



## 2007 Alaska Dialogue



*“Emerging Leadership in an  
Exceptional State”*

# Summary Report on the 2007 Alaska Dialogue

By Nils Andreassen, Coordinator

Three days of exhilarating discussion and debate marked this year's Alaska Dialogue: "*Emerging Leadership in an Exceptional State.*" This year's gathering built on the comments from participants from last year, as well as from others during preliminary brainstorming meetings this year. All called for greater inclusion of young leaders and minority groups. Taking into account the themes that resonated with young people, we tried to capture past enthusiasm while addressing the leadership challenge facing the state.



We wanted to create a platform where emerging leaders could “walk with” past leaders – men and women who participated in the Constitutional Convention, in the first years of the State legislature, in ANCSA, the oil pipeline construction and the post-pipeline era. In this, we wanted to engage young leaders in past achievements through the stories of battles that past Alaskans have fought for and won.

The degree to which our approach was successful was evident. The generation gap between attendees was the most pronounced of differences, yet we heard from past attendees and leaders of their gratitude to have the opportunity to meet over 50 emerging leaders from throughout the state. Someone referred to this as a gift, representative of the hope for a future that previous generations had worked for so long to secure. The young people were just as enthusiastic, with many expressing awe at being included in the same room and at the same table as an older generation that had literally created the Alaska we know.

During the weekend, we addressed issues of statesmanship, energy, and diversity, hearing from panelists and engaging emerging leaders in some issues that were new to them. We heard strong, yet balanced, views from people with generally diverse, and often powerful, messages.

Prior to the Dialogue, we learned that the energy issue was not high on the list of priorities that interested younger participants. Therefore one of the goals of the organizers was to introduce this issue in a way that the next generation could see its relevance. Energy, both its production and consumption, is at the heart of Alaska. The production of North Slope oil fills the state's coffers with much-needed revenue. At the same time, with the high price of electricity and diesel fuel, consumption in rural Alaska is punishing communities, driving many rural residents

to move to urban centers. A number of today's leaders encouraged the next generation to take the energy issue and do something innovative with it.

From the perspective of statesmanship, spoken to by many, we focused on the idea of putting Alaska first. This is rooted in Alaska being an "Owner State," where our state resources are owned by the people, with the revenue from those resources helping our people and communities. Alaskans, as statesmen, need to think through how to translate that wealth into the wealth of all, transcending politics, partisanship and special interests. Leadership in Alaska is defined by those individuals who rise to challenges, recognize opportunity, and understand their responsibility to the people of Alaska.

The young people who attended identified diversity as one of their main interests. For emerging leaders, many of whom come from diverse backgrounds, it's time for Alaska to recognize the changing nature of the Alaska "we."

Alaska can build on the strengths found in diversity and work hard to better include the many minority peoples that live here and call themselves Alaskans. Many strong voices spoke to this issue, and the panelists who addressed this issue were commended for being some of the strongest and most articulate of the Dialogue.

The response was overwhelmingly in favor of continuing to broaden our attendance base to include younger leaders, and the Institute of the North has agreed to host an annual spring Dialogue on the theme of emerging leadership. Meanwhile the fall Dialogue in Talkeetna will maintain its tradition of addressing the many, changing issues facing Alaskans. In this, we will work to find the resources necessary to continue the more inclusive nature of this year's outstanding session.



*The following pages are a compilation of the ideas and convictions expressed during the Dialogue panels, sessions and breakout groups. Certainly not all of the participants agree with all of these conclusions, but they share the same sense of urgency.*

## *A Toast to Alaska*

In the opening session Friday evening, we featured a Toast to Alaska in which Alaska leaders were invited to speak to integrity, statehood, scholarship, development, challenges, respect and innovation. In all, their words were thoughtful, powerful, inspiring and even disturbing.

