



**Alaska Natives**  
WITHOUT LAND

Presented to the Wrangell  
Town Meeting

February 16, 2021

The Landless Natives of  
Wrangell, Alaska



# Roots Run Deep

- I was born at Bishop Rowe Hospital in 1959
- Wrangell High School class of 1977
- My father's ashes are at the Columbarium wall at Wrangell cemetery
- My Rinehart, Churchill and Bradley grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents are buried in the cemeteries here in Wrangell
- I am the recognized Sháade háni (clan leader) of the Wrangell Kiks.ádi and Hit s'áati (leader or trustee) for the Gagaan Hít (Sun House) at Totem Park



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- Haa Aaní and our Traditional values
  - Our people have walked these lands since **Time Immemorial**
  - Every ounce of our culture points to the lands that have sustained us for millenium
    - Creation stories
    - Clan lineage
    - Songs/storytelling
    - Place names
    - Subsistence
    - Artforms

# Our Lingít Haa Aaní





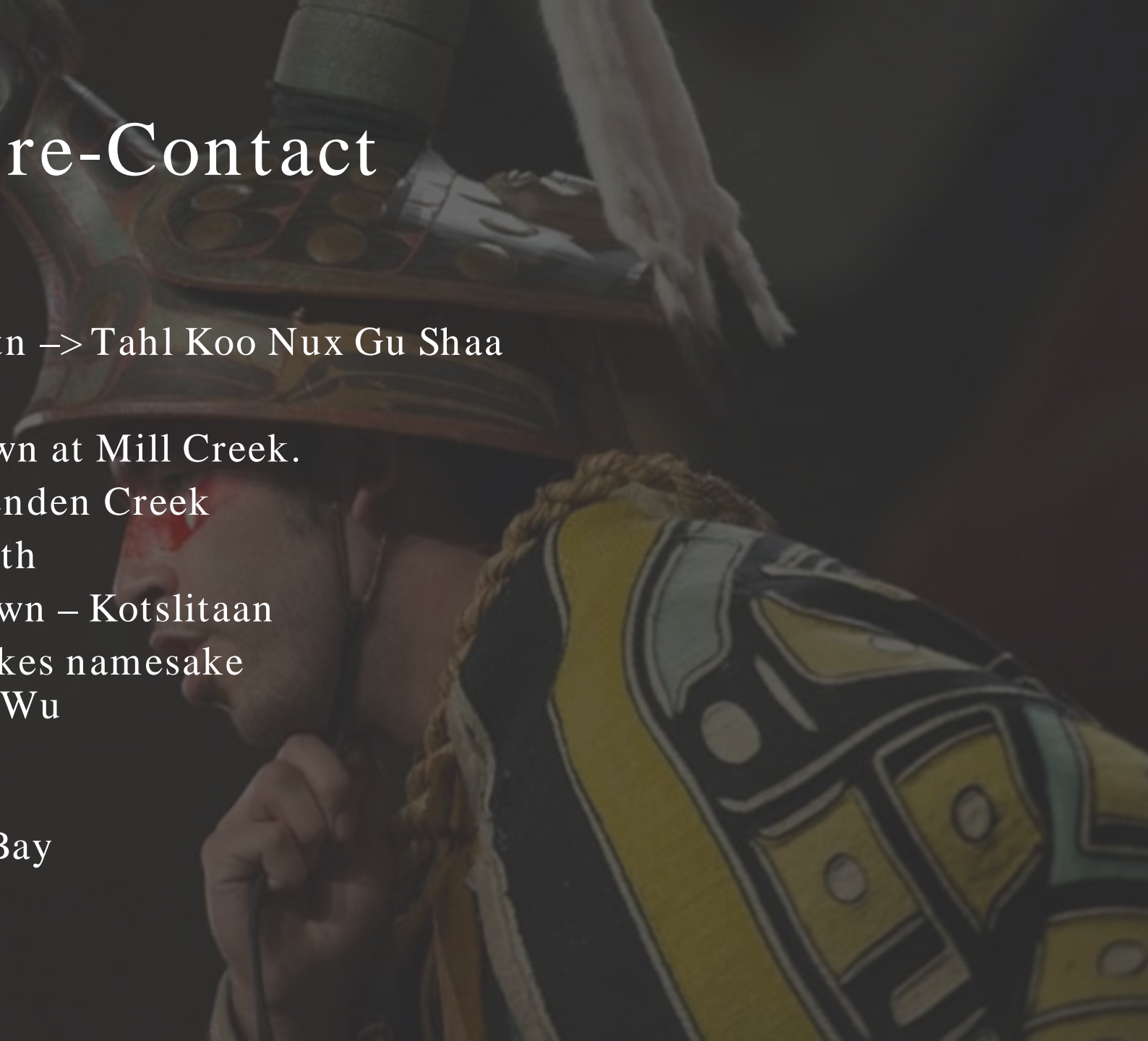
# The Indigenous Perspective

- The Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples have walked these lands for thousands of years...
  - Stewarding the land
  - Living off the land
  - Believing in the land
- Our **At.oow** (an owned or purchased object) refers to land, sacred sites, names, stories, crest, etc., and is a vital aspect of our culture as Indigenous peoples
- When you take away our land you have taken away our at.oow, a vital connection we have with our spiritual environment

