



RE#25-24

A RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING CRIMES AGAINST ALASKA FLAG DESIGNER BENNY BENSON ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, HEALING & CONFLICT RESOLUTION ON JULY 9TH, 2027 THE 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY.

WHEREAS, the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska, a federally recognized sovereign Nation, vows to exercise its powers to further the economic and social well-being of all its members, safeguarding and supporting the Unangan language, culture, customs, and traditions for generations to come; and,

WHEREAS, Benny Benson (full legal name John Ben Benson, Jr., born 9/12/1912, (i) is a registered member of the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska (enrollment #QTU 1345 ii) whose mother Tatiana Dushkin was born and raised in Unalaska as were her parents; Benny lived in Unalaska from 9/29/1916 to 9/25/1925(iii) and returned to visit Unalaska in the summer of 1971 to reconnect with his roots (iv); and,

WHEREAS, Benny Benson, a seventh-grade student, as the winner of the Alaska Flag Contest, first hoisted the Alaska flag up the flagpole on July 9, 1927 and the 100-year anniversary will occur on **July 9, 2027; and,**

WHEREAS, of the 50 state flags in the United States, there is only one state flag designed by a Native American Indigenous Person, that flag being Alaska's; and,

WHEREAS, Benny was a superlative flag designer with the Alaska flag ranking in the top 8% of US flag designs(v); Benny was the youngest flag designer, the financially poorest flag designer, the only flag designer raised in an orphanage, and the only living flag designer when the US flags were flown to the moon on Apollo 11 in 1969(vi) which for Benny was "quite a deal"(vii); and,

WHEREAS, on October 19, 2018, Alaska Governor Bill Walker apologized to Alaska Natives for the wrongs endured for generations, for being forced into boarding schools, for being forced to abandon Native language, for erasing Alaska Native QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 2 of 20 history, for generational- and historical- trauma(viii); and,

WHEREAS, in the Unangan culture, when wrongs or crimes are committed against persons, it is important to publicly acknowledge those wrongs, to accept responsibility, and to do everything possible to right those wrongs, as part of Unangan healing traditions(ix); and,

WHEREAS, in 1910, only two years before Benny Benson was born, Governor Walter Clark of the District of Alaska erased images of Alaska Natives from the State Seal and replaced them with depictions of farming, horses, a train, a brick factory pouring out black smoke, and three shocks of wheat (x); and,





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WHEREAS, on September 12, 1912, Benny Benson was born; in 1915 when he was age three, his family's home burned down to the ground, and his mother Tatiana Dushkin (1879 – 1915) passed away (xi); and,

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1912, when Benny was only about two months old, the Alaska Native Brotherhood was formed with goals of promoting Alaska Native solidarity, abolishing racial prejudice, and securing economic equality for Alaska's First People; (xii) fourteen years later in 1927, the president of the Alaska Native Brotherhood – Tlingit attorney William Paul - would stand up to protect seventh grade student Benny Benson from hostile racism during the Alaska Flag Contest; and,

WHEREAS, in the Unangan culture, parents are supposed to provide safe housing, food, water, and survival instruction for their children and to do otherwise is wrong (in Western language, a crime), deserving condemnation with the senseless loss of even one infant resulting in calamity for an entire village(xiii); and,

WHEREAS, in September 1916, Benny's father John Ben Benson, Sr. (1858 – 1937, of Scandinavian descent – either Swedish or Norwegian) put Benny (age 4), his younger brother Carl (age 1), and his older sister Elsie (age 7) on a ship, sending them about four hundred nautical miles away to the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska, claiming that he was not capable of raising the children when in fact, after placing his three young children on a ship, he soon married an Alaska Native woman, age 23, and, at age 58, purchased a fishing boat, purchased two islands, worked an additional two decades, and continued to father more children until age 78 (xiv); and,

WHEREAS, upon arrival at the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska at age four years, Benny Benson was assigned Indentured #217, he began a life of being forced to abandon his traditional Unangan ways, forced to learn Western ways, forced childhood financial debt, forced childhood labor, and forced childhood relocation which he would live for the next sixteen years of his life until age 20(xv); and,