Our state is one of phenomenal leadership – leadership that goes back to the original inhabitants of Alaska. We have always responded dynamically to opportunities, as well as crises. Today we have our latest challenge, a crisis of integrity in our legislature. Again, this presents a unique opportunity for the emerging leaders. The elders told us, “If you lead with integrity, the future is yours. There is no reason to accept corruption, when we have so much to be grateful for and protect.

Our state is unique, and we face unique challenges. One of our greatest strengths is our Alaska Native peoples, an indigenous culture whose knowledge is needed by the rest of humanity. Alaska Natives live for a reason – to attain harmony. They do so through their humanity, this is their greatest challenge and their greatest strength. Yup’ik elder Harold Napoleon commented that the government has spent a lot of money to solve problems for Alaska Natives that only the people themselves can solve. Together we can work with Alaska Native tribes and corporations to bring rural regions up to the same social and political levels as the rest of the state.

Resource development defines much of Alaska. Our unique opportunity is to manage resources around our traditional subsistence way of life, with the goal addressing regional social issues. We guarantee this way of life by prioritizing the protection of resources and land, collaborating with partners, and working on Alaska hire and workforce development.

Our culture says that our humanity is demonstrated by respect. We show respect to our elders because to be good human beings we must learn from those before us. It is this respect that shapes our responsibilities when it comes to further development

As Alaskans we have a history of innovation. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline, the Permanent Fund Dividend, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act are all excellent examples. We have a future before us that requires us to live up to this heritage by filtering what we do through values of integrity, scholarship, humanity and respect, as well as remembering our fight for Statehood, our experience with development, and the challenges we have faced and overcome.

## *Connecting Alaska's Energy Resources with Alaska's People*

Energy is a critical issue to Alaskans – we have significant energy wealth and significant energy poverty. We need to be innovative and forward-thinking when considering strategies for any energy plan. It is necessary in Alaska to invest resources in the creation of new resources. We should use an integrated systems approach to consider the three components of rural energy: heating, transportation and electricity; and look at how to integrate this with other infrastructure.

Alaska needs a vision for the future, a future that extends more than ten or twenty years, so that we can plan now on how to get there. We have the most renewable resources of any state, for which there is considerable risk management involved. Oil and gas will not continue to be abundant, with worldwide demand for energy quadrupling by the end of the century. We face an uncertain future because of climate change. We should start thinking now about a carbon tax. Renewable resources can ensure stable energy prices over time; extractive sources will continue to fluctuate. Alaska must have a policy in place regarding renewables.

Our primary job as Alaskans is to connect resources to people. We are rich in energy resources; unfortunately, these resources aren't near communities. As an Arctic state, heat and light are not discretionary – we must have both to have sustainable communities. The current system relies on an abundance of oil and gas. While we can't influence the price of gas, we can influence the availability to the state. This isn't a problem that can be solved by a state agency alone. It must be addressed by Alaska's private, public, and Native organizations, all of whom need to think about public resources with an ownership role – as part of the Commons.

In urban areas there is little recognition, of what it takes to survive in rural Alaska. There is no context with which to view high unemployment, a high cost of living, and high rates of teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and suicide. Rural Alaskans are struggling as they confront numerous social challenges, even as they try to take advantage of opportunities seen in responsible resource development. The high costs of energy in rural Alaska should matter to all Alaskans.

The next generation has a different view of energy, focusing on issues of conservation and efficiency. We should be looking at how to reduce our impact on the environment, how our actions right now can have a great impact. As part of the larger picture, Alaska could be a global leader in how it views energy production and consumption.

Energy has been a priority for Alaskans for decades now, and after 30 years, nothing has changed – we have not succeeded in reducing the price of energy in rural Alaska nor increased the opportunity for natural gas production. There are projects across the state that could happen now. There needs to be economic stability for any project, but Alaskans need to plan now for the future, to work together, and to treat the high cost of energy in rural Alaska as an issue that affects us all.