Chief Siyeh's House -  
Totems & War Canoe,  
WRANGELL - ALASKA

# A Brief History: Pre-Contact

- Kiks.adi' migrate from Kiks Bay
- Great flood → Devils Thumb Mtn → Tahl Koo Nux Gu Shaa
- Under the Ice
- Settle along mainland. Main town at Mill Creek.
- Teeyhit'taan moves out to Crittenden Creek
- Naanaayaayi come from the North
- Tribe splits and move to Old Town – Kotslitaan
- Battle with the Tsimshian – Shakes namesake
  - Other battles – KootzNuWu
  - Klawock
  - Sitka Feud
- Teeyhit'taan Crest Hat at Lake Bay
  - Paid for in blood





# Post-Contact

- Capt. George Vancouver towed to Old Town 1793
- In 1833, Lt. Dionysius Zarembo, on board the Russian ship Chichagof lands at present day Wrangell and the next year builds Redoubt St. Dionysus.
- Chief Shakes the V moves to Shakes Island
- The British (Hudson Bay Co) squabble with Lt. Zarembo and Capt. Etolin and HBC ends up with a 20-year lease of Ft. Stikine.
- Oct. 18, 1867 – Alaska Day
- Wrangell grows from gold rushes to the Klondike and Cassiar grows to 10,000
- Bombing of Wrangell tribe in Dec. 1869, story told by Wm. Tamaree. Similar to bombing of Kake earlier the same year.
- Early 1870's the first Presbyterian and Catholic churches are built in Wrangell. Many natives, including Tillie Paul Tamaree are active members of the Presbyterian Church.
- 1879 - Naturalist John Muir first explored Alaska during a trip to the Island of Wrangell on July 14, 1879. He notes the areas of town the Tlingit lived and types of houses they constructed; he also comments on some ceremonies and culture he observed.



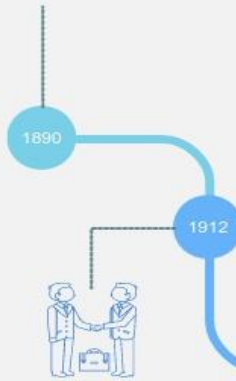
- 1882, George Thornton Emmons, U.S. Navy Lieutenant is stationed in Alaska, he takes an interest in Tlingit culture and spends the next couple decades in Alaska, including Wrangell. At the request of Franz Boaz he begins organizing his notes and preparing a manuscript titled 'The Tlingit'. When he died in 1945, the project was still unfinished. In 1955, Fredrica de Laguna takes over the project and it is finally published in 1991 under the title 'The Tlingit Indians' (the red book). The book contains several pictures taken in Wrangell in the late 1800's.
- Potlatch of 1895 – Frog Blanket, Raven Pole, Bear Canoe and Killer Whale flotilla robe are presented
- In 1902, the creation of the Alexander Archipelago Forest Reserve and its subsequent transformation into the Tongass National Forest, USFS takes native sites, burning and destroying subsistence sites long held by Wrangell clans.
- Wrangell incorporated as a city in 1903.
- 1904 John Reed Swanton, an anthropologist, PhD from Harvard University, conducted fieldwork and study including interviews with Tlingit elders Kaadashaan (John Kadashan) (Kaasx'gweidí Clan) (1834-1914) recording early Wrangell Tlingit history.
- Dissatisfied with their treatment, a congregation of local natives built the People's Church in under the direction of its minister, the Rev. Harry Corser. In 1905 Rev. Corser is ordained an Episcopal priest and the church becomes St. Phillips Episcopal Church under Bishop Peter Rowe.

# The History of Land Claims in Wrangell, AK



## The Journey to D.C.

Wrangell begins to petition congress. Attorney Willoughby Clark is sent to Washington D.C. in 1890 to lobby for lands improperly stolen.



## The ANB's Formation

The Alaska Native Brotherhood is formed in 1912 in Alaska. Wrangell's very own sisterhood camp 1 is formed 3 years later in 1915.

The 1920 ANB Convention is held in Wrangell and attended by William and Louis Paul.

## The Right to an Education

In 1929 William Paul brings a suit and wins the right for Native students to attend public school.



## The Central Council Comes to Wrangell

The first Tlingit and Haida Central Council meeting is held in Wrangell, although it won't be until almost 30 years later in 1965 that Wrangell decides to join the council.



## The Right to Vote

After Chief Shakes VII and Tillie Paul Tamaree are arrested at the Wrangell voting polls in 1922, William Paul goes to trial in 1923 to prove Chief Shakes is "civilized." Soon after in 1924, Alaska Natives are granted the right to vote.