WHEREAS, of all the children in the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska, Benny had the darkest-toned skin, even darker than the Yupik and Inupiaq children, and Benny was given several derogatory names including "Chocolate Drop" (a disparaging term for children who had Alaska Native mothers and African American fathers), "Doughnut" (it's okay to be dark brown on the outside as long as you are white on the inside), and "So Dark," with the children in the boarding school often being tormented about their ethnicity to the point of tears and Benny often sitting outside the home alone by himself with only rocks to play with(xvi); and,





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WHEREAS, on March 15, 1919, the American Legion was established in the United States, and on July 31, 1919, the first American Legion was established in Alaska and named Jack Henry Post No. 1 after an Alaskan soldier killed in action in France during World War I on September 29, 1918(xvii); the American Legion sponsored the Alaska flag contest in 1927; and

WHEREAS, , in the late 1800s and early 1900s, theories of scientific racism and eugenics were popular in Europe, North America, and the Jesse Lee Home; these theories posited that people's intelligence could be determined by physical characteristics such as skin color with Nordic people with blond hair and blue eyes being the most intelligent, and people with dark hair, dark eyes, and dark skin being the least intelligent, and that human attributes (for example, intelligence, ambition, or criminality) could be controlled through selective breeding(xviii); Benny Benson's teacher Myrtle Hatten was a proponent of these theories and asserted that she could achieve eugenics in one generation(xix); and,

WHEREAS, racism against Alaska Natives in the 1920s was open, in your face, and hostile with signs displayed on public buildings reading, "No Dogs, No Natives Allowed... We cater to White Trade Only(xx); and,

WHEREAS, in the 1920 US Federal Census, there were 363 people living in Unalaska with 71% being Aleut and 29% being White(xxi) and, "All of the people who are residents in Unalaska are intensely interested in the success" of the Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska(xxii); and,

WHEREAS, in the 1920 US Federal Census, there were 632 people living in Seward, Alaska with 97% being White and less than 1% being Alaska Native, Black, or Asian(xxiii) with public documents indicating that the community leaders in Seward did not want Alaska Natives to move into town, particularly full-blood or darkskinned Alaska Natives(xxiv); and,

WHEREAS, in the 1920s, leaders in some towns in Alaska wanted their communities to become white settler towns, pushing people of color out of city limits and passing rules, laws, or covenants that prohibited people of color from living in neighborhoods or within city limits; when people of color disobeyed and QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 4 of 20 built homes in prohibited regions, their homes were set on fire by arsonists; some of these covenants continued through the 1970s(xxv); and,





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WHEREAS, in August 1922, after Reverend Thomas J. Gambill traveled from Wisconsin to Unalaska to inspect the Jesse Lee Home, he boasted, “All the work of the home is done by the children” with the girls doing the housekeeping, cooking, sewing, knitting, fancy work, music, baking all the bread, and doing all the laundry; while the boys do the fishing, rowing, swimming, hunting, gardening, mechanics, shoe cobbling, ivory work, salting, curing the game, running the electric light plant, running the water plant, doing all the painting, repair work on the buildings, repair work on the grounds(xxvi); in the boarding school program, the children were required to do this work and were then billed for room, board, and incidental expenses; for example, Benny Benson’s bill from the Jesse Lee Home in 1921 was \$263.00, a tremendous amount of money for a nine-year old boy living in an orphanage(xxvii); and,

WHEREAS, in the early 1920s, community leaders in Seward urged that, “In case the Jesse Lee Home moves from Unalaska to Seward, it will be far enough [out of town] to prevent its inmates from getting to town except on rare occasion (xxviii); and,

WHEREAS, in 1924, when the Jesse Lee Home was considering moving from Unalaska to Seward, a news article in the Seward Daily Gateway noted that, it is, “Bad policy to mix natives and whites indiscriminately in the public school (xxix); and,

WHEREAS, in 1924, the townspeople of Seward were so concerned and threatened about the possibility of the Jesse Lee Home moving into Seward, bringing in large numbers of full-blood Alaska Native people, that three-time Mayor Leroy Vincent Ray (and future Alaska-flag-contest judge) had to assure the citizens of Seward, “Mayor Leroy Vincent Ray doubts there were over 2 or 3 full-blood natives in the whole school, at least 95% were white and of Russian and Scandinavian descent; (xxx) and,

