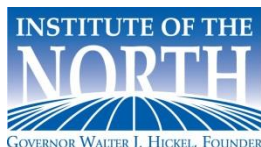
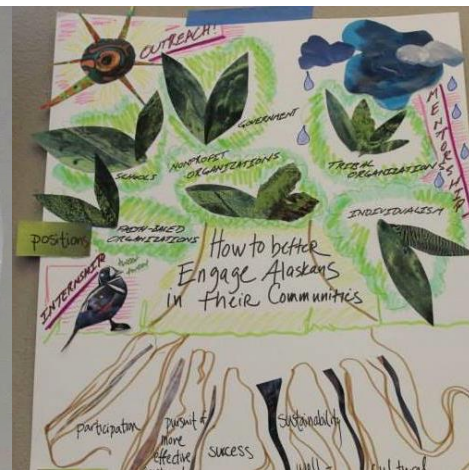


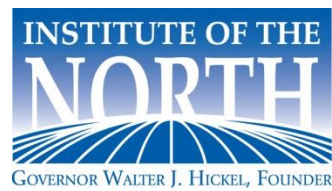
# 2013 Emerging Leaders Dialogue



May 19-22  Kodiak, Alaska



*For more information about the Institute of the North, Lead:North, or the annual Emerging Leaders Dialogue please visit [www.institutenorth.org](http://www.institutenorth.org)*



### Advocates for each other

Even though the windows gave sunny, unobstructed views of a bustling small boat harbor tucked under towering wind turbines and dozens of soaring eagles, the more than 60 attendees at the 2013 Emerging Leaders Dialogue kept their attention fully on the conversations taking place in the room. This non-partisan, state-wide forum has become an established space over the last six years where participants strengthen their ability to engage in challenging dialogue while building relationships and mutual respect.

It is in forums such as this that young Alaskans have the opportunity to imagine, discuss and create new solutions to outstanding and intractable problems. It is here that young leaders can practice engaged citizenship and contribute to policy conversations. Governor Wally Hickel always said that the young must understand the obligations of ownership, consistent with Article One of the State Constitution, which notes that in addition to rights all Alaskans have “corresponding obligations to one another and the state.” The Institute of the North’s Emerging Leaders Dialogue is a unique space in Alaska to practice that obligation and learn how young Alaskans can become advocates for each other.



### Kodiak Dialogue

Inspired by the question, “How do we build and sustain healthy Alaska communities?” participants came to the Dialogue as individuals and Alaskans invested in working toward a prosperous future for the state. Participants were encouraged to take risks, keep open minds, and dive into conversations with the goal of broadening horizons and feeling better prepared to take part in these important conversations in their own communities.

Themes emerged around the importance of family ties and future generations; some asked questions about how to empower peers to get involved. A sense of urgency to act underlined the Dialogue this year: if young Alaskans want to see healthy, sustainable communities in 20 years, actions must begin now and with this generation of young leaders. Infused throughout these conversations was the sense of constraint, and being able to balance the scale of new development – whether education, buildings or even roads – with the ability to maintain current infrastructure. Young Alaskans also wrestled with the role of the private and public sectors in Alaska’s economy and fiscal policy.



*Dialogue participants take part in a Policy Fishbowl discussion about how to build and sustain healthy Alaska communities.*

It was easy to see beyond Kodiak, as the themes allowed participants from more than a dozen communities around the state to draw parallels to their own experiences. Many expressed their surprise that some of the same issues and thoughts they experience in their hometowns resonate in Kodiak.

### **Visioning the Future**

Participants went through a strategic prioritizing process to identify eight important policy topics and self-selected into groups. Each group developed an educational poster representing their policy issue and identifying ways that emerging leaders can have an impact. Participants had the better part of the day to get creative, engage in dialogue that ranged from familiar to uncomfortable, and come away feeling better educated about each of the issue areas.



*Participants discuss how young leaders can address the question "How do we keep young Alaskans in Alaska?"*

***How can the State better incorporate Alaska Native values into legislation?*** Participants addressed this question through the lens of education policy and the need to educate both students and teachers. Place-based education should include Alaska Native values and culture, and can be implemented at a policy level in public schools through, for example, Alaska Studies courses. At the same time, integrating traditional knowledge and western science into curriculum will set the example that these two ways of thinking can be mutually beneficial.

***How can energy planning be conducted at the state level?*** Participants tackled this question by assessing the values that inform our energy decisions - environmental conservation, social justice and economic development. Ideally, the state should approach this question by thinking through the implications of Wally Hicke's, "Show me any place on Earth where there is a shortage of [affordable] energy, and I'll show you basic poverty."



*Dialogue participants create an educational poster about Alaska statewide energy planning.*

***How can we keep young Alaskans in Alaska?*** Participants noted that outmigration is selective in young people; high potential people often leave to avoid the stigma of staying or because they don't see opportunity at home. This can be corrected by firmly demonstrating the value in young people staying in Alaska: giving communities viability; building a local workforce; and keeping knowledge of Alaska, especially traditional knowledge, in the state.