## *Building a Community of Alaskans*

Alaska is composed of many communities that base their relationships and their decisions on communal rather than individual properties. We encourage a strong sense of community by talking to communities and celebrating their diversity. Indeed, there is a cultural competency that is required in a new Alaska, emphasizing cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as life experiences.

Alaska's first people, its Alaska Natives, retain their spirituality as human beings, making them what they are. It was expressed by rural Alaska Native attendees that poverty has become a resource in rural villages. We use poverty to qualify people for aid, dependent on poverty for homes, education, health and food. Alaska Natives must fix their problems, not rely upon government money. Using poverty as a resource must be addressed and changed. The inhabitants of rural Alaska should be the richest in the Union; instead they are the poorest. The state must change its attitude and posture against the Native people. Recognize Alaska Natives as such and not as "rural" - integrate Alaska Natives into the rest of the state and work with us to empower us. Let Alaska Natives end domestic abuse, substance abuse, suicide and unemployment. Engage Alaska Natives rather than ignoring them. The state has nothing to fear from its native people – "we will never fight the state, we own the state."

Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the nation, with a population of around 30,000 in Alaska. Poverty, crime, and low education are characteristic of Hispanic communities in the US. This is not so in Alaska. Here more and more Hispanics are working hard to become Alaskans, learn English, make education a priority, and participate in public policy decisions. Alaska should embrace this culture, dispel the negative stereotypes that come up from Outside. We can do this by creating mentorship and scholarship programs for young minorities, actively seeking and involving minority leadership in civil government, and helping to create a positive environment for small business development.

Diversity doesn't always feel comfortable and it doesn't equal a lack of productivity. As individuals and as a community we can bring productive discomfort into our lives as an effective growth mechanism. We must add change and color to our lives if we want diversity to have an impact on our future. Alaska has to make room for the new faces and thoughts at the table and it will take courageous leaders and concerned citizens to recreate our sense of an Alaska identity.

Many minorities that live here today are second and third generation. They are Alaskans who have grown up here, have raised their parents here, and have worked hard to maintain their identity and connection to a home country that many have only heard about. There is a great deal of intergenerational conflict between parents and children because parents are confused about the system and the children are busy assimilating. Because of this, many emerging leaders from minority backgrounds have great leadership potential. They see their future in Alaska and their culture as an asset to Alaskans.

In Anchorage we see every day that strength lies in diversity. We see a school district that constantly reinvents itself to welcome new children and new minorities. It is also a school district that is constantly confronted with managing social issues. Here, the challenge is partnering with the community, reaching out early and working with the community to find the right fit for the child.

“Public” leadership is leadership imposed on minority groups in Alaska. To gain the respect and the trust that we all need Alaskans must demonstrate a cultural competency – know how relationships are formed, engaged, broken and healed in their communities. There is a lot to be said for knowing enough about a community that you can state your intentions and avoid a breach. You must prove your authenticity, represent a community’s interests, exhibit mainstream validity, and “come back home” – allow the public’s ideas and concerns to be raised before other public leaders.

### *Platform for the Future—Hearing from Emerging leaders*

“We, the younger generation, don’t need you, the leaders of today and yesterday, to move out of the way. We need you to scoot over so we can walk with you.”

“This is an extraordinary opportunity, and I hope that this emerging leader concept continues into the future.”

“We should continually re-examine what we discussed here to build into future Dialogues.”

“The action items identified here truly demonstrate the importance of grassroots efforts.”

“We should shorten the time between emerging leader gatherings.”

“This weekend has been very beneficial because of the networking opportunities.”

“I am humbled by the passion that is in this room and the drive to succeed.”

“Listening is essential to understanding your community’s needs, to serving your community, and to becoming a leader.”

*Platform for the Future, cont.*

“New leaders of today need to go to rural Alaska to learn of rural needs.”

“Disagreements can be barriers to relationships; we need to bury the hatchet.”

“I’ve witnessed bribery and corruption, good ideas ignored, bad ideas applauded; I live in a state with substantial substance abuse and suicide problems, and I don’t see anyone coming up with lasting solutions.”

