross
Tanana
Tatitlek
Tazlina
Telida
Tetiin
Tok
Tolsona
Tonsina
Tuluksak
Tyonek
Upper Kalskag
Valdez
Venetie
Whittier
Wiseman

SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 103

NATIVE LANGUAGE EDUCATION ACT

SB 103 provides that schools with Alaska Native students may teach the language that is traditional within the community. In a school district where a majority of the students are Alaska Native, a local Native language curriculum advisory board shall be established to review and make recommendations about the teaching of the Native language. Other districts may also establish such a board. If the advisory board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum, it then may be incorporated into the school curriculum and taught by certified or trained instructors. The bill allows for the delivery of language instruction by existing satellite instruction or other distance delivery technology, including computer programs and audio distance delivery. The effective date of this legislation is July 1, 2000.

Many of Alaska's Native languages are on the brink of extinction. Dr. Michael Krauss, professor of linguistics at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, predicts that "short of a miracle or radical social change" we will lose 15, and possibly 18, of our 20 Native languages by the year 2055.

Sadly, the loss of Alaska Native languages is rooted in anti-Native language educational policies promoted by American missionaries and educators around the turn of the century. Schools played a critical role in efforts to assimilate Alaska Natives into the Western/Anglo religion, language and culture; in fact, children were punished for speaking their Native language.

Schools cannot, nor should they, carry the burden of Native language preservation alone. Parents, extended family members, and communities have important roles as well. In many villages, however, many of those tools are lost. We must have our schools involved and committed to teaching and preserving our Native languages. Presently, many of our village schools are teaching German, Spanish, Russian and Japanese to our children. Many who have the capability to extend their programs to include Native languages have not.

Native Language Education has received strong support from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the White House Conference on Indian Education, the Denakkanaaga Elders Conference, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, the Association of Village Council Presidents, the Interior Education Council, the Village Participation Conference, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, and by numerous villages.