

January 21, 2021
Regular City Council Meeting

**Discussion of Commissioning a Totem Pole in Honor of Elizabeth Peratrovich -
Councilmember Gage**



More Doodles

December 30, 2020

Celebrating Elizabeth Peratrovich



Doodle Snow Games - Day 11
Feb 19, 2018



Rosenmontag 2018
Feb 12, 2018



Costa Rica Elections 2018
Feb 4, 2018

Today's Doodle, illustrated by Sitka, Alaska-based guest artist [Michaela Goade](#), celebrates Alaska Native civil rights champion Elizabeth Peratrovich, who played an instrumental role in the 1945 passage of the first anti-discrimination law in the United States. On this day in 1941, after encountering an inn door sign that read "No Natives Allowed," Peratrovich and her husband—both of Alaska's Indigenous Tlingit tribe—helped plant the seed for the anti-discrimination law when they wrote a letter to Alaska's governor and gained his support.

Elizabeth Peratrovich—whose Tlingit name is *Kaaxgal.aat*, a member of the Lukaax̱ádi clan of the Raven moiety—was born on July 4, 1911 in Petersburg, Alaska during a time of extensive segregation in the territory. She was lovingly raised by adoptive parents, living in various small Southeast Alaska communities throughout her childhood. With a passion for teaching, Peratrovich attended college in Bellingham, Washington where she also became reacquainted with her husband, Roy Peratrovich, who was a student at the same school. The couple married and moved to Klawock, Alaska where their role in local politics and Elizabeth's knack for leadership drove her heavy involvement with the Alaska Native Sisterhood, one of the oldest civil rights groups in the world, leading to her eventual appointment as the organization's Grand President.

Seeking better access to lawmakers who could help effect change, the Peratrovichs moved in 1941 with their three children to the Alaskan capital of Juneau, where they were met with blatant discrimination. When attempting to buy a home in their new city, they were denied when the sellers saw they were of Alaska Native descent. Instances like these were unfortunately common for Alaska's Indigenous peoples and further motivated Peratrovich to take action in the name of systemic change.

Elizabeth and Roy worked with others to draft Alaska's first anti-discrimination bill, which was introduced in 1941 and failed to pass. On February 5, 1945 following years of perseverance, a second anti-discrimination bill was brought before the Alaska Senate, and Peratrovich took to the floor to deliver an impassioned call for equal treatment for Indigenous peoples. She was met with thunderous applause throughout the gallery, and her moving testimony is widely credited as a decisive factor in the passage of the historic Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945.

In 1988 the Alaska State Legislature declared February 16 as "Elizabeth Peratrovich Day," and in 2020 the United States Mint released a \$1 gold coin inscribed with Elizabeth's likeness in honor of her historic achievements in the fight for equality.

Thank you, Elizabeth Peratrovich, for helping to build the foundation for a more equitable future.



Special thanks to the family of Elizabeth Peratrovich for their partnership on today's Doodle. Below, Elizabeth's granddaughter, betsy Peratrovich, shares her thoughts on her grandmother's legacy.

My grandmother Elizabeth passed away before I was born, but based on the stories told in my family, she and my grandpa Roy were quite a team. He liked to give her all of the credit, as she continually inspired him to strive to improve the lives of Alaska Native peoples. But my dad recounts that they both used to sit around the dining table at night where together they typed letters, wrote and practiced speeches, and strategized on how best to secure equal rights for all. Because of the positions they held in the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood, and because they lived in the territorial capital, my grandparents were uniquely positioned to shine a light on the issue of discrimination and to lobby Alaska lawmakers, the governor, and others to advocate for the passage of anti-discrimination legislation.

In one instance, they decided to invite a legislator to join them for coffee, at which time they would plead their case. When the invitation was accepted, they took the small amount of spare change they had and brought it to the meeting—worrying the whole time that they wouldn't have enough to pay if anything other than coffee was ordered. Thankfully, not only did they have just enough money to pay for the beverages, but the meeting was productive! There were many grassroots efforts in those days, including efforts by countless other Alaska Native people who took steps to overcome and raise awareness of widespread inequities and instances of blatant prejudice. All Alaska Native peoples can be proud of the passage of Alaska's Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945—the first act of its kind in the United States.

Google.org is donating \$1,250,000 to the [National Congress of American Indians](#), the oldest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving tribal governments and communities.

This funding will provide direct cash grants and business training to hundreds of Indigenous-owned small businesses in the US that have been impacted by COVID-19. [Learn more.](#)

Guest Artist Q&A with Michaela

Today's Doodle was illustrated by Sitka, Alaska-based guest artist [Michaela Goade](#). Below, she shares her thoughts behind the making of this Doodle:

Q. Why was this topic meaningful to you personally?

A. It meant a lot to work on this project. Elizabeth Peratrovich often doesn't receive the recognition she deserves, and her story is important, inspiring, and powerful. To be able to portray this strong Tlingit woman—as a Tlingit artist myself—is a good feeling. It means a great deal to be able to represent our Nation in this way and uplift Elizabeth's life and work.

I grew up hearing Elizabeth Peratrovich's name often, both in the community and also within our family. Our early family history intertwines with Elizabeth's as she was a friend to my great-aunts, and I was often told that we shared a distant familial connection. I've always admired Elizabeth Peratrovich for her strength, intelligence, courage and compassion.

Q. What were your first thoughts when you were approached about the project?

A. I was so excited! Not only was the project a chance to work on a Google Doodle, but also an opportunity to help amplify the life and work of Elizabeth Peratrovich.

A. Yes! I drew quite a bit of inspiration from different sources for this Doodle. When drawing Elizabeth, I was particularly inspired by her famous testimony given to the Alaska Territorial Legislature in 1945. I wanted to show her in action as she delivered her powerful speech. Additionally, Elizabeth belonged to the Lukaax̂ádi clan (a Raven Moiety), so I knew I wanted to include Raven and incorporate elements of traditional Formline into his design. In Tlingit creation stories, Raven was the one who brought daylight to the world. In the Doodle, Raven is holding the sun, which is a reference to this creation story. Similarly, Elizabeth was also a bringer of light to the world. Lastly, the ocean and tree imagery is a reference to our traditional homelands here in Southeast Alaska.

Q. What message do you hope people take away from your Doodle?

A. It is my hope that this Doodle helps spread awareness of Elizabeth—who she was, where she came from, and the equality she fought so passionately for.

Early drafts of the Doodle below:





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  English (United States) 



This day in history