“To fellow emerging leaders – step up and work with existing leaders, but don’t be afraid to step over if that leader does not uphold principles.”

“We must build on the representation that we see here, finding new and better ways to support inclusion.”

“I have been rejuvenated and reminded of the leadership skills that I have been taught; I need to remain aware of the pressing issues the state faces and my role.”

“All leaders are human. At first I was timid, but I realized that this is my country and this is my state.”

“From the past and existing leaders that we have learned from, I have gained this: do things for the greater good, speak my mind, believe in a vision, find something I’m passionate about, own up to my mistakes, see the state as a whole, call things like I see them, know when to say “bullshit” and respect the humanity of others.”

“Resources belong to current and future Alaskans. We need to move that wealth into infrastructure, health care, education and an energy plan.”

“Leadership is a long journey, but the Dialogue is one of the opportunities along the way.”

“We have allies.”



Remarks from Governor Sarah Palin

Governor Sarah Palin, the first sitting Governor to join us for a Dialogue, was able to listen to some of the comments that emerging leaders made regarding the future. Later, she was introduced and acknowledged for her passion to herald in change, as well as her willingness to work with leaders as mentors. Governor Palin shared with us her desire for positive solutions to the issues facing the state. She spoke briefly about the natural gas pipeline and was adamant about the need for leadership with integrity and a collaborative effort; for this Alaskans will have to put partisanship aside and work hard to succeed. Governor Palin expressed that we cannot take our oil resources for granted; therefore we must take care of business without procrastination. She concluded by asserting that Alaskans deserve to have confidence in the system and we need to approach the coming months with enthusiasm and optimism.



<b>Goal: Affordable energy with long-diversified energy economy that ensures Alaska</b>			
		<b>Grassroots/Community Level</b>	<b>Middle Ground/Regional Coordination</b>
<b>START</b>  <b>Short Term</b> <b>(w/in next year)</b>		Energy education in the schools  Promote energy awareness within the businesses and institutions (energy efficiency)  Identify and quantify local needs and potential energy resources to meet those needs  Identify potential funding sources for community energy projects	Identify existing and develop new energy projects in regions across the state  Encourage local residents to participate in energy planning and establishing regional energy plans  Create or improve maps of energy resources at the regional level
<b>Medium Term</b> <b>(1-5 years out)</b>		Involve local students and community members in community energy planning in a meaningful way (data collection and analysis)	Regional groups present their energy plans to the state Energy Czar (resulting in final plans and continual re-evaluation of state energy policy)  Energy Czar coordinates collaboration between regions to produce economies of scale and the development of energy projects  Establish regional campuses/training facilities (Alaska Center for Energy & Power) to compliment the regional energy plan
<b>OUTCOME</b>  <b>Long Term</b> <b>(50 year plan)</b>		Communities will have energy self sufficiency and sustainable local economies	Regional self sufficiency across the state

\* State Energy Czar is a cabinet level commissioner overseeing the long state energy policy

\*\* Examples:

- Establish incentives for energy efficiency and conservation
- Revisit Alaska Energy Authority mission and role in Alaska energy future
- Assess current electrical generation, transmission, and distribution along the railbelt to identify opportunities for improvement
- Reevaluate state energy subsidies

<b>Term price stability for all Alaskans and a          Alaska remains an energy exporting state into the future</b>	
<b>Energy &amp; Planning</b>	<b>Top Down/State Level</b>
Energy champions  Role in creating  Resources at the	<p>Governor Appoints A Statewide Energy Czar *</p> <p>Establish and aggressively fund a sustainable (renewable?) energy grant/loan fund policy to spur the development of economically viable projects</p> <p>Create, establish, and begin to implement a comprehensive statewide energy plan which includes 'thinking outside the box' (a collaborative effort between existing &amp; emerging energy professionals, learning from the past so we can move more effectively into the future) **</p>
Plans to the (including and plan)  amongst and of scale for  facilities that	<p>Establish key demonstration projects across the state using emerging and innovative technologies</p> <p>Establish a statewide energy education institute that builds a bridge between industry and the university system (Alaska Center for Energy &amp; Power)</p>
State	<p>Established pool of energy talent which can be exported</p> <p>Alaska's stranded energy resources are developed resulting in new industry and value added exports</p>

