



OUR HOMELAND, OUR FUTURE

2015 AFN WINTER LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Kotzebue, Alaska
February 16-17, 2015

SUMMARY REPORT

AFN Co-Chairs
Ana Hoffman
Jerry Isaac



AFN President
Julie Kitka



Introduction

In a remarkable gathering of leaders, the Alaska Federation of Natives board of directors hosted the Winter Leadership Retreat at the Nullagvik Hotel in Kotzebue on February 17. Virtually every level of government was represented at the meeting, from small town mayors to an Obama cabinet secretary, from elected officials to commissioners and top-level staff. It has been a long time since so many federal, state, local and Native leaders spent significant time together on so many demanding issues.

AFN's priority for the meeting was strengthening relationships among Native groups, as well as between Native groups and governments. It is commonly understood and was frequently acknowledged throughout the retreat that much more can be accomplished by working together rather than individually. "We may have our differences, but as a statewide Native community, we are united," said AFN President Julie Kitka.

AFN was pleased to welcome so many distinguished guests to discuss the most important social and economic issues facing us as Native leaders and communities, and as Alaskans.

In addition to Northwest Arctic Borough Mayor Reggie Joule, North Slope Borough Mayor Charlotte Brower, and Alaska's rural state legislators, the AFN board was joined by U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell; U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, Congressman Don Young; Governor Bill Walker and Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott; Alaska Senate President Kevin Meyer, Alaska House of Representatives Speaker Mike Chenault, and several other state legislators including Senators Lyman Hoffman, Mike Dunleavy, Donny Olson, and Representatives Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins and Charisse Millett; State of Alaska Commissioners Valerie Davidson, Health & Social Services, Gary Folger, Public Safety, Mike Hanley, Education, and Ron Taylor, Corrections; and State of Alaska Senior Arctic Official, Craig Fleener.

Also participating were AFN Co-Chairs Ana Hoffman and Jerry Isaac; AFN President Julie Kitka; ASRC Chairman Crawford Patkotak; NANA Regional Corporation President Wayne Westlake; AVCP President Myron Naneng; ICC-Alaska President Jim Stotts; Kawerak President Melanie Bahnke; Maniilaq President Timothy Schuerch; and former State Senator and Doyon Limited Board Member Georgianna Lincoln.



AFN hosted a community reception at the Kotzebue Middle/High School on February 16, the evening before the retreat, in honor of our distinguished guests. It was an impactful way to set the tone for the gathering, in the spirit of community, good will, sharing, respect, and enjoyment of the bounty of the land and the culture of the people.



After singing by Nikaitchuat School students, a traditional Alaska Native dinner was served – including caribou stew, salmon chowder and fry bread – followed by an engaging performance by The Northern Lights Dancers.



AFN wishes to thank the community of Kotzebue for allowing us to visit and meet in their beautiful region. AFN also sincerely thanks the leadership of the Northwest Arctic Borough, NANA Regional Corporation, Maniilaq and the Northwest Arctic School District for their assistance in making the gathering possible.

AFN wishes continued success to all the Northwest Arctic Leadership Team organizations, the City of Kotzebue, the Native Village of Kotzebue/ Kotzebue IRA Council and Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation (KIC). You are true leaders in our state.

Overview

Opening remarks from AFN Co-Chair Ana Hoffman reminded participants that this was a Native gathering in a Native village; therefore it was incumbent upon all in attendance to honor the Inupiat values cherished here. Hoffman said, “We have a diverse group of people here with a variety of views and we will hear a lot of those views this morning.”

Alaska Natives have a special trust relationship with the federal government, which is often embodied within the U.S. Department of Interior and its policy decisions. There is much to be done. At the same time, the long-term, often cold relationship between the State of Alaska and Native people is thawing. Many members of the new administration, including Governor Bill Walker, spoke of a new way of doing business.



The strength of the Alaska Federation of Natives is built upon our ability to gather together with diverse views, to have respectful and thoughtful dialogue, and to always be aimed towards a productive outcome.

— AFN Co-Chair Ana Hoffman



Perhaps most important, relationships were strengthened and new relationships established. Indeed, the final hour and a half of the retreat was devoted to a large talking circle. Chairs were pulled to the edge, the podium was relegated to a corner, and the microphone was passed around. Everyone in the circle had the chance to speak, share their impressions of the day, and discuss what they believe needs to happen next.

Several retreat speakers reflected that while there are many challenges, there are as many or more opportunities at both the federal and state levels. Long-term solutions will only come if tribes, corporations and organizations can collaborate with all levels of government.



Enlightening keynotes were delivered by ASRC Chairman Crawford Patkotak and Doyon Limited Board Member and former Alaska State Senator Georgianna Lincoln. Abridged transcripts of their presentations are attached to this report.

Several of the federal and state officials and Alaska Native leaders who attended our retreat told us that it was the best stakeholder meeting they have participated in recently, and that they left northwest Alaska with new and renewed professional and personal relationships following our day-long discussion.

Many speakers recognized how far the Native community has come after generations of civil rights and land claims battles. The corporations formed by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) are powerful economic engines in Alaska. The non-profit tribal health and human services organizations are leaders and innovators in their fields.

