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Council Urges Self-Determination in Alaska Native Language Survival

January 2, 2018 ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC) focuses on self-determination and the right of Indigenous peoples to shape the future survival of their own languages in its [2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature](#). The report is the culmination of the council's meetings with stakeholder groups over the past 24 months since the 2016 report was published.

"Self-determination, in this context, is the language community being in full control of the future of their language. It has to be a basic principal that language programs don't wait for things to happen; they make them happen," said X'unei Lance Twitchell, ANLPAC Vice Chair.

Key themes in the 2018 report are

- **Self-determination** of Alaska Native peoples shaping the future survival of their own languages
- **Cultural justice** in reclaiming their traditional and cultural forms of practice
- Highlighting the **best practices** to increase the number of speakers of Alaska Native languages

Although all Alaska Native languages are recognized as official languages of the State of Alaska, every one has seen a decline in the number of speakers over the last several decades. While the declines continue, there are some noteworthy successes in which English-only Alaskans have become fluent in one of Alaska's Native languages, either as students in a language immersion school or by working individually in a master-apprentice relationship with a fluent elder. These new, fluent, second-language speakers spark new hope for Alaska's threatened and endangered Native languages—particularly as some are now raising their children as first-language speakers.

Created by the Alaska Legislature in 2012, the ANLPAC oversees research and provides recommendations to the governor and legislature on programs, policies, and projects that can promote the continued survival of Alaska's Indigenous languages. The ANLPAC meets regularly via audioconference and invites participation from the public. The governor appoints to the council five voting members who are professional language experts and who represent diverse regions of the state. In addition, one member of the Alaska Senate and one member of the Alaska House of Representatives serve on the council as nonvoting members. The biennial report is required

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