and planning

Identify inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement

## **Summation of responses from evaluation forms:**

### *Creative Ideas that Caught People's Passion*

This was a great forum for Alaskans to get together and discuss the future of Alaska. Alaskans are at a critical juncture, and must strongly evaluate the steps that should be taken in the next few years as they are critical for the future of the state.

Many people were excited to see the quality of the strength and the conviction that emerging leaders evinced. Perhaps the greatest value of the Dialogue was in the opportunity to meet a variety of leaders from different fields and different parts of the state. These people can be our “go to” folks in the future. In this, we need collaboration between all groups to open up and build leadership opportunities as we prepare future leaders. This Dialogue set the stage to continue involving emerging leaders.

People were concerned with how Alaska was prepared in light of changes coming in the Arctic. They thought that opening a dialogue about the need for a northern sea route would be useful when considering the economic impact to Alaska. In general, attendees wanted to better understand Alaska's role in developing the Arctic.

Energy turned out to be a very important topic, and it soon became apparent that it should matter to the young as well as the old. This was the first time that many emerging leaders had had a chance to engage with the energy issue, and many came away with a profound and new understanding of what energy means to Alaskans. There was a sense of urgency and competency around renewable energy that many young people could grasp. Someone also suggested that there should be greater private investment in renewables. Attendees came away with an increased understanding of the value of and opportunity for renewable energy in rural Alaska.

At the same time, there was a lot of discussion around how better to support rural Alaska's energy needs, perhaps by supporting infrastructure development. The idea was floated, as it was in last year's Dialogue, that Alaska needs an energy czar, someone who could make things happen in the state. The breakout group who looked at how to reduce the costs of energy came up with an energy matrix that is included in this document. They drafted and gave a letter to Governor Palin regarding what they deemed the priorities for energy in Alaska.

With politics in shambles in Juneau, participants spoke strongly about seizing the opportunity to create a new and fair political process. Many people would like to reclaim our Alaskan government and have our state run by statesmen rather than loyal party politicians. People were interested in non-partisan elections and in an open process in Juneau. At the Dialogue, political reform actually seemed possible, particularly when there were people in the room who helped shape the state – constitutionally, legislatively, and through its public policy decisions.

The Institute of the North is proud of the Dialogue's Alaska First heritage, and newcomers who had never heard the term were impressed with how people from so many different backgrounds could come together and fight for Alaska before all else. Those who had not heard of Governor Hickel's Owner State concept were intrigued by the idea. For young people, to discover that they actually own Alaska is a captivating idea. This was also a chance for people to explore the concept that the best and brightest need not always agree, and that risk is necessary for success. In an open forum such as the Dialogue, conflict is inevitable, but opportunity is easily captured when the goal is the same – a better Alaska.

Diversity was one of the themes of the weekend, and people came away thinking about diversity in new ways. Diversity in leadership is not only about the color of our skin or our ethnicity, but is also about diversifying thought. We also had a chance to see the "Anchorage is Our Town" video, and people were interested in getting it seen by all Alaskans. When addressing diversity, the idea of "productive discomfort" came up. People noted that change can be uncomfortable, and that we need to embrace it if Alaska is to benefit from our citizens of all backgrounds.

Many came away feeling that there was much more they could do in their daily lives to be involved in the issues affecting the state. The breakout group who looked at diversity came up with a diverse leadership cycle diagram that we have included here.