WHEREAS, in 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act provided Alaska Natives the right to vote, but only if five white citizens endorsed their voting application, only if they severed all tribal relationships, and only if they adopted the habits of civilized life; literacy tests were imposed to further restrict Alaska Native access to ballots(xxxi) because Native voting posed a threat to white settlers and white land owners(xxxii); and,





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WHEREAS, around 1925, Myrtle Hatten – Benny Benson’s school teacher during the Alaska flag contest – noted, “There were some in Seward, at the outset, who did not welcome the native children” (xxxiii) and did not want Alaska Native children to move QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 5 of 20 into Seward as part of the Jesse Lee Home; and,

WHEREAS, on September 25, 1925, the Jesse Lee Home moved from Unalaska to Seward, and Benny Benson, an “inmate” of the Jesse Lee Home, was forcibly relocated from Unalaska to Seward on board the USS Bear with 23 other Jesse Lee Home boys, having no choice and no voice as a 13-year-old boy living in an orphanage with public documents indicating that Benny would have stayed in Unalaska where his mother and grandparents were raised from rather than move to Seward, arriving in Seward on September 30, 1925 (xxxiv); and,

WHEREAS, while on board the USCGC Bear – a US Coast Guard ship armed rapidfire guns - a large boatswain (ship’s officer in charge) grabbed him and threatened to throw him overboard into the ocean if he did not stop whistling (xxxv) – being thrown off of a tall sailing ship in September 1925 in the Bering Sea or Pacific Ocean would have resulted in Benny Benson’s death and changed Alaska history; and,

WHEREAS, in October 1925, Leroy Vincent Ray, the attorney of the City of Seward (and later judge in the Alaska flag contest) wrote a petition to exclude the Jesse Lee Home from City of Seward limits (xxxvi) while mandating “conditions absolutely prohibiting an increase of enrollment in the Jesse Lee Home in Seward (xxxvii); and,

WHEREAS, shortly after the Jesse Lee Home was opened in Seward in 1925, Myrtle Hatten was appointed to the position of teacher, and she later stated that there was, “Only one boy who came to the Jesse Lee Home who was not a heathen... he knew how to pray when he got here, (xxxviii) and the boy was not Benny Benson, so it may be asserted that Myrtle Hatten viewed her seventh-grade student Benny Benson as a “heathen,” a disparaging term for someone who is not religious or whose religion is not Christianity; and,

WHEREAS, on or before November 28, 1926, the Alaska flag contest was announced (xxxix) sponsored by the American Legion of Alaska, open to all children in seventh grade, eighth grade, and high schools of the public, private, and Indian schools in Alaska; rules including the students writing their name, age, and address in pencil in the reverse of design; panels of three local judges were established in the towns to select the ten best designs from each school; the students’ drawings needed to be mailed to the American Legion in Juneau by March 1, 1927; and,





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WHEREAS, the Alaska flag contest in 1927 was sponsored by the American Legion whose code of conduct and core values include “integrity, honesty, fairness, openness, responsibility and respect; (xl) thus, it may be asserted that, if the American Legion sponsors an Alaska flag contest for children in the public, private, and Native schools of Alaska, it would do so in a fair manner with equal opportunities for all, with bias against no children, and with the long-term QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 6 of 20 interests of Alaska in mind for a flag design unique to the 49th State; and,

WHEREAS, the Alaska flag contest was a two-stage contest with the first stage being determined by a panel of local judges in the villages and the second stage being determined by a panel of judges with the American Legion in Juneau; and,

WHEREAS, in the second phase of the Alaska flag contest, 142 drawings were submitted to a panel of judges in Juneau, and this portion of the contest was fair in that adhesive tape was used to cover the identifying information of the students on the verso (back) of the drawings, concealing their personal identifying information such as names, addresses, ages, or school names which could reveal their gender, ethnicity, or family connections, and the panel of judges in Juneau made their decisions based upon the design rather than the student who drew the design, unanimously selected the drawing submitted by Benny Benson as the winner of the Alaska flag contest(xli); and,

WHEREAS, before the Juneau portion of the contest, 700 drawings were submitted by students in the seventh grade through twelfth grade in the public, private, and Indian schools in the villages or towns where they were living at the time; and,