We have so many challenges facing us: the high cost of energy; the changing climate that we're all seeing and experiencing; and the crying need for greater laws and regulatory protections for our hunting and fishing and civil justice.

— AFN President Julie Kitka

The day before the retreat AFN facilitated a visit to Kivalina, a small Native village 81 miles from Kotzebue, for Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to listen firsthand to local concerns and see the

Even so, many said that Alaska Natives must work even harder to ensure Native people have a “seat at the table” when it comes to critical policy and regulatory decisions. Leaders at the retreat pledged to move beyond dialogue and consultation into more collaborative work on policy and partnerships that will help make Alaska a safe and prosperous place for future generations.

challenges with her own eyes. AFN also facilitated several meetings between Secretary Jewell and Governor Walker, state legislative leadership, rural legislators, the Northwest Arctic Leadership Team and federally recognized tribes. These advance meetings proved to be an important step in the process of creating a meaningful exchange.

Key Takeaways

» It's all about strengthening existing relationships and building new ones. The 2015 AFN Winter Leadership Retreat was a great success in this regard.

» The Arctic is our life. It is who we are and it is what defines us.

» In ANCSA, Congress mandated our corporations to provide economic benefits to Alaska's most disadvantage population while working to protect and perpetuate our cultural and traditional practices.

» The real solution for social distress in our villages is transferring some authority to tribal governments and opening up greater opportunities for our Native corporations.

» The federal government by itself cannot solve these problems. Nor can the state by itself. Nor can the tribes. Only by working together, in close collaboration, can we all work toward a healthy, safe and prosperous future for our families and especially our children.

» Respectful, thoughtful, face-to-face discussion, the way AFN conducts its gatherings, is the only way forward if we are collectively to produce positive outcomes.



» Alaska Native groups and Alaskans in general are struggling with access-to-land issues. These and other issues like subsistence resource management will lack progress as long as Alaska Natives are not meaningfully involved in crafting public policy.



» Relations between Alaska Native organizations and tribes and the state and federal governments must move from consultation to active collaboration. Difficult discussions like those in the 2015 AFN Winter Retreat must continue, not only between Native organizations, tribes, non-profits and corporations and the state and federal governments, but amongst ourselves as well.

» Meaningful consultation means more than just listening; it means incorporating our ideas into policy.

» Co-management of fish and game is a real solution whose time has come. Congressman Young committed to introducing an Ahtna bill and called for Governor Walker's support. Secretary Jewell said DOI is pursuing a co-management pilot project on the Kuskokwim River through the Fish and Wildlife Service.

» DOI is very focused on climate change. There is a new \$8 million item in the budget for support in dealing with climate change, some of which will go to 22 Alaska Native villages as competitive grants. DOI recognizes this is not enough, but it's a start.

» There is a new beginning, a "sea change," in tribal relations with the state. Tribal organizations have a strong track record in compacting and contracting with the federal government. Expanding this to the state will provide for more local control particularly in public safety and justice and will help solve the state's current fiscal crisis.

» The cost of energy in rural Alaska is severely impacting communities and impeding economic growth as well as access to subsistence resources.

» Medicaid expansion is an investment in Alaskans and will boost the economy.

» Alaska Natives are stewards of the lands they have lived on for thousands of years. We know how to manage for sustainability.

» As our Elders did for us, we must prepare the next generation to step up and eventually take over.

» This is a time of action. People are listening in DC and Juneau.



We have been stewards of this land since time immemorial and we will continue to be there. That's our responsibility as Indigenous people and we have to reclaim some of that. It's our culture. What's our role? We need to step up to the plate.

— Mayor Reggie Joule



Presenter Highlights

Julie Kitka, AFN President



Everyone in this room has been spending decades trying to get problems solved and trying to make things better for our people.

That's why we're so grateful that everyone's here in this meeting because everyone here has a role in the solutions we're all seeking.

Reggie Joule, Mayor, Northwest Arctic Borough



We've been preparing for this for a long time: to discuss the challenges, the opportunities of living in this land, in the Arctic, as the

world focuses on the Arctic. We live day to day but with an eye on how our young people are going to come through all of this preparation and work that we're doing now. Yesterday, we were the future. Today, our children and grandchildren are the future.

Charlotte Brower, Mayor, North Slope Borough



What can we do to avoid these types of divisions among us? Looking to the past can provide the answer to our future. The Inupiat have eked out an existence in some of the most inhospitable places on the earth. Our people's survival rested on mutual cooperation to overcome whatever challenges Mother Nature could throw our way. As a testament to this legacy, our Elders passed down to each generation

a set of core values that were essential for our people's survival and are still relevant today, such as respect for others, cooperation, and avoidance of conflict.

Bill Walker, Governor, State of Alaska



When I hear the mayors of the North Slope Borough and the Northwest Arctic Borough talk about their region, talk about the villages, the purest form of government is the local government because it's close to the people . . . How will their input be heard? I don't believe in making a decision and then tell the local people impacted you have three minutes to testify. That's the wrong way of doing business. You start at the table.

