

RC 058



Dr. Reverend Anna Frank and Luke Titus, Minto Elders. Photos courtesy of Fairbanks Native Association and Kohtr'elneyh – Alaska's Just Transition Summit, 2020.

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Dear Alaska Board of Game,

Normally, in a personal testimony it might not seem appropriate to include pictures, but pictures remind you of what/who you may be fighting for. I want you to imagine these two as young people, imagine the pain they felt when boarding schools ripped kids away, the heartache from watching their loved ones self-medicate and self-destruct and from the continued cycle of intergenerational trauma experienced today. On the other side of the fire, I want you to imagine those who have survived and are rising from the ashes. Their strength and resilience come from the seven generations within them and their duty to protect the seven generations ahead of them. Why do I bring up these points? What do they have to do with the Alaska Board of Game?

This strength and resilience are largely based on maintaining connections with traditional foods and culture, a relationship-based way of life and knowing. The animals you try to count and regulate are our relatives and when we suffer and need for their sustenance, they provide themselves to us for our ceremonial hunts. Traditionally, we never hunt trophy bulls because we want them to mate and reproduce. Traditionally, we could see the difference between a barren cow and one with calves, by the color of the hair and by the way the animal moved, how it has extra fat that jiggles just enough to decipher by eye. That is how we respected our reciprocal relationship with our four-legged relatives, a religious and spiritual belief and practice. By law (I believe Natasha Singh provided those details in her

testimony), you are not allowed to interfere with our religious beliefs and practices. **Therefore, I oppose proposal 140 (ADF&G) and support proposals 141 (Tanana Rampart Manley Fish & Game Advisory Committee), 142 and 143 (Dr. Reverend Anna Frank) regarding reauthorizing antlerless hunts and outlawing ceremonial harvests.**

I would like to note I have written many Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and am quite familiar with public testimony and substantial comment evaluation. I am very aware of the many changes our current administration has made to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the blatant disregard for our way of life. I have also taken some time to review the Bureau of Land Management's *Bering-Sea Western Interior Resource Management Plan* and the *National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/EIS*. I provided public testimony for the Ambler Road EIS based largely on the fact I oppose any proposed road construction in permafrost laden Alaska due to potential cumulative effects of climate change, resource development and socioeconomic impacts.

I note these experiences because I view myself as one of those younger, educated, driven individuals that you heard testimony from yesterday. From the ashes we will rise and overcome. I think the simple fact that ADF&G even thought to reinstate the antlerless hunt is extremely disrespectful, especially since the Board Commissioner stated he has been on the board since the 1970s and yet, your team is still trying to decipher basic religious practices and spiritual beliefs of the people whose very land you take from today. How is it possible to make progress if we're still reviewing K-12 level facts?

I am a Master of Science student in Natural Resources Management at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) focusing on sustainable agriculture and rural development. I am investigating healing through food and culture which requires taking a deep look at Indigenous food sovereignty and security, and the holistic relationship between food, health and justice. I am a "non-traditional" student as I am older, have college-bound children and prior to returning to school, worked as a Senior Project Engineer on various projects, including the Alaska Pipeline Project and the In-State Gas Line (now the Alaska LNG project by AGDC).

I chose this field because of my experience with the State of Alaska and major resource development companies, and their egregious behavior and unethical operating standards. My job included reviewing all parts of the EIS and becoming very familiar with the biologists and how they collect "scientific data" and much of my job involved figuring out how to get around their "regulations." That is why the NEPA was dismantled and the Feds and State of Alaska are rubbing their mitts together to figure out how to get in and build mega projects behind people's backs, without environmental protections (aka extreme extraction of stranded assets). So, with all due respect, Commissioner, it appears the State is trying to recreate the ANCSA and TAPS wild west era of the 1970s. However, this time around, our people have had time to heal, educate themselves and develop a support system to stand our ground, whatever that might have to look like.

My job today involves co-production of knowledge, blending Western science and Indigenous ways of knowing. Again, with all due respect, Alaska Native people who sustain themselves from the land are far better meteorologists, biologists, hydrologists, anthropologists and engineers than any of us educated only by Western standards could ever hope to be. We have been on the land, collecting measurements and observations for over 10,000 years, storing it with memory and sharing it through stories. In my mind, Western science has a lot of catching up to do, and at UAF, we are doing exactly that. The tables are turning, and scientists from all over the world are now desperately and aggressively seeking out

Indigenous knowledge to prepare and adapt to the impacts of climate change that Western science and practices have caused. So, because Western science is bought and paid for, and is used to justify natural resource exploitation, the jury is still out on which science is superior. After all, Western science has justified and still continues to attempt to justify exploitation of natural resources.

I would also like to note I sat through my first round of Board of Game public testimonies on Saturday, March 7, 2020 and made the following notes from my family and community testimony:

- There are discrepancies between biologists' "estimates" and local observations;
- ADF&G has failed to truly consider and/or validate Indigenous knowledge;
- There is a clear violation of tribal consultation requirements;
- Food sovereignty and security are impacting local village's sustainability;
- Racism, income inequalities, pressure from outside hunters and cultural disrespect (e.g. wanton waste of moose meat by non-Alaskan hunters) are still largely apparent;
- Villages would gladly accept any unwanted meat taken by out-of-area hunters and this should be investigated further as a way of building good faith and a reciprocal relationship;
- Native youth are being empowered and their testimony was respectfully considered;
- There are relationships between board of game members and the Native community that can be strengthened and be a place to build from, to truly incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the operating standards of the ADF&G; and
- The Native communities need to continue efforts such as Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Hunting and Fishing Task Force to continue empowering youth and educating their people on the appropriate way to engage with the ADF&G.

I tried to end this letter by respecting the progress we have made together and noting the positive as well as the areas that can be improved upon. I hope we can truly form a working relationship that benefits us all as Alaskans, regardless of culture. I hope you read this letter and that one of you responds – Orville, I am counting on you to make that happen. You told us at TCC Annual Convention to fill our leadership roles and I would like to offer my assistance to do just that. Even though I grew up with both Elders whose pictures I included, my recent conversations with them propelled me to write this letter and attend the BOG meetings. I had the pleasure of spending time with Luke Titus at Alaska's First Just Transition Summit (Kohtr'elneyh), where he encouraged me to speak up for our people and fill my role as a land and water protector. I sat in the steam and sauna with Dr. Reverend Anna Frank and another Alaska Native woman, in between our generations, who encouraged me to speak for the people of Nenana and Minto, as we are sister villages. From those encounters, I was granted permission to be a spokesperson for our people, so even though I have all the Western accolades, I also am well grounded in my culture and traditional knowledge.

Please feel free to contact me, as I am a current researcher at UAF, a tribal member served by TCC and working to protect our natural resources for ALL ALASKANS.

Kind Regards,



Eva Burk