WHEREAS, in early 1927, Benny Benson submitted three drawings for the Alaska flag contest in the Jesse Lee Home in Seward where his teacher was Myrtle Hatten(xlii); and,

WHEREAS, on February 19, 1927, the panel of three judges in Seward announced the winners of the Seward portion of the contest:

Name of Student	School	Grade	Ethnicity	Age	Prize	Place
Sidney Leighton Henrickson	Public	10th	White	15	\$5	First
Alice Marit Eide	Public	12th	White	18	\$3	Second
Benny Benson	Native	7th	Alaska Native	14	\$1	Third





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WHEREAS, Sidney Leighton Henrikson was a popular high school sophomore student, age 15, in the Seward Public School who was an employee of the Seward Daily Gateway newspaper and appeared in local newspaper articles over 38 times; his design consisted of the Alaska territory seal on a blue background with red, white, and blue rectangles (see Sidney Leighton Henrikson's flag design in Appendix A) for which the Seward judges awarded first prize and \$5.00(xliii); and,

WHEREAS, Alice Marit Eide was a high school senior student, age 18, popular for her singing capabilities and stage performance, having appeared in local newspapers over 110 times; Eide published several articles in (and was an employee of) the Seward Daily Gateway; Alice Marit Eide(xliv) was awarded second prize and \$3.00 for her flag design by the Seward judges but her flag design QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 7 of 20 drawing has been lost or misplaced over the years(xlv); and,

WHEREAS, Benny Benson was an Alaska Native seventh grade student, age 14, in the Jesse Lee Home who appeared in the newspaper only once before the Alaska flag contest; his design consisted of a blue background with eight stars (the Big Dipper and the North Star) and was awarded only third place and \$1.00 by the Seward judges(xlvi); and,

WHEREAS, after the judges in Juneau announced that Benny Benson won the Alaska flag contest by unanimous vote, Tlingit attorney William L. Paul commented that in the Seward portion of the Alaska flag contest, Benny was, "...picked as only a third rater by the Seward 'Judges'... who could not overlook the fact that Benny Benson was part Indian... swarthy [particularly dark-skinned]" (xlvii); and,

WHEREAS, the panel of three judges in Seward on February 19, 1927 consisted of the following men whose average age was 46 years:

Name of Judge	DOB	Born	Buried	Ethnic	Age	Job
Ralph Richard Guthrie	2/14/1882	NY	CA	White	45	Captain
Aaron Edward Rucker	1/4/1896	CO	CA	White	45	Attorney/Ed
Leroy Vincent Ray	5/15/1877	MA	AK	White	49	Attorney





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WHEREAS, one of the judges in Seward was United States Army Captain Ralph Richard Guthrie(xlviii), born February 14, 1882 in New York, age 45 at the time of the Alaska flag contest in 1927, arrived in Alaska on July 20, 1926, only 103 days before the contest was announced, chosen to be a judge because he wrote dozens of articles in a Nation-wide magazine called “The Popular” described as a “magazine for men and women who like to read about men” with several articles being derogatory towards Native Americans in general and Alaska Natives in particular(xlix); for example, he wrote about young woman with blond hair being worth \$1,000,000 yet an Alaska Native 15-year-old girl with black hair was worth bangles valued at \$10.99; Ralph Guthrie left Alaska on July 28, 1928, having lived in Alaska shortly over two years yet having the capability to influence the Alaska flag contest and Alaska history; and,

WHEREAS, the second judge was Aaron Edward Rucker (1) , born January 4, 1896 in Victor, Colorado, age 44 at the time of the Alaska flag contest in Seward in 1927, an attorney who served as the city attorney for Seward and the editor for the Seward Daily Gateway and the Alaska Pathway, returning to California in 1927, the same year as the Alaska flag contest; and,

WHEREAS, the third judge in Seward was LeRoy Vincent Rayli, born May 14, 1877 in Brookline, Massachusetts, age 49 at the time of the Alaska flag contest in Seward in 1927, serving as city attorney for several years and mayor of Seward for six QTU Resolution Honoring Alaska Flag Designer Benny Benson Page 8 of 20 years; and,