When we look at the cost of energy, gas is below two dollars in the Lower 48. How does that help the villages who fill up their tanks one time a year, at whatever the price happens to be at that moment in time when the barge comes in?

Byron Mallott, Lieutenant Governor, State of Alaska



This is a historical moment. The ability of the AFN to attract to Kotzebue the kind of public policy strength that your organization has been able to do is a historical moment.

We are the ultimate bellwether of Alaska's future. You cannot build a good society and destroy people and their lives. And we are dedicated to building a good society in which every Alaskan has the opportunity to prosper. Everything that we are engaged in as Alaskans, in my judgment, in the determination of history, will be made on that single point: that Alaska's Native people survive and prosper.

Crawford Patkotak, Chairman, ASRC



The grandeur of Alaska is not only defined by its environment, but also by the stewardship of its residents.

ANCSA corporations are unlike other national corporations. The congressional mandate put upon our corporations to provide economic benefits to Alaska's most disadvantage population – while working to protect and perpetuate our cultural traditional practices – is a mandate that we take seriously. However, it seems agencies in our federal government have overlooked their obligations under ANCSA. Just because ANCSA was signed more than 40 years ago does not make it any less binding.

I am not here to throw down the gauntlet, but to reach out to you [Secretary Jewell] and your staff to find ways to work together. To find areas of alignment. To work as neighbors with each other. There are three land owners: the federal government, the State of Alaska, and Alaska Native corporations. We must work together to find alignment issues that impact those that live on the North Slope.

Victor Joseph, President, Tanana Chiefs Conference



We know of the salmon crashing on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. That food source has not been very reliable for a very long time because it has not had that co-management discussion. Tribes need to be in that discussion, too.

Tribes need to get together and talk because we're not in agreement and there is divide, especially when it comes to ANWR. As many of you know sitting here, Tanana Chiefs has always opposed any development in ANWR and we do today. So with that, we recognize and thank the Secretary and the President for making their recommendation.

Our people depend on the caribou from those birthing grounds. We talked about responsible development. Responsible development to us does not take away our ability to provide a subsistence way of life.

Whether we agree or disagree, we're family.

Sally Jewell, U.S. Secretary of the Interior



One of the signature commitments on the part of this administration has been to work more closely with indigenous people of this country. The president has made that very clear and I hope I have as well. Our guiding principle is tribal self-determination and self-governance.

I feel like I have been charged with being in the forever business. I know that as I listen to many of you as you talk about being on these lands since time immemorial, about being stewards of these lands as the Alaska Native people have been since time immemorial. The federal lands under our jurisdiction are also lands that I am asked to look at for the long term, not just the short term. And that is something that is expected of me by the American people. That means taking a balanced view to the development of resources and it doesn't always put us on the same page. It means diversifying our energy portfolio and supporting renewable energy.

Tanana Chiefs Conference Victor [Joseph] and Jerry [Isaac] talked to me about the YK Delta and Interior and the importance of subsistence and what's happening with the fish there and asked that we consider co-management with the Fish & Wildlife Service. I'm pleased to say that is something we're pursuing as a pilot on the Kuskokwim River and we will continue to work closely to see what we can do together to partner with you.

Sheri Buretta, Chairman, Chugach Alaska Corporation



Powerful organizations in Washington, D.C. can impact our lives. . . Our voices are quiet and small, but they're equally important because we live here. It's a balance.

In addition to our ability to create economic opportunity and continue our way of life, programs including the 8(a) program are extremely important to us, and they are being taken away and stripped just as our opportunities to develop our lands are.

Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senator

I think what I find most encouraging, is to look out into the room and see all the young people, that next generation of leadership.



What happens when you overlay all of the federal ownership across the map of Alaska? What happens when you overlay the withdrawals on the map of Alaska? What happens when you take off the table the opportunity for development, even access. What happens to your homeland, our future? The colors just kind of pop at you because you look at it and you say, "How do you access your lands? And if you can't access your lands, how do you live here as a people?"

Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senator



The economic and social issues are interconnected and I think so often that gets overlooked when we're debating access to lands or oil and gas responsible resource development.

We need more meaningful consultations. ANILCA itself has dozens of provisions that require meaningful consultation with Alaskans.

Don Young, U.S. Representative

You don't know how painful it is for me to sit and listen. But I've done well. And I've learned a little. I think the theme for this retreat is 'consultation that's real.' We talk about balance and we need the right balance for resource development.



I think it would do you all well to go back and read the Alaska Native Claims [Settlement] Act. The land that you were guaranteed for your social and economic well-being. It says that specifically in that Act.

Kevin Meyer, President, State Senate



Yesterday when I met with Secretary Jewell, I said, 'You can learn a lot from this AFN meeting by just listening. Watch how we work. We listen to each other before decisions are made.'

Mike Chenault, Speaker, State House

Representative Bryce Edgmon has introduced a couple of resolutions, HCR 1/HJR3, and those both deal with accountability and greater jurisdiction for local tribes. Both have been referred to the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee and I look forward to the dialogue. I don't know what's going to come out of it, but I think we should have that conversation.



