



August 19, 2022

United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, beginning at 12:00 p.m. (AKT), for a Field Hearing titled "*Contaminated Land Conveyances: The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the Detrimental Impacts of Contamination on Native Communities, and the Next Steps for Environmental Justice.*"

Good afternoon, Senator Murkowski, Agency Leads and participants.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about such an important topic.

I am Vincent M. Tutiakoff, Mayor of the City of Unalaska, Chairman of the Ounalashka Corporation, an Alaska Native Village Corporation formed under ANSCA, and Traditional Chief for the Qawalangin Tribe.

OC received 128,000 acres of land under ANCSA on Unalaska, Amaknak, Umnak and Sedanka Islands.

I have lived in Unalaska for almost 75 years and have been to several other areas of Alaska that are also contaminated, including Nikolski, Atka, Attu, Shemya, and Adak.

Areas of concern that I personally have encountered include

- Growing up in Unalaska we utilized building material, such as windows, doors, siding, plumbing parts, etc. But while retrieving necessary material to keep our homes weatherized, many of the people reported areas of concern – asbestos – lead paint covered material – and PCBs in the ground and in storage buildings left by the military. This has been the cause for many of our people getting cancer, skin burns and loss of hair. Many of our people died because of contaminated water sheds, fish have disappeared from most streams for years after the war. Within the last 25 years some of the fish have returned. Birds have starved and been found on beaches across Unalaska and Amaknak Islands from eating contaminated food. Clam beds have been lost to contamination and in some cases are the cause of death to the Aleut people.
- When OC is constructing a project and contamination is found all construction must stop and remediation must be complete before construction can again commence. Alternatively, if we clean our lands first, OC risks not being reimbursed. We are going through this now with APIA and the Head Start Building



907.581.1276



info@ounalashka.com



www.ounalashka.com



PO Box 149, Unalaska, Alaska 99685-0149



The OC Board, Tribal Council, and the City of Unalaska have formed a Tri-lateral Group. The purpose is to bring personal concerns and plans for remediation of our lands on Amaknak and Unalaska, that we as a group identified as WWII contamination. Recently OC, the Qawalangin Tribe and the City have been working together to not only identify and prioritize the contaminated sites, but also to move forward with the clean-up.

Mitigation is important in order to address the physical and chemical impacts from past military activities to protect the health and safety of the entire community and allow for the safe practice of traditional cultural lifeways.

The U.S. Department of Defense created the first military outpost on Amaknak Island in 1911 and in 1940 the U.S. Navy constructed the Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base.

During the peak military activities in 1942 and 1943, the Navy, Army, and Marines had 65,000 personnel in the area, including all necessary infrastructure for the troops such as housing, support buildings, power plants, and defensive structures that were spread all across the island.

By 1950 the military largely abandoned Unalaska/Dutch Harbor leaving behind a great deal of history, along with over 100 contaminated sites and millions of dollars in remediation costs.

Even more than 70 years after the military withdraw, OC, the Tribe and community continue to be negatively impacted by:

- Hazardous materials like Lead-based paint and asbestos-containing materials
- Munitions
- Unexploded ordnances
- Unsafe buildings and structures
- Abandoned equipment
- Petroleum hydrocarbons from underground and aboveground storage tanks
- Rommel stakes – is in the thousands and only some have been removed over the years
- Persistent organic pollutants such as PCBs

Currently, we have a known 51 areas of concern (that range in size from impacts from single underground storage tanks to full military bases). The City recently received a Brownfield Assessment grant and OC is in the process of applying for one as well. There is no doubt this number will increase significantly These impacted areas represent approximately 80,000 acres. The Formerly Used Defense Site program under the Army Corp has been working on the island for the past 30 years and the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program for 20 years.

As we look to the future, we have estimated at the present rate of mitigation it will take more than 100 years to complete the necessary clean up.



The City, Tribe and Ounalashka Corporation have been collaborating to address the highest priority sites that have impacts that threaten community safety, health, and the environment based on what limited available funding we have been able to procure.

Each impacted area has adversely affected Tribal and community economic, social, or cultural welfare and limited full use of Tribal lands and resources.

The City, Tribe and the Ounalashka Corporation are dedicated to mitigating these impacts to restore safe access to Tribal lands and create a healthier and safer environment for its people, community, and future generations.

But the Federal Government needs to help.

We did not ask for our lands to be contaminated nor did we contaminate them ourselves. We received the land from the Government already contaminated.

We the Unangan People of Unalaska and other Alaska Native Groups want to ensure that our native corporations be involved in the clean up our own land. We also want to prevent ancient burial sites and artifacts from being disturbed or removed from our communities. Tribal Sovereignty commands that the Tribe and OC dictate such actions.

Qagaasakung to Senator Murkowski and the other participants for coming to Unalaska to hear our concerns.

Sincerely,

Vincent M. Tutiakoff
Board Chair



907.581.1276



info@ounalashka.com



www.ounalashka.com



PO Box 149, Unalaska, Alaska 99685-0149