WHEREAS, in the film Aleut Story, sociologist Dr. Dorothy Knee Jones noted there are effective techniques that colonizers have historically utilized to gain control over people of color, “To subdue a people, to render them submissive, you degrade them. That’s part of any colonial system. And one of the ways they degraded the Aleuts was by segregating them and humiliating them. [The Aleuts] were treated like dogs(lii); and,

WHEREAS, when it appeared that a student of color might win the flag contest, a smear campaign was launched against seventh-grade Benny Benson with its point of origin appearing to be leaders in the town of Seward utilizing local, state, and national media as a political tool to subject Alaska Natives in general and seventh grade student Benny Benson in particular to a withering storm of racial prejudice; the epicenter of this smear campaign was articles published in the Seward Daily Gateway with the apparent goal of discrediting Benny Benson or bullying the seventh-grade student into withdrawing from the Alaska flag contest so that others could step into first place; and,





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WHEREAS, in 1927, Benny Benson was an easy target for bullies, his mother being deceased, his father lived miles away and rarely visited, Benny was living in an orphanage; there was no Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, no Alaska Federation of Natives, no Alaska Native Medical Center, no Aleut Corporation, no Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, no Alaska Native Justice Center, no professionally-trained victims' advocates, no US Federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), no Alaska Office of Victims' Rights, no Victims for Justice, and virtually no protection for a seventh-grade boy who entered a drawing in an Alaska flag contest; and,

WHEREAS, Benny, then a seventh-grade student, age 14, living in an orphanage, was disheartened by this treatment, wanted to leave Seward to return to Unalaska, and almost withdrew from the flag contest(liii); and,

WHEREAS, after Benny was named winner, on April 23, 1927, the Alaska Legislature allocated \$1,000 so that Benny Benson could travel to Washington, DC to hand deliver the Alaska flag to United State President Calvin Coolidge(liv); and,

WHEREAS, on April 26, 1927, the Alaska Legislature allocated \$2,000 so that Benny Benson could travel to Paris to carry the Alaska flag in the French Legion Flag Parade(lv); and,

WHEREAS, on April 23, 1927, the Seward Daily Gateway published an article titled, "Congratulations to Benny Benson" who, "carries the blood of the aboriginal ancestry from the most primitive to stand among the great – the President of the United States"(lvi); and,

WHEREAS, on May 2nd, 1927, the Alaska flag law was adopted by the Legislature as the official flag of the Territory of Alaska, and the law was written by Tlingit attorney William Paul who was aware of the Territory of Alaska erasing Alaska Natives from history, "The Governor shall cause... that due credit be given to Benny Benson, age thirteen years, a student in the seventh grade, the designer of the flag herein described as the official flag of Alaska"(lvii); and,

WHEREAS, William Paul also drafted letters and documents to send to children in Alaska schools, emphasizing the role that Alaska Natives played in the Alaska flag design and the Alaska flag law; however, the Territory of Alaska's assistant commissioner in the Department of Education, Marie Drake, determined William Paul's message was too complex for Alaska children to understand, and instead published the Alaska Flag Song; and,

WHEREAS, on June 19, 1927, the New York Times published an article titled, "Schoolboy is designer of a flag for Alaska," calling Benny Benson an "inmate of the Jesse Lee Home for native and half-caste children... small of stature for his years.. swarthy of skin... speaks with a staccato clipping of words common to the Indian race... knows more about fishing, hunting and trapping than anything else... had never seen a train or automobile(lviii); and,





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WHEREAS, on July 29, 1927, the Seward Daily Gateway published an article titled, “Did Benny Benson Honswoggle [sic – horns woggle – to steal] Alaskan Solons [politicians] Asks White,” quoting editor Stroller White’s article from the week before in which a man from Canada accused Benny of stealing the flag design from him; White claimed that Benny, “a little breed pupil of the Jesse Lee Home at Seward, [had] a good time and, in fact, all the people of Alaska had one put over them(lix); Stroller White was accusing Benny Benson (a seventh-grade Alaska Native student living in an orphanage) of intentionally stealing a flag design from a Canada flag contest, pulling the wool over the eyes of the politicians in Juneau so that he could get the \$1,000, and lying to all of the people in Alaska; and,