Greg Razo, Vice President, CIRI



Part of the answer in solving our budget crises is to utilize the institutions we have built for over 40 years, especially the tribal institutions. By partnering with the tribes and the Native corporations and utilizing what we've already built, we can help save this state some money and we can empower our people. We can work together with the governor and the legislature. Come up with some answers. Not build new things but strengthen what we have.

Wayne Westlake, President, NANA Regional Corporation



When we say that subsistence is the cornerstone of our economy, we are not overstating it. Subsistence food accounts for 80% or more of the annual rural diet. When we talk about 'food security,' it is not merely conceptual or academic. We're talking about the ability to feed our families.

The world needs the Inuit to help guide the successful navigation of an opening Arctic.

Myron Naneng, Co-Chair, AFN Subsistence Committee

Our people depend on the land, the waters, the seas, the lakes and the air to harvest their food. Last week a couple of young men in my office were saying, "Well, I'm going to go pick out my economy off the land." Meaning that they're going to go hunting for meat so they can have that meat for the rest of the spring and they wouldn't have to go to a grocery store. That's an economy.



[In] the Yukon-Canada treaty, the Canadians are supposed to have an allocation of escapement of 45-47,000 [salmon]. Our people that live on the river system have no allocation for Chinook salmon. The State of Alaska really needs to work hard in making sure our people on the river systems are involved in the fisheries management. That's what we're pushing for. That's why the announcement in October by [DOI Assistant Secretary Mike Conner] stated that there's going to be a demonstration project on the Kuskokwim River. Our people are working with the tribes in the villages to pursue the Kuskokwim Inter-tribal Fish Commission.

Melanie Bahnke, President, Kawerak



Our challenge is to move beyond consultation and work toward active cooperation. We work the systems—we abide by policies; we challenge the decisions that are made; we provide testimony; we submit written comments—because we know we are citizens of the State of Alaska and the United States of America. However, until we are fully engaged, not just consulted with, but engaged, we are . . . denied the right to fully participate in the decisions that affect our survival as a people.

Jim Stotts, President, ICC-Alaska

The Inuit Circumpolar Council believes in sustainable development, sustainable environment, and sustainable culture. Without sustainable culture, the other two will not work for us. As the first people of the Arctic, we have the right and the responsibility to protect our culture and environment. We accept this responsibility on behalf of all mankind.



Timothy Schuerch, President, Maniilaq



Medicaid expansion will mean about two to three million dollars recurring just in our region alone to support health and social service programs. Heaven knows, we need those resources. Our people have needs. Our people are hurting out there in the villages.

The sports hunters are spooking the lead caribou and those that follow into new migration routes far from the villages. Native hunters can't afford the extra fuel to get to these new routes. The federal government by itself cannot solve this problem. The state government by itself cannot solve this problem. Our tribes, all by ourselves, cannot solve this problem. Only by working together in a co-management basis with our tribes. We've got to do something to protect this unique beautiful subsistence resource, our Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

Georgianna Lincoln, former State Senator, Board Member, Doyon Limited



Historically, each of our villages managed its own affairs, including issues of public safety, access to justice. After statehood Alaska strongly centralized the administration and the laws and policies that support this model, which failed to adequately address the needs of our villages our people, which leaves most of our villages lacking regular access to police, courts and related resources. A recent report noted that at least 75 of our villages have no law enforcement, leaving our villages in terrible social distress at times.

Tribal self-government has proven to be one of the most successful policies enacted for Native people. It allows tribal governments and tribal organizations to assume responsibility for and management of programs, services, functions and activities at the local level. [It is] very important that we don't need others to do for us or to us. We know what is best in our village and how to deliver those services. Deputizing tribes to carry out law enforcement services; transferring jurisdiction to tribal courts for traditional dispute resolution; adopting new laws and policies of difference to tribal governments and Native villages.

Valarie Davidson, Commissioner, Health & Human Services, State of Alaska



It's really, really important that we have diverse advocacy on [Medicaid expansion]. Because if the health people are the only ones advocating for it, we're not going to get where we need to be. We need the legislature on board. We need the for-profit business leaders, we need the tribal leaders, we need non-profit leaders. We need everybody saying 'this is an investment in Alaska we have to make.'

Craig Fleener, Senior Arctic Official, State of Alaska



If you go to almost every community in Alaska, most of them would say that probably 70% of their subsistence needs are being met. If you throw the high cost of energy on top of that where they're debating whether or not they can buy fuel to go hunt or fuel to go trapping or the fuel necessary to keep their houses warm. All of those things factor into food security.

Gary Folger, Commissioner, Public Safety, State of Alaska

A quote from Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." And I know that we're good people and we can do anything.



Ana Hoffman, AFN Co-Chair



We would like to extend an invitation to President Obama to come out and visit rural Alaska.

Talking Circle Highlights

"We've opened some doors for communication to occur where we can have very meaningful discussion. Hopefully people will understand that in speaking with the Alaska Native community, they're not just checking off a box."



"Pick the salmonberry while it's ripe."

"We are one. We are Native. This is our time. We have ears listening in DC, in Juneau. The ears are listening, what are we going to do about it? We need to take that ball and run. They're not going to do it for us. We are strong people and I know we can do this."

