

Submitted by Jim Simon

Hello, my name is Jim Simon. Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the Board for the opportunity to provide my personal testimony. I'm an applied anthropological consultant serving approximately 90 federally-recognized tribes in Alaska, through working for 4 intertribal resource commissions and the Tanana Chiefs Conference Hunting and Fishing Task Force. I'm also a member of the adjunct faculty in the UAF Tribal Management program and a former ADF&G regional supervisor in the Subsistence Division covering the AYK region. However, today I am providing only my personal testimony in favor of the principles outlined in Proposal 94.

I recommend that Proposal 94 be amended to either (1) recognize all Alaska Native first king salmon religious ceremonies throughout the Yukon River drainage, (2) recognize in regulation the ceremonial harvest of Chinook salmon during fishing closures to harvest king salmon for Alaska Native funerary and memorial religious ceremonies, or (3) combining both of these amendments together.

Our current class of UAF students have discussed this proposal in great detail and all support increased recognition by western fish and wildlife bureaucratic programs of Alaska Native religious and spiritual ceremonies and the associated stewardship relationships with the natural resources upon which Yukon River tribes have depended for thousands of years.

While it is my understanding that king salmon fishing opportunities during recent fishing closures to conserve Chinook salmon early in the season are currently provided by the department for Alaska Native funerary and memorial religious ceremonies through a religious exemption under the Alaska Constitution, I would like to see these harvest opportunities for certain religious ceremonies codified in regulation to ensure those uses are protected in the future.

While the Frank decision of the Alaska Supreme Court in the 1970s recognized the protected constitutional rights of taking moose out of regular hunting seasons for certain religious ceremonies, these issues did not really arise with respect to salmon until dramatic restrictions to subsistence salmon fishing and closures in recent years. Given that the Yukon Chinook run has not yet been rebuilt, it remains important to ensure that Chinook salmon remain available for Alaska Native funerary and memorial religious ceremonies during any future emergency closures.

This concludes my testimony and in closing I would like to thank each of you for your service on the Board as well as the ADF&G staff supporting you at this meeting.

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