WHEREAS, from 1927, no flag contest could be located in Canada with a flag design similar to Benny Benson’s but the Yukon Nuggets later published an article about Stroller White’s lifelong newspaper creed which included carrying on “traditions of telling all, or making up the truth – whichever came first” and to “always boost the patrons of your paper [regardless of how badly they behave, write the article to make your patrons look good]”; (lx) the “making up truth” principles appeared to have been applied to non-patrons (for example, Benny Benson) and not the “boosting” principles; and,

WHEREAS, on September 15, 1927, Benny Benson responded to Stroller White’s allegations that he plagiarized the flag design from Canada, saying he would be “proud to be called an Aleut or a white boy, but the use of the term ‘breed’ is too often employed as an obnoxious term” and that Benny was “taught something different from deceit and falsehood... and not in the habit of employing either(lxi)”; and,

WHEREAS, on November 18, 1927, as part of winning the Alaska flag contest, Benny was also awarded a Hamilton engraved gold watch valued at \$115(lxii); and,

WHEREAS, on May 19, 1932, Benny Benson graduated from William H. Seward High School, after spending 16 years of his life (age four on September 9, 1916 to age 20 in 1932), Benny was physically free from an indentured life yet possibly under financial debt; he moved to Ugiashak Island (also known as Benson Island) to help his ailing father, and later helped his father travel to Seattle for medical attention for his amputated leg(lxiii); and,

WHEREAS, in 1935, only three years after Benny Benson graduated, a petition was circulated to ban the “inmates and wards of the Jesse Lee Home” from attending William H. Seward High School as students; over 120 citizens and residents of Seward signed the petition, including four members of the Seward City Council(lxiv); and,





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WHEREAS, in 1935, despite Tlingit attorney William Paul's efforts to distribute a strong Alaska Native message with the Alaska flag to children throughout Alaska, the Alaska Territorial Department of Education in Juneau instead chose a song written by Marie Drake, as the Alaska Flag Song; Marie Drake did not speak with Benny Benson, the original designer of the strong Alaska flag; the song does not mention the designer or Alaska Natives, and instead talks about the gold of the early sourdough's dreams; Marie Drake copyrighted the song in 1935; and,

WHEREAS, in 1939, the Territory of Alaska awarded Benny Benson the \$1,000 which he had legally won in 1927, and Benny used that money to attend diesel engineering school in Seattle; however, the Territory of Alaska had placed Benny's money in an interest-bearing account, and it had gained \$334.85 of interest, money belonging to Benny Benson; but, in a news article under the headline, "Ben Benson to Get \$1,000; No More," the Alaska Senators voted five to three to pocket the \$334.85 of interest belonging to an Alaska Native young man who rightfully won it when he was age 14 in a "rare show of penny-pinching" by the Alaska Legislature; and, the beginning of acts of theft first by the Territory of Alaska and followed by the State of Alaska which would repeat in 1963 and which would continue into 2025; and,

WHEREAS, in February 1951, the engraved gold watch which Benny won in the flag contest was taken during a robbery from a store in Kodiak and later recovered by a US Deputy Marshal and returned; and,

WHEREAS, on February 25, 1951, Benny and his sister Elizabeta (Elsie M. BensonAllen) were reunited at 508 North Park in Anchorage, after not seeing each other for 38 years; she passed away May 31, 1951, only about three months after the siblings were reunited, and is buried at Fort Richardson National Cemetery; and,

WHEREAS, in 1959, the State of Alaska, through the University of Alaska Fairbanks, awarded C. Marie Drake, Territorial Assistant Commissioner of Education, an honorary Doctor of Literature as author of the Alaska Flag Song while the State of Alaska has not awarded an honorary doctorate degree to Benny Benson as of June 2025; and,

WHEREAS, in December 1962, the Alaska Legislature adopted the Display of Flags law, Sec. 44.09.030 which states, in part, that the flag of the United States and the flag of the State of Alaska shall be displayed, weather permitting, in or near every schoolhouse during school days; one often sees the flag of the United States displayed, but often the flag of the State of Alaska is missing; and,





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WHEREAS, in 1963, the State of Alaska acknowledged that it was wrong for the Territory of Alaska to refuse to deliver the \$334.85 of interest to Benny and recalculated the amount of interest owed to be \$791 between 1929 and 1939, and in 1963 calculated that the State of Alaska owed Benny \$2,985, but it was rounded off to \$2,500(lxxiii), effectively subjecting Benny Benson to the theft of \$485 at a time when he was having life challenges; and,