"You can not tell your history in the five minutes you have when you sit down with somebody, lobbying back and forth. At the end of the day it's relationships because you can't capture everything in a comment, not everybody's going to read the comment. But you keep going back and you keep talking to people and you build a community."

"We're all family."

"Remarkable change in our lifetimes, where we had literally nothing to say about anything that affected our lives. And a lot of things are being done to our land and our people. It's about power and control. Don't kid yourself. We're still in that phase, of trying to keep control of our lives and our space. I'm happy to see that this younger generation is putting in the same dedication and spirit and energy and time into what it takes to have our people enjoy the fruits of our own land, maintain our culture and our livelihood. It's been a long hard battle on so many fronts. We have the capacity and the intelligence to do virtually anything we want to do and it's taken a long time to reach that point."

"All of you are men and women of service. Some of you have been answering the call for 50 years and I thank you for that. Some of you are brand new at it and you will be answering the call for a long time to come. I hope that we can teach our children that we have this duty. To be of service. To be of action. The time is now to be of action."

"We're at an important time in our history. The door is open. When times get really tough that means you have the opportunity to come up with new ideas. And we have lots of great, new ideas that we've been trying to push through that door for so long. It's going to take some fighting and we've just begun to fight. Hard times make for important changes, even though there's not enough oil money. That's okay. We've been doing this for a long time as Native people."

"We are breaking a tight circle and allowing all in. We are all one people. We need to work together across our different organizations to make things better for all people, not let anyone pit us against each other."

"The end of an era of confrontation and isolation."





[The following was edited for conciseness and clarity for this summary report.]

There is a lot of interest in our state from many in Washington, D.C. and rightly so. We live in the most beautiful and resource rich state in the nation. The grandeur of Alaska is not only defined by the environment but by the stewardship of its residents. No one has a greater interest in protecting our natural beauty than Alaskans. Sometimes outsiders fail to appropriate deference to that notion but it is true. The presence of many prominent Alaskan leaders assembled here illustrates a simple fact that we care about our state and the future it holds for many generations to come.

The Inupiat call arctic Alaska home. We don't just talk the talk about the Arctic. We live it. The Arctic is our life. It is who we are and it is what defines us. We thrived in the Arctic in the past, we flourish in the Arctic present and we will lead and prosper in the Arctic future. We have a right and an obligation to support and defend it.

When we look at the role of the whaling captain of old, the whaling captain has a long traditional history of providing leadership throughout the arctic region. Whaling captains along with their wives recognized the importance and the need for harvesting the bowhead whale: to sustain the local community and the region, and to provide for the nutritional, cultural, spiritual and economic needs of neighboring communities through sharing, trade and commerce. As whaling captains we have adapted to the changing social economic conditions of the Inupiat people and have adapted to technological improvements throughout the years. It is through the use of advanced equipment – many of which use petroleum based products – that allows the efficient harvest of the bowhead whale. In more recent history, when there was an attack on our cultural

bowhead whale harvest, the whaling captains supported the need to sustain self-determination and to strengthen the rights of aboriginal Inupiat people. They played an important role in recognizing the need to keep the balance of our cultural subsistence hunting and responsible resource development, both of which support the long-term sustainability of our communities. This role of responsibility has not changed today and we as whaling captains take this responsibility very seriously.

When faced with challenging statewide or federal issues, organizations like AFN need to bring Alaskans together and draw from the strength, leadership, credibility and resolve from each region as it is doing today. It is with that same strength and resolve that I stand before you as a representative from the Arctic Slope Region, committed to working issues that affect all Alaskans.

Secretary Jewell, your staff has been briefed on our positions about the Arctic. We don't need to restate our concerns here. I did not come to this region to argue with the Secretary about development. However, with one stroke of your pen, Madam Secretary, you can change the lives of our people for the better or for worse. I stand before you today asking for you to be our partner and improving the lives of Alaska Natives.

Within this administration many federal officials subscribe to the philosophy of divide and conquer, listening to only a few of our own people on their extreme views, to advance the agenda of environmentalists and animal rights groups. We as a people see through this and we will work together with resolve because the mission of the local governments, Alaska Native corporations and the tribes are the same: self-determination. Their one-minded view – dismissing the relevance of one group over the other – is short sided and is a disservice to all Alaska Natives and all Alaskans.

In our region there have been countless examples where our local governments, tribal organizations and Alaska Native corporations have worked together to achieve our common goal of self-determination.

ASRC's mission is to actively manage our businesses, our lands and resources, our investments and our relationships to enhance Inupiat cultural and economic freedom with continuity, responsibility and integrity. It is important to remember how the Alaska Native corporations were established. We were created by an act in Congress to settle the long overdue aboriginal land claims. These claims



were based on land use and occupancy, family and kinship, trade and commerce. It was the largest land settlement in our country's history, intended to stimulate economic development across this great state. ANCSA corporations are unlike other national corporations. The congressional mandates put upon our corporations to provide economic benefits to Alaska's most disadvantaged population, while working to protect and perpetuate our cultural traditional practices, is a mandate that we take seriously.