Everyone recognized the value of mentoring new leaders. There was a drive towards the end of the weekend to form a mentor program, with people signing up as mentors and mentees, each with an accountability partner who will make sure they follow through with getting a mentor or a mentee. People would like to see a statewide leadership network that would have a positive impact on everyone. This fledgling Leadership Alaska should have a central website that past, current, and emerging leaders can access.

For the future, attendees were thrilled with the idea of a spring Dialogue. They felt this was a necessary way of capturing the energy around emerging leadership. Ideas *are* more important than money, and it is time to stop talking about change and start doing something.

**Participants filled out an evaluation form that included the question:**

The most surprising lesson for me was...

- Most emerging leaders felt the same way as I did;
- There are multiple opportunities if we go in the right direction now, and a dismal future if we don't;
- Many emerging leaders in Alaska are from racial and ethnic minority populations;
- The willingness of current leaders to reach out to young people. Sometimes we can be very intimidated by their experience, knowledge and status. Found out they want to help as much as we want to learn and that communication is the key;

- The fact that many people from Anchorage and the other urban centers had such a large disconnect with the very real crisis going on in rural communities. They all knew that it was bad out there, but upon learning about the actual costs of fuel and food, they were taken aback;
- How remote Alaska has to deal with energy costs and how the government, private sector and public sector have a growing social service problem in rural Alaska;
- The many female leaders in rural Alaska. By the end of the weekend, I was actually wondering - where are the men?;
- Common ground is so easy to find;
- The reality of life in Juneau, and a glimpse at what goes on behind closed doors;
- The realities of the legislative process related to the shenanigans and punishment of partisanship, as well as the payment structure in Juneau;
- The disparity in basic goods and services in rural/remote communities;
- Alternative energy ideas;
- The cost of energy in rural Alaska blew me away. I knew that energy was expensive, but the costs relayed to us at the Dialogue are obviously prohibitive;
- How well different generations interacted and listened to each other;
- That I have some of the same qualities that veteran leaders have;
- The number and diversity of people who are committed to various aspects of life in Alaska;
- The number of people who want action;
- The differences in costs of living, rural/urban causing a raft of social service issues;
- To learn that Vic Fischer grew up in Russia.

# Diverse Leadership

*a renewable resource*



## **Suggested themes for the 2008 Alaska Dialogue**

### **Energy**

- Renewable energy development
- Natural gas pipeline

### **Future of the Arctic**

- Healthcare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Public education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Alaska – where every voice counts

### **Leadership (Spring Dialogue)**

- Cultivating leaders through sharing of past leaders
- Productive discomfort
- Embracing diversity
- Supporting leadership transition

### **Rural Alaska Issues**

- Responsibilities of urban Alaska
- Alaska's culture and resources – greatest strengths
- Economic independence
- Strengthening rural communities

### **50 years of Statehood**

Where we came from, where we are today, and where we're headed.



## **Action items recommended for the Institute of the North**

Breakout sessions reported to the general conference and recommended to the Institute of the North action items that participants would set in place to be followed up on by Dialogue staff. The following are brief descriptions of the final products prepared by these groups, and what the future holds for each.

### **Politics beyond Partisanship:**

Get REAL campaign – Reform and Elevate the Alaska Legislature

### **Diversity in Leadership:**

Diversity diagram included in final report

### **Leadership Development:**

Mentorship program database

### **Alaska Energy:**

Energy matrix included in final report

### **Alaska and the Arctic:**

Invitation to meet the President of Iceland

### **Alaska Dialogue and the Institute of the North:**

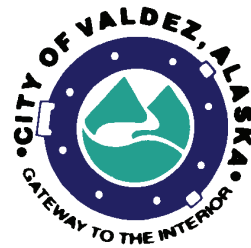
Commit to a Spring Dialogue dedicated to emerging leadership

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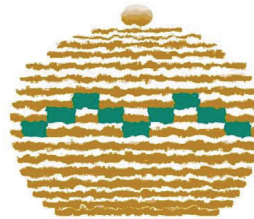
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