

Testimony in Support of H.R. 5444 by Wrangell Institute Survivor Nelson Angapak Sr.

I attended boarding 2 boarding schools during my early years. 1958-1959 at Wrangell Institute, mature 14 year old boy. I spoke limited English like many of the students attending the school. My comments will be limited to my experience at Wrangell Institute.

In looking back, I think the younger children had the most difficult time adjusting to the boarding school. Many of the children did not speak English. I remember one child, maybe 6 years old. When the teacher started verbally screaming at him, he looked at me: "callgusia?" He asked me, what did I do? I didn't respond as I knew if I responded in Yupik, I would be punished, and more than likely, physically, as I was older. I was 14 and since I spoke limited or very little English, I was placed in the kindergarten.

During the recess, I told the boy that all he did was to speak Yupik. And it was not wrong.

Somehow, while I was at Wrangell Institute, I learned I could quit school when I was 16. I was determined and I told my grandfather that I was going to quit school at age 16. He was silent; and finally, he looked at me and told me that "I was hoping that You was going to learn enough of this tongue to tell the "white eyes" that we were people just like them with feelings." Had he responded any other way, I would have quit school. During the summer after I turned 16, I thought of his response.

When school started that fall, I went back to school. I was going to stay in school until I was kicked out due to my age.

Cultural Security

One of the things that happened in boarding schools was that the federal government made an effort to kill our tongues. These are the very basic foundations of our societies. Without our tongues, who are we?

HR 5444 must have some language in it mandating the preservations of our tongues. That's what makes us who we are.

Never again must this nation make any kind of effort to killing our languages and tongues. Rather, this nation must enforce the implementation of federal statutes that are meant to preserve our tongues. This is the least that can be done to secure our Cultural Security.

At some point, Congress should consider legislation addressing what schools operated by Bureau of Indian Affairs did in at least in the Native Village of Tuntutuliak. The kids were punished for speaking Yupik in classes, especially the younger children. They were deprived of food or send home to eat at home for speaking the only tongue they could speak. This action by BIA deprived some kids of knowing their tongue. Please consider legislation

addressing this.

Please support the passage of HR 5444.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions on this, please drop me a line. I will make every effort to respond.

Nelson N Angapak, Sr.