However, it seems agencies in our federal government have overlooked their obligations under ANCSA. Just because ANCSA was signed more than 40 years ago does not make it any less binding. Therefore when imposing federal policies on Alaska Natives it is important to recognize that in addition to government to government relationship the United States has with our tribal entities, it also has statutory and executive order obligations to Alaska Native corporations.

ASRC stands ready to partner with you, your department and the federal government to fulfill our congressional mandate to provide long-term sustainable benefits to our people. Safe responsible oil and gas development is the only industry that has remained long enough to foster improvements to our remote communities, infrastructure for oil development and transport, has provided a tax space for our governments. Whale activities have created opportunities for ASRC and other Alaska Native

corporations to provide a variety of services to the industry.

We are a busy people with long term goals and it is our continued desire to fulfill the rights that were provided to us through ANCSA. We have an oil pipeline to fill, a gas pipeline to build and the OCS to develop. It is through realizing these goals that we will be able to continue the long term economic

sustainability of our communities.

We've already stated our concerns about the Department of Interior's recommendation to designate the coastal plain of ANWR as wilderness and you know we will fight you in Congress on this designation. However I am not here to throw down the gauntlet but instead to reach out to you and your staff and find ways to work together, find areas of alignment, to work as neighbors with each other. There are three land owners of the North Slope: federal government, State of Alaska and Alaska Native corporations. We must work together to find an alignment on issues that impact those that live on the North Slope. This approach is what ASRC aims to accomplish. Decisions in Washington are being made that have material impacts to our communities with real families and real lives. Often times these decisions are made without consultation or our consent.

ANCSA set the stage for Native corporations to have partners in DC. However lately it seems at every turn the federal government is putting up regulatory hurdles, which have negative impacts on the viability, [and] opposing projects. I applaud our delegation, Senators Murkowski, Sullivan, Congressman Young. Thank you for taking up the fight on these issues. The others in this room also welcome the challenge: including Governor Walker, Mayor Brower and the North Slope Borough, Mayor Reggie Joule, the Alaska Legislature. I thank you as well. Our future is worth fighting for.

There has been some progress with the Department of Interior. For example, through meaningful discussions with the Department, ASRC has been able to resolve and mediate differences in the proposed Greater Moose's Tooth project by Conoco Phillips Alaska. GMT1 will develop ASRC resources conveyed to our corporation under ANCSA in the northeast corner of the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska. Just last Friday we issued a positive record of decision for GMT1 and we are happy to say that after careful consideration your department got to the 'yes' result by selecting Alternative A as a preferred alternative. I want to personally thank you and we appreciate the efforts your department has taken to address our concerns on this very important project for all Alaska Native people. This is how a partnership should work. We still have a few details to work out with the BLM but in the spirit of collaboration we are certain we can bridge our differences on these issues as well.

It is important for me to stress that we would like more of these types of partnership

opportunities. Under the 7(i) share provisions of ANCSA, this project will continue to benefit all Alaska Native corporations, as ASRC has paid over \$1 billion in 7(i) distributions from natural resource development.

On the arctic Outer Continental Shelf, ASRC has been an advocate of having a seat at the table. Sometimes you have to improvise to get that seat. As an example, after the lease sales on the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, we quickly recognized our opportunities in the off-shore exploration and development and found a way to bring benefit to our people. Since OCS revenue shares does not exist in Alaska we proactively pursued a solution to ensure our people benefited.

We were not about to let this opportunity slip by; what did we do? We approached industry with a unique offer on alignment for an opportunity to invest. We also challenged oil companies to prove to us they can explore, develop and produce oil safely. Make no mistake, we will not allow activity that can negatively impact our people and villages who live our cultural lifestyle that has sustained us for generations. We took a lessons-learned approached from the land claims fight. We reminded the United States government that the land claims fight was not a welfare bill and that we were not looking for a handout. It was a mechanism for our people to be self-reliant and not government dependent. We are a hardworking people, a proud people who will not be denied.

We don't just talk the talk about the Arctic. We live it. The Arctic is our life. It is who we are and it is what defines us. We thrived in the Arctic in the past, we flourish in the Arctic present and we will lead and prosper in the Arctic future.



On the proposed OCS development we look for an opportunity to invest through years of negotiations. We have come together with six of our region's village corporations to form the Arctic Inupiat Offshore LLC for investment in Shell's leases in the proposed OCS development. I want

to recognize our President and CEO Mr. Rex Allen Rock, Sr., who's here with us today, for his leadership and vision on this great endeavor. We are finally in the position to not only have a say in how exploration development is conducted, but for the first time in our history we will share in the profits that can potentially bring long term benefits for generations to come and up until now were ready to bypass us. I call this a true thinking-out-of-the-box effort that literally gives us a seat at the table when discussions about Chukchi development are being made. Like our leaders before us who taught us to plan for the future and build something better for the next generation, we are fulfilling our part.

