

Dr. Michael Johnson
Commissioner



Department of Education
and Early Development

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Alaska Federation of Natives to scope tribal compacting of education in Alaska

JUNEAU – The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has issued a grant to the Alaska Federation of Natives to support the State Board of Education’s priority of identifying a legal and practical pathway for a state-tribal compact in which Alaska Natives could administer K-12 public school with support from the local school board and community.

Inspiring tribal and community ownership of education excellence was identified as a priority in Alaska’s Education Challenge. In October of 2019, Gov. Mike Dunleavy announced his support of tribal compacting of education during his address at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention.

Under the agreement, AFN will:

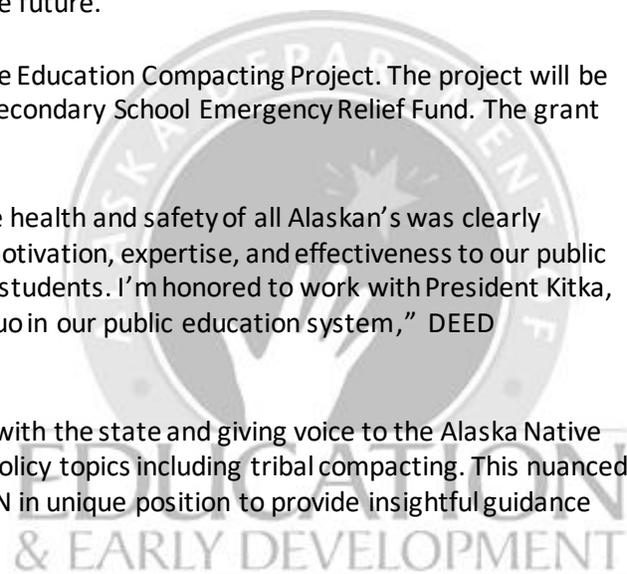
- Identify relevant federal and state laws and regulations;
- Compile relevant material related to educating Alaska Native students;
- Engage with Alaska Native leaders and subject matter experts on educational compacting options
- Design of a comprehensive path forward
- Design seminars for educators and administrators on the why and what of compacting
- Participate in discussions with the State of Alaska and various committees of the Alaska State Legislature to respond to questions on the final pathway report.

“Tribal involvement can directly help improve educational outcomes for Alaska Native students,” said Governor Mike Dunleavy. “I’m pleased that the tribal compacting of education will focus on putting our young people on a path for success now and into the future.”

AFN has been approved for a \$1 million grant for the Education Compacting Project. The project will be funded by the Federal CARES Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. The grant award period runs through June 30, 2022.

“The effectiveness of tribal health in supporting the health and safety of all Alaskan’s was clearly evident during the pandemic. Applying that same motivation, expertise, and effectiveness to our public education system will result in better outcomes for students. I’m honored to work with President Kitka, her staff, and Alaska’s tribes to change the status quo in our public education system,” DEED Commissioner Michael Johnson said.

AFN has a well-established track record of working with the state and giving voice to the Alaska Native community on a wide range of legal and technical policy topics including tribal compacting. This nuanced technical experience of tribal compacting places AFN in unique position to provide insightful guidance



for addressing the necessary components required to form a successful tribal compact. AFN has the capability, qualifications, and infrastructure to start this endeavor immediately.

“AFN thanks Commissioner Johnson and his team for their leadership. We are honored to have the opportunity to work with him to advance real educational opportunities for our children,” AFN President Julie Kitka said. “This project is a visible statement of a new and better chapter in our history with formal education. Expanding self-determination and taking back responsibility is very important to us.”

Sandy Kowalski, Chair of the State Board of Education’s Tribal Compacting Committee, stated, “The State Board of Education recognizes that tribes have always had an inherent interest in the education and wellbeing of all youth in our communities and the idea of tribal compacting in education has long been discussed by tribes eager to take the reins to create a strong school experience for children. Our youth deserve an excellent education every day and this is possible when the best resources are brought to bear. The State Board of Education is excited for this grant and is looking forward to the work AFN will do with tribes to help create this path.”

More information on tribal compacting education in Alaska is available at <https://education.alaska.gov/compacting>.

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*The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides information, resources, and leadership to support over 130,000 students in 505 public schools across the state of Alaska. The mission of the department is to ensure an “**Excellent Education for Every Student Every Day.**”*