WHEREAS, to raise money to pay his financial bills, Benny hand-painted and autographed small Alaska flags, gold letters on a blue fabric, when he sold, reporting an annual income of \$302.94(lxxiv); thus, the \$485 of interest that was taken by the State of Alaska in 1963 was a significant amount of funding; and,

WHEREAS, on July 20, 1969, NASA astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, backed up by Michael Collins, landed Apollo 11 on the moon, carrying with them the US National flag and all 50 US State flags, including Alaska's flag; Benny Benson watched the Apollo 11 craft land on the moon during the first live broadcast in Alaska, saying, "When they flew the Alaska flag to the moon... that was quite a deal"(lxxv); and,

WHEREAS, on December 3, 1969, US President Richard M. Nixon presented to Alaska Governor Keith Miller a wooden plaque to which was attached a clear plastic ball containing pieces of lunar material and a small Alaska flag designed by Benny Benson which had traveled to the moon and back to earth; and, the plaque was displayed at the Alaska Transportation Museum(lxxvi) located at 3833 West International Airport Road; and,

WHEREAS, in 1970, Anfesia Shapsnikoff (recognized by the Alaska State Legislature as an "Aleut Tradition Bearer"(lxxvii) stated that she grew up in Unalaska and attended the same school with Benny Benson, and, "Benny Benson... designed an Alaska flag... he done that here in Unalaska... Unalaska don't get credit for this Alaska flag which was designed by Benny Benson when he was in the 5th grade with the help of a teacher by the name of Miss Day"(lxxviii); and,

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1971, Benny Benson and his wife Anna traveled to Unalaska so that Benny could reconnect to his roots, and they stayed with Coe Whittern (the son of the last Methodist minister in Unalaska) who had purchased the Jesse Lee Home's Boy's Dormitory and turned it into his private residence; Benny and his wife Anna stayed in the residence with Coe Whittern and his wife Phyllis; Coe Whittern stated that in the summer of 1971, Benny Benson said, "I wanted you to know I designed the flag here in this house [the Boy's Dormitory], here in Unalaska, and, unfortunately, Unalaska hasn't gotten credit for me designing this territorial flag in Unalaska" (lxxix); and,

WHEREAS, on July 2, 1972, Benny Benson passed away at age 59, and is buried in Kodiak Cemetery(lxxx); and,





RE#25-24

A RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING CRIMES AGAINST ALASKA FLAG DESIGNER BENNY BENSON ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, HEALING & CONFLICT RESOLUTION ON JULY 9TH, 2027 THE 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY.

WHEREAS, in the Unangan culture, even though someone has passed from the physical world, they continue to remain spiritually in the presence of those living to assist with providing guidance, inspiration, and strength(lxxxix) and wrongs or crimes committed against them (or the cultural items they created) continue to be viable and should be resolved for long-term peace in the village(lxxxii); and,

WHEREAS, on September 6, 1973, an arsonist set the Alaska Transportation Museum on fire, and the curator of the museum was seen carrying the Alaska Flag & Moon Rock plaque to his residence, but then it could not be located(lxxxiii); and,

WHEREAS, around 2009, the State of Alaska published Alaska's Kids' Corner(lxxxiv) which is "for Alaska Kids" and includes categories such as Alaska facts, state symbols, State Seal, song, and flag with no image of Benny Benson under the flag, without his age mentioned, without his name typed, without his age of 14 mentioned, without mentioning he is Alaska Native; on the other hand, under the Alaska State Song, the state of Alaska includes an audio file, Marie Drake's name twice, her life summarized, the words of the Alaska flag song typed, and a music sheet of the Alaska flag song; Benny was age 14 when he designed the Alaska flag; Marie Drake was age 57 when she wrote the Alaska flag song; and,

WHEREAS, on August 18, 2010, criminal justice student Elizabeth Riker published a news article in Juneau, reporting that Alaska's moon rock (with Alaska moon flag) was lost, misplaced, or stolen and that it may command, "five million dollars on the black market(lxxxv); and