I'd like to quickly touch on an issue that some have conveniently tried to use as a political tool: our changing climate here in the Arctic – what some have called ground zero. Yes, we've seen that sea ice forms later in the winter, thaws earlier in the spring. We've taken notice of the open water season becoming measurably longer and it is getting warmer. Yet we are not victims of change and we will resist the urge to be labeled as such. Our culture as Inupiat is built around understanding the natural environment. We owe it to ourselves and our children to understand the changes that are occurring and adapt as we always have. The earth has cooled and warmed over millennia and some are using this natural cycle as a call to arms to save the planet at the expense of the Inupiat of the Arctic. This call to arms is a threat to present and the future of the Inupiat people. I believe the real risk to food security is not going to be resource development but a federal law regulation or rule that begins to systematically deny our right to practice our cultural and economic

freedoms as First Alaskans. We are truly the first conservationists. If given the full opportunity to manage our lands and waters for the benefit of our people we can realize our full potential. We have demonstrated [that] when opportunities are presented we seize them. In just a single generation we have adapted and are prospering in the corporate world, without sacrificing the cultural values that have sustained us for generations.

The Inupiat are the Arctic. For thousands of years we have responsibly used the resources in our lands and waters [that have] sustained us and our culture. It is in the use of these resources in years past and in present day that we have proven our resolve to be self-reliant and...financially independent. We are doing our best. We instill pride, ownership and responsibility to our people like our leaders before us. We will put our differences aside and we'll work together to overcome differences when faced with challenges. We will rise as one to protect our homeland and our future.



[The following was edited for conciseness and clarity for this summary report.] I look back here at [the AFN banner] 'Our Homeland, Our Future,' and looking at that picture I can see Rampart with the bluffs being right there and to me it was Rampart. I'm sure many of you here can look at the picture and say that could be my village, my community. It is our homeland, our future.

The United States has a unique and special political relationship with Alaska's 229 federally recognized tribe. That's a significant number of recognized tribes as a total of the United States tribes, which is 556 recognized tribes. We have 229 plus and I think that is absolutely significant.

Historically, each of our villages have managed our own affairs, including issues of public safety, access to justice. However that did change dramatically and swiftly with statehood. We, many of us in this room, can go back to that time of when we heard the discussion around statehood – whether we supported that or not – and what that would mean to us as Native people and our villages. After statehood Alaska strongly centralized the administration and the laws and policies that support this model, which failed to adequately address the needs of our villages, our people – eighty percent of our villages are Alaska Native – leaving our villages in terrible social distress at times; the distress begs for a cure, beginning with the transparent reexamination of the state's laws and policies that have allowed certain ills to languish for decades without meaningful address or treatment.

Today Alaska has over 200 villages. If it was superimposed over a map of the Lower 48, Alaska would stretch from California to Georgia up to North Dakota and back down to California again. That geographic area is so large and so are our issues. Our villages experience the highest rates of family violence, suicide and alcohol abuse in the whole United States. The domestic violence rate: ten times the national average; physical assaults on women: twelve times the national average; suicide rates are almost four times the national average and, most

disturbing, rape in our villages occurs at the highest rate of any in our nation: three times the national average, meaning one in every two of our Native women will report being a victim of rape in their lifetime. These rates are unacceptable and so are

the factors that contribute to these rapes. One such factor is Alaska's strongly centralized administration, which leaves most of our villages lacking regular access to police, courts and related resources. A recent report noted that at least 75 of our villages have no law

enforcement at all. The state's four judicial districts routinely assign magistrates to travel to the rural circuits, meaning rural residents have almost no interaction with the state's court system beyond the magistrate level.

While I was in the legislature for 14 years I heard this statement over and over and over again. When I'd raise the issues in our villages a particular senator who is still there today got up on the floor after I spoke and said, "What is the solution to that, Georgianna? Just move." I've heard that over and over again. You don't like to pay the price for a gallon of milk? Just move. You don't like the education in your community? Just move. You don't like the unemployment? Just move. That is not a solution, nor should we accept that as a solution. We need to be very vocal.

I said to Natasha [Singh, TCC General Counsel] when she gave me these figures, "Natasha, I want to say it even though it hurts us to hear some of these statistics. We need to hear this because we need to act on solutions to these statistics." Alaska Native children constitute 17.3% of Alaska state child population, but Alaska Native children are 50.1% of reports of child maltreatment in the state. 51% in all out-of-home placements. A staggering 62% [in foster homes] are Native. This means that Alaska Native children are represented in foster care at a rate three times greater than the general population and this rate has been increasing over the years. We cannot have this.



We can talk about resource development. We can talk about economic development, but we need to turn these statistics around. Those are our future leaders. These are our future leaders that are sitting here today listening to us. These are the ones we should listen to as well for some of the solutions.

Tribal self-government has proven to be one of the most successful policies enacted for Native people. It allows tribal governments and tribal organizations to assume responsibility for and management of programs, services, functions and activities at the local level. We don't need others to do for us or to us. We know what is best in our village and how to deliver those services; so therefore let us have the responsibility and management for those programs for our own people.

Remarkable gains have been made in urban Alaska, including the Alaska Native Medical Center, but these gains have largely bypassed our villages, particularly in the areas of public safety and access to justice.

