



IMPACTS OF THE IVORY BAN
ON
ALASKA NATIVE SELF SUFFICIENCY

TESTIMONY
TO

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WATER, AND
WILDLIFE
HEARING
EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF THE FEDERAL
AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY BAN
AND RELATED STATE LAW
CARLSON CENTER
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

BY

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OCTOBER 20, 2016

MY NAME IS ROSITA KAA HÁNI WORL. I CURRENTLY SERVE AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE SEALASKA HERITAGE INSTITUTE. I ALSO SERVE AS THE CHAIR OF THE ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES SUBSISTENCE COMMITTEE. SEALASKA HERITAGE INSTITUTE IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ALASKA NATIVE CULTURES WITH GOALS OF PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND DIVERSITY. THE AFN SUBSISTENCE COMMITTEE IS DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION OF NATIVE SUBSISTENCE RIGHTS, FOOD SECURITY, AND THE USE OF BYPRODUCTS OF WILDLIFE



RESOURCES FOR CULTURAL OBJECTS, CLOTHING, AND
ARTS AND CRAFTS PRODUCTION AND SALE.

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO OFFER MY
COMMENTS ON THE ADVERSE IMPACTS ON ALASKA
NATIVE ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY THAT WILL COME
FROM THE FEDERAL AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY BAN AND
THAT WILL RESULT FROM OTHER BANS BY FIVE STATE
LAWS AND ADDITIONAL STATES THAT ARE CONSIDERING
A BAN.

AS I UNDERSTAND, THE FEDERAL BAN RELATES TO
AN AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY BAN WHILE MOST STATE
LAWS INCLUDE ALL IVORY INCLUDING BOTH OLD AND
NEW WALRUS IVORY THAT IS USED BY ALASKA
NATIVES. A NUMBER OF STATE BANS ALSO APPLY TO
MAMMOTH IVORY, INCLUDING MASTADON THAT IS USED
BY BOTH ALASKA NATIVES AND NON NATIVES. I ALSO
UNDERSTAND THAT SOME STATES HAVE INCLUDED OR
HAVE PROPOSED TO INCLUDE WHALE, POLAR BEAR, AND
SEA OTTER PRODUCTS.



THE ARRAY OF FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS HIGHLIGHTS ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS. THE DIFFERING LEGISLATIVE BANS ARE CONFUSING AND COLLECTIVE MAY SERVE AS A DETERRENT TO THOSE WHO MIGHT BE INCLINED TO BUY ALASKA IVORY ART AND WILL ONLY SERVE TO SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE IVORY ART MARKET. SUPPRESSION OF THE IVORY MARKET WILL BE DEVASTATING FOR ALASKA NATIVE HUNTERS, CRAFTS PEOPLE AND ARTISANS AND WOULD BE FURTHER DISASTROUS, IF IN FACT WHALE, POLAR BEAR, AND SEA OTTER PRODUCTS ARE ALSO BANNED.

FIRST MAY I STATE, THAT ALASKA NATIVES FIRMLY BELIEVE AND SUPPORT MEASURES TO ENSURE A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN ELEPHANT POPULATION. CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE VALUES THAT ARE ENTRENCHED IN OUR ANCIENT SOCIETIES THAT REMAIN DEPENDENT ON THE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR OUR LIVELIHOOD AND CULTURAL SURVIVAL. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE



SUCH MEASURES TO PROTECT ELEPHANTS SHOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON ALASKA NATIVE IVORY CARVERS AND THE MARKET FOR THEIR PRODUCTS.

I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ADVOCATES OF THE IVORY BAN THAT INCLUDES WALRUS WERE UNWARE OF THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BAN ON ALASKA NATIVES. I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THEY APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT THE CULTURAL SURVIVAL OF ALASKA S INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES.

RURAL ALASKA VILLAGES ARE ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED, AND HIGH RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT ARE THE NORM. SHI STUDIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT OUTMIGRATION OF VILLAGERS TO URBAN CENTERS HAS BEEN INTENSIFYING IN THE LAST DECADE PRIMARILY AS A RESULT OF THE LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN OUR RURAL, REMOTE VILLAGES. RURAL VILLAGES ARE CHARACTERIZED BY



HIGH ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATIONS COSTS AND LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

THE PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS IS AN ANCIENT TRADITION THAT SUPPORTED VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS ECONOMIES THROUGHOUT ALASKA. IT WAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE SALE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS WITH THE ARRIVAL OF WESTERNERS. TODAY ARTS AND CRAFTS SALES PLAY AN EVEN GREATER ROLE IN VILLAGE ECONOMIES. WALRUS IVORY, INCLUDING MAMMOTH AND MASTODON IVORY, ARE ALSO USED AS A CREATIVE, HIGH ART EXPRESSION THAT IS WIDELY COVETED IN THE ART WORLD.