WHEREAS, on December 9, 2010, a lawsuit was filed against the State of Alaska and the Alaska State Museum by Arthur "Coleman" Anderson, the stepson of the curator of the Alaska Transportation Museum in 1973, saying he found the Alaska Flag & Moon Rock plaque after the fire, he thought it was, "cool and that he might be able to clean it up and turn it into a neat souvenir," that he was now the lawful owner, and the State of Alaska owed him money for rescuing, cleaning, and storing the plaque, but the State countersued, and Coleman Anderson eventually returned the Alaska Flag & Moon Rock to the Alaska State Museum in Juneau where it is currently displayed(lxxxvi); and,

WHEREAS, on February 22, 2022, Alaska Superior Court Judge Adolf Zeman issued Alaska Superior Court order #3AN-22-04368 CI requiring the State of Alaska's Bureau of Vital Statistics to correct the date of birth and the mother's maiden name on Benny Benson's birth certificate(lxxxvii); and,





RE#25-24

A RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING CRIMES AGAINST ALASKA FLAG DESIGNER BENNY BENSON ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, HEALING & CONFLICT RESOLUTION ON JULY 9TH, 2027 THE 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY.

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2024, Pulitzer Prize winning author John Tetpon (Inupiaq from Shaktoolik) in an article titled, "BIA boarding schools' devastating legacy continues in Alaska" wrote, "There was only one purpose for the boarding school program in Alaska... it was all about white power... white supremacy... to assimilate the savage Natives by force..."(lxxxviii); and,

WHEREAS, on April 14, 2025, Benjamin Jacuk (Dena'ina Athabascan/Sugpiaq), in a journal article about the continued effects of boarding schools on Alaska Natives, wrote that under 18th century scientific racist thinking, "Western European peoples had a level of superiority over all other races..." and the primary goal was "...almost entirely based on resource extraction and other economic ventures" which the America Baptist Church for the year 1889 alone added up to \$7M (equivalent to \$227 M in 2023) for resources such as fish, oil, bone, ivory, furs, gold, silver(lxxxix); and,

WHEREAS, on April 24, 2025, Daren Herman, the grandson of Benny Benson, first set foot on Alaska soil, traveling from North Dakota to accept the honorary doctorate degree to be awarded by Alaska Pacific University(xc); and,

WHEREAS, on April 24, 2025, the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska approved the enrollment of Benny Benson into the Tribe with enrollment #QTU 1345(xci); and,

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2025, Alaska Pacific University president Janelle Vanasse awarded Doctor of Humane Letters to Benny Benson which was accepted by his grandson Daren Herman(xcii); and,

WHEREAS, in the Unangan culture, people are ambitious for well-founded enduring fame, venerate celestial bodies (stars, moon, and sun), and have endurance to the point of insensibility(xciii); and,

WHEREAS, to paraphrase Unalaska historian Ray Hudson, Benny Benson was, by all accounts, a good boy, a good man, a good husband, a good father, a good grandfather, and a positive role model for healthy relationships through Alaska(xciv); and,






RE#25-24

A RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING CRIMES AGAINST ALASKA FLAG DESIGNER BENNY BENSON ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, HEALING & CONFLICT RESOLUTION ON JULY 9TH, 2027 THE 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY.

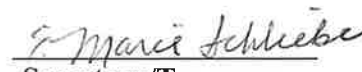
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Benny Benson's hometown was Unalaska; and,
2. That Unalaska is the official home of the Alaska flag by decree of the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska, a federally recognized Tribe and sovereign nation; and,
3. That Benny Benson was, is, and continues to be a victim of several crimes in both the Unangan world and the Western world including those listed in Appendix B that should be resolved in one fashion or another before the 100-year anniversary on July 9, 2027; and,
4. That people and organizations are encouraged to learn more about Benny Benson and to use his life as an example to increase awareness of the history of racism in Alaska; how wrongs or crimes can be used to dehumanize; services for victims of crime that are available today that were not available during Benny Benson's time; and, how to help, support, encourage, and uplift those who have been less fortunate.

We do certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Tribal Council of the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska at a duly called meeting held the 16th day of June, 2025. At which a quorum was present and resulted in a vote of 7 ayes, 0 nays and 0 abstaining.



President
Shayla Shaishnikoff



Secretary/Treasurer
E. Marie Schliebe