## The Goldschmidt Haas Report is Submitted

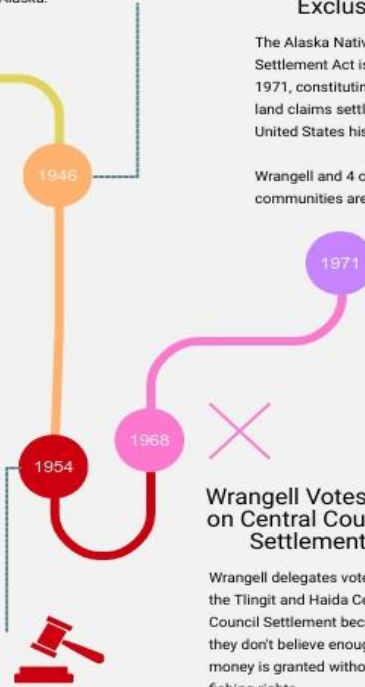
The Goldschmidt Haas Report which was written by Walter A. Goldschmidt and Theodore H. Haas, is submitted to the commissioner of Indian affairs on the "Possessory Rights of the Natives of Southeast Alaska."



## ANCSA's Passage and Wrangell's Exclusion

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is passed in 1971, constituting the largest land claims settlement in United States history.

Wrangell and 4 other Native communities are left out.



## Wrangell Votes No on Central Council Settlement

Wrangell delegates vote no on the Tlingit and Haida Central Council Settlement because they don't believe enough money is granted without fishing rights.

## Tee-Hit-Ton vs. U.S

William L. Paul, Sr. brings suit against the government in Tee-Hit-Ton vs. the United States.

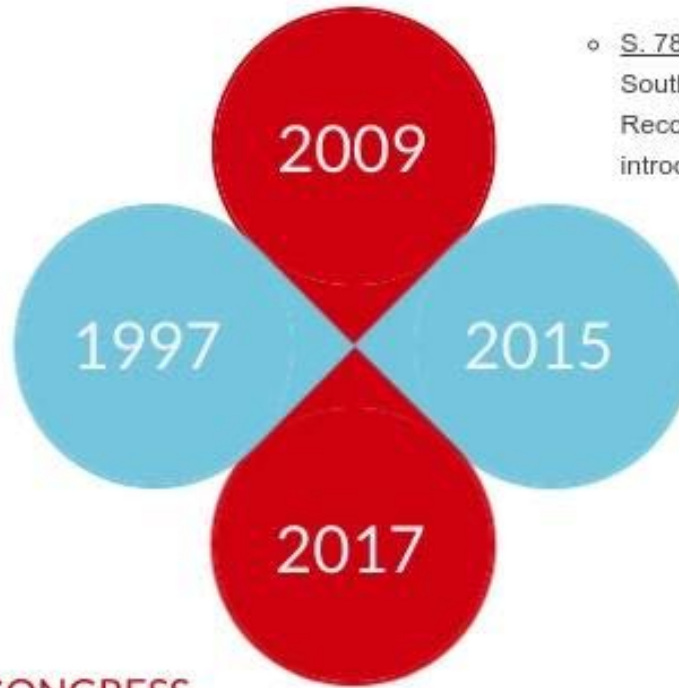
The Teeyhitta are one of the nine clans from the Shx'at Kwáan (Stikine River Area) and are still Landless today.



# Congressional Bills

## 105th CONGRESS

- S. 967: "A bill to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act to benefit Alaska natives and rural residents, and for other purposes."
- H.R. 2000: "ANCSA Land Bank Protection Act of 1998."
- Sections for the unrecognized communities in SE Alaska are **deleted**.



## 115th CONGRESS

- Feb. 2017: H.R. 229 - "Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act" is introduced in the House.
- June 2017: S. 1491 - "ANCSA Unrecognized Community Landless Natives Authorization Act of 2017" is introduced in the Senate, later combined with S. 1481 - "Alaska Native Claims Settlement Improvement Act of 2017" as section 10, but in **2018 only section 11, Alaska Native Veterans Allotments, moves forward**.

## 111th CONGRESS

- S. 784 and H.R. 2018: "Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act," are introduced in the House and Senate.

## 114th CONGRESS

- S. 872 and H.R. 2386: "Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act" are introduced in the House and Senate and have hearings in both chambers.



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# Community Benefits



- Economic Development
  - Investment in businesses
  - Jobs
- Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) are the #1 private employers in the state
- ANCs create 25% of the state's GDP
- ANCs fund student scholarships, job training, vocational and training assistance
- Dividends paid to local shareholders are spent in the community
- Balanced conservation and land use

# Prior Wrangell Assembly Support

- On April 6, 2016 the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution in support of the Landless Natives of Wrangell.
- On April 12, 2016 resolution 04-16-1341 'A Resolution of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, supporting the Landless Natives of Wrangell', passed.
- On September 11, 2019 Wrangell Chamber board president, Keeleigh Solverson, sent letters to Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Sen. Dan Sullivan and Congressman Don Young a letter in support of introducing new legislation for the Wrangell Natives Without Land.
- *I am here today to ask the Wrangell Assembly for a letter of support, and when new legislation is introduced, a resolution in support of the Wrangell Natives Without Land efforts to seek recognition and receive one township of land from within the Tongass National Forest as an amendment to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.*