I MUST EMPHASIZE THAT WALRUS IS A MAJOR FOOD SOURCE AMONG NORTHERN AND WESTERN COASTAL COMMUNITIES. IN SOME COMMUNITIES, WALRUS IS THE PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE. WALRUS SKINS ARE USED TO MAKE SKIN BOATS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL FOR



HUNTING AND TRAVEL. ITS IVORY IS IMPORTANT AS A SOURCE OF INCOME, BUT ABOVE ALL WALRUS IS PRIZED FOR THE FOOD SECURITY IT PROVIDES.

ARTS AND CRAFTS PRODUCTION AND SALE, INCLUDING IVORY, IS ONE MEANS OF PROVIDING MODEST, BUT CRITICAL FINANCIAL BENEFITS TO NATIVES WHO OTHERWISE LACK ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. WHILE WE LACK HARD DATA ON THE VALUE OF IVORY PRODUCTION, WE KNOW THAT IVORY PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ALASKA S SMALL-SCALE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMIES AND THE ANNUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS TOURIST MARKET THAT IS WELL OVER \$32 MILLION. WE ALSO KNOW THAT VILLAGE ARTISANS CAN MAKE UP TO \$35,000 TO 50,000 ANNUALLY AND THAT THOSE EARNINGS ARE WIDELY SHARED AMONG FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

SHI IS INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH THE BENEFITS OF THE ARTS AND CRAFT MARKET TO NATIVE PEOPLE THROUGH THE SUSTAINABLE ARTS PROJECTS WE HAVE



IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING BASKETRY, SEAL SKIN, SEA OTTER, AND WOOD CARVING AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN OUR COMMUNITIES. WE HAVE ALSO INITIATED EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT ARTISTS HAVE ACCESS TO IVORY.

WHEN SHI FIRST LEARNED OF THE CALIFORNIA INITIATIVE TO BAN THE SALE OF ALL IVORY, WE IMMEDIATELY CALLED VARIOUS OFFICIALS AND LAWMAKERS TO OPPOSE THE LEGISLATION. OUR EFFORTS WERE FAR TOO LATE. EVEN IF WE HAD HAD ADEQUATE NOTICE, IT IS A CERTAINTY THAT WE COULD NOT MATCH OR OVERCOME THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND POLITICAL EFFORT SUPPORTED BY THE ADVOCATES OF THE IVORY BAN.

THE EXISTING IVORY BAN BY SEVERAL STATES AND A NATIONAL BAN POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE SURVIVAL OF NATIVE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE PRIMARILY DEPENDENT ON A SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY AND



THE SALE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS. THE BANS ADDS TO THE ONGOING THREAT FACING ALASKA NATIVES THAT IS ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE AND IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT IN OUR COASTAL COMMUNITIES.

WHILE WE SUPPORT MEASURES TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF ELEPHANTS AND OTHER ANIMALS, THE SURVIVAL OF ALASKA NATIVE COMMUNITIES MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

WE RESPECTFULLY OFFER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- INCLUDE LANGUAGE IN ANY IN LEGISLATION OR REGULATIONS RELATED TO AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY THAT PROVIDES FOR AN EXPLICIT ALASKA NATIVE EXEMPTION FOR LEGALLY HARVESTED WALRUS AND IVORY AND ENSURES THAT THE LANGUAGE IS CONSISTENT WITH THE MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT OF 1972 (MMPA).
- INITIATE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT ALL STATE LAWS TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE MMPA AND PROVIDE FOR AN ALASKA NATIVE EXEMPTION.
- REQUIRE THE INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS BOARD TO DEVELOP A PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT TO INFORM THE PUBLIC OF ALASKA NATIVE



SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEPENDENCY ON THE SALE OF ALASKAN IVORY, INCLUDING MAMMOTH AND MASTODON, AND THE CRITICAL ROLE ALASKAN IVORY PLAYS IN THE SURVIVAL OF INDIGENOUS ECONOMIES.

GUNALCHÉESH.

DR. ROSITA KAA HÁNI WORL, IS TLINGIT FROM THE THUNDERBIRD CLAN AND HOUSE LOWERED FROM THE SUN IN KLUKWAN. SHE IS A HARVARD-TRAINED ANTHROPOLOGIST WHO HAS CONDUCTED RESEARCH THROUGHOUT ALASKA AND THE CIRCUMPOLAR ARCTIC AND HAS AUTHORED NUMEROUS SCHOLARLY WORKS.

