

Official Proclamation

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WHEREAS, We honor Nettie and Irene Jones as Ketchikan heroes, Nettie Jones stood steadfast in support of her daughter Irene Jones through one of the toughest fights in our city's history as she fought for the right to attend the Ketchikan School District in the face of an era of segregation; and

WHEREAS, On September 3, 1929, Irene Jones attended the Ketchikan Main School and on September 5, 1929, Superintendent Tony E. Karnes denied Irene, and all Indigenous community members, access to the Main School; and

WHEREAS, On September 10, 1929, Irene Jones led the way to desegregation; The Jones Family Despite opposition from the White and Native community fought for Irene Jones and all Native students to have equal access to an education; and

WHEREAS, With the assistance of famed Tlingit attorney William Lewis Paul, Sr., whom, with his experience with discrimination in Wrangell and a Civil Rights Leader with the Alaska Native Brotherhood, brought forth a lawsuit on Sept 10, 1929, against the Ketchikan School District and the Ketchikan School Board; and

WHEREAS, A Writ of Mandamus serves as a court order compelling the school board to follow the law and uphold his daughter Irene Jones's right to attend The Ketchikan Main School; and

WHEREAS, We recognize the trials, tribulations, as well as accomplishments of our students in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District; and

WHEREAS, We acknowledge the extraordinary, difficult path Irene Jones forged, and as a community, we vow never to forget that Irene Jones Stood alone, between the White and Native Communities, and fought for what she knew was right to ensure that one day, all people of Ketchikan & Alaska regardless of color, or gender would have equal access to education; and

WHEREAS, We recognize the late Judy Bader Needham, the Instructors, our Title 6 parent Committee's leadership, the cultural coordinator initiative, and our students as teachers; and

WHEREAS, We continue to recognize the late Judy Bader Needham for sharing her family stories and keeping the history alive, and her work with the students to bring Irene Jones's story to video; and

WHEREAS, We further recognize the students of the Ketchikan Schoenbar Middle School for their exceptional work and the creation of their video "I Fought for That Seat" Irene Jones and Desegregation of the Ketchikan School District so that Irene Jones's Story shall never go silent; and

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WHEREAS, We, the City of Ketchikan, honor Irene Jones, our students, and educators, who embraced the power of education, and have taken their seats, to become tomorrow's critical thinkers and leaders in their communities; and

WHEREAS, The City of Ketchikan acknowledges the work, critical thinking, and strengths of our youth, our Title 6 parent committee. It's leadership and applaud their efforts to educate and empower all of us through the story of Irene Jones, so that as a community we can embrace our history and Jones' contribution to a community of equality and anti-discrimination for all people of Alaska. We retain the inspiration to reach beyond our borders to those who can learn from the story of a young girl who stood alone in her conviction, to unite an entire community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Janalee Gage, Vice-Mayor of the City of Ketchikan, Alaska, do hereby proclaim September 26, 2024, as

IRENE JONES DAY

to honor Irene Jones and all those who honor her, by following in her footsteps and taking a stand.

Signed this 10th day of October, 2024

Janalee Gage, Vice-Mayor

City of Ketchikan, Alaska