Alaska Native tribal governments and Native organizations have demonstrated capacity to administer federal programs through compacting and contracting and now is an opportune time to explore similar models with the state government, beginning with select demonstration projects. I think we heard from our new administration how they're willing to work with us. Let us help them to help us accomplish these demonstration projects, accomplish self-governance at the local level. But I want to say also that when we negotiate, when we talk about taking on our own programs, that any transfer in this authority must include a transfer of the financial resources. Not just go ahead and do it, let the Native corporations pay

for it. Let those resources follow the programs that the state currently expends to operate like programs. But unlike the state government, Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations can leverage and do leverage funds to provide a greater array of services.

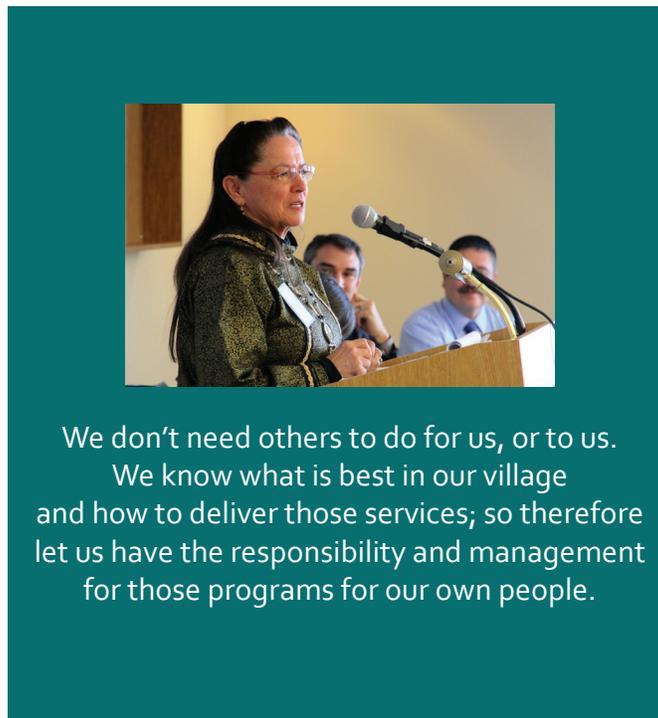
I don't want just consultation. I want consultation resulting in tribes taking over those programs. Not just 'yes we sat and listened to you.' That's not consultation in my vocabulary. Deputizing tribes to carry out law enforcement services; transferring jurisdiction to tribal courts for traditional dispute resolution – easy one to do; adopting new laws and policies of difference to tribal governments and Native villages. As Alaskans we need to do everything we can to protect our villages, everything we can to protect our young, everything we can to ensure our youth will be sitting at these tables.

The Commission on Rural Governance and Empowerment was a tremendously important report

that was a call to action. It was given in the later part of 2014 and I quote: "The 2013 reconvening continued the original commission's call for meaningful and innovative partnerships between tribes, states and municipal governments. It's a crucial goal that cannot be realized unless the State of Alaska eliminates existing constraints to a full and formal relationship with the tribal governments." We have to hold the state's feet to fire on this one.

I know that the governor and the lieutenant governor, their hearts

are there; their willingness to proceed, to see this through, is there. But they're dealing with a one-party senate and house that I hope I'm proven wrong, but I don't believe that the Senate and the House chambers are going to let the governor and lieutenant governor shine.



We don't need others to do for us, or to us. We know what is best in our village and how to deliver those services; so therefore let us have the responsibility and management for those programs for our own people.

The strategic action steps that were noted in that report said: 'clarify, amend and empower tribal jurisdiction in Indian country; develop natural resources to benefit local people; strengthen Native cultures. The key to overcoming the challenges faced by rural Alaskans.' The state system must work with and for Alaska Native cultures not against them. Expand the tribal contracting. Native communities must accelerate the production of their own leadership pool, not have somebody tell us what is best for us.

We heard about subsistence briefly and we toss out that word subsistence and we want to change it for "our life." But subsistence is our life. You heard that over and over and over again. Today subsistence is our life. It should be our top priority. The state should resolve the subsistence crises by adopting a constitutional amendment recognizing a rural subsistence priority that meets the requirement of ANILCA. I remember my mother telling me that in Rampart on the Yukon River when, as a young woman growing up in the late 30's early 40's, the caribou herd would run for days, she'd say, just above Rampart and that you could almost walk on the backs of the caribou to get from one side to the other of the Yukon river. In my life I have not seen a caribou in my region. Now my kids last summer said, "Mom, how come you're not sending us salmon strips?" There was no salmon to be caught — or I shouldn't say it that way — we had restrictions where we couldn't put in a net for king salmon. First time in my life.

Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell spoke of "relying on scientific evidence in making decisions." I've heard that for years now. I'm sick of hearing that. Who are the best scientist for that area? We are. I can tell you how the fish migrated in my area; I can tell you the size of the fish if there was any difference. But nobody asked our people in our village because they had to hire somebody with a degree from the Lower 48 to tell us scientifically what was going on in the area, but knew nothing about us. We need to change that. We need to change where the scientists are us, from the region.

Moving forward, holding hands. Alaska Native people are moving forward. As Tim [Schuerch] said on an earlier panel, "We've been here forever." We as Alaska Native people are going to be here forever, forever, forever, through seven, eight, ten, another how many years, forever.