***What industries can produce a sustainable Alaskan economy?*** Participants highlighted three possibilities, while recognizing the importance of oil to the state's current economy and state budget:

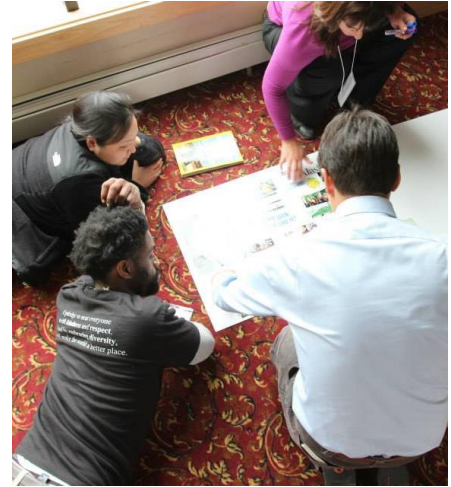
- Education: knowledge economy and human infrastructure
- Sustainable tourism: local economies
- Renewable energy: invest in risk for a return and empower small-scale developers

### ***Should sexual orientation be included as a protected class in Alaska?***

Participants identified three areas for consideration:

- Security (jobs, identity, fear, housing)
- Family (marriage, benefits, economy)
- Values (equality, community, morality)

***Who owns Alaska?*** Participants were keenly aware of the preponderance of federal land ownership and the implications for natural resource development and conservation. There was clearly a sense that Alaskans should benefit from resource and land management, particularly before outside interests.



Dialogue participants in a speed-networking activity.

### ***How do we better engage Alaskans in their communities?***

Participants – young Alaskans who already have a well-established sense of community engagement – highlighted internships, mentorships and community outreach efforts as effective mechanisms for engagement. However, they reminded one another that it ultimately takes individual initiative to engage.

### ***How do we plan for a future in which importing/transporting food is severely restricted?***

Participants assumed that no additional government funding or food subsidies would be forthcoming; therefore Alaska would have to create groundwork for a healthy system through funding available now. By identifying potential food production regions, communicating their value and educating other Alaskans, such a system might develop.

### ***What can emerging leaders do?***

The action begins with individuals reaching out to their families and networks, who can effect change in their communities, who can lobby their government (local, state, or federal) which will then implement policy changes. Additionally, young Alaskans can:

- Inform the citizenry: Alaska studies class, local public and social media;
- Invite yourself to the table and engage in these conversations;
- Get involved in the industry, energy workforce;
- Get involved with existing organizations/coalitions: Energy Action Coalition, Resource Development Council, etc.;
- Tell our own local success stories – focusing on what success looks like in our own community;
- Break the cycle of silence, acknowledge challenges and address them;
- Mentor: young professionals mentor youth, peers;

- Learn how to contact local, state and national representatives, then do it;
- Sit on boards/commissions or talk with board members;
- Encourage policy that is education, small business and innovation-minded;
- Learn about and get involved with legislation this election cycle;
- Raise awareness, become educated on the issues, participate;
- Start culture of engagement in schools through service learning;
- Share specialized knowledge;
- Focus on the challenges, opportunities specific to the North;
- Create food co-ops designed to plan toward a restricted import model;
- Encourage individual initiative.



### Aha Moments

Peer-mentoring emerged as a key topic during this year’s Dialogue, and participants were able to practice mentorship with each other in a vantage group exercise facilitated by Christian Muntean of Beyond Borders. “A realization for me this week was that mentorship can come from my own peer group” one participant said.



*Participants contemplate how to balance Alaska’s budget.*

Participants also identified Alaska’s fiscal policy as a topic that will affect today’s (and tomorrow’s) young leaders. Groups worked to grasp the complicated issue by attempting to balance the budget in an eye-opening game developed by the State of Alaska House Special Committee on Fiscal Policy with Information Insights and Agnew::Beck.

Participants realized that balancing dialogue with action is an important step toward leadership. The Northern Leadership Center, part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Management, facilitated a closing exercise that helped participants form next steps for moving forward.

### Seeing Kodiak

Participants were treated to an experience that was truly unique to Kodiak when they piled into a school bus and took the twisting, hour-long drive to the Alaska Aerospace Corporation Kodiak Launch Complex. Situated on the east side of the island with a clear view of the Pacific Ocean, the Alaska Aerospace Corporation was established by the State of Alaska to develop a high technology aerospace industry in the state. The visit was a striking example of how the State of Alaska can act to diversify the economy, and showed a new way to value Alaska’s strategic location as a premier place to launch polar satellites.



*The group at the Alaska Aerospace Kodiak Launch Complex.*



*Left: Erin Harrington of Kodiak gives Dialogue participants a tour of the new Kodiak Public Library structure. Right: Touch tank at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center, during the Community Reception.*



A second site visit was to the new Kodiak Public Library facility, which is still under construction. The campaign to build a new public library in Kodiak was a grassroots effort spearheaded by young community leaders. Participants recognized the facility as an embodiment of what young leaders can accomplish with patience, persistence, mentorship, and vision.

## Tweetables

After filling out personal pledge cards with goals, actions, or next steps, participants shared their takeaways from the Dialogue twitter-style with a tagline or brief phrase. Pervasive themes included a renewed sense of empowerment and community, motivation to step up into policy discussions, and a realization that emerging leaders can, and should, have a seat at the table during discussions that affect the future of Alaska.

- “Finding commonalities in issues we face is encouraging.”
- “Focus on the good; work with what we do have, not what we don’t have”
- “I’ve been on the sidelines a little too long and let other people take charge on what needs to get done”
- “Mentorship can come from my own peer group.”
- “Learn. Share. Engage.”
- “There is no scarcity of energy out there, or willingness to engage.”
- “Finding diversity through common ground.”
- “I usually shy away from policy – but I am going to take the step forward into policy discussions.”
- “Open up the dialogue – don’t wait for someone else to say what you think should be said.”
- “The personal is political. What moves people should be moving our government. Don’t be afraid of politics and policy discussions.”
- “People appreciate what I have to say.”
- “Just because a particular conversation needs to be happening doesn’t mean that it is happening – we should feel empowered to fill that void.”
- “I didn’t feel like I had the power to help change the future. And I didn’t know where to start. But now I do.”
- “I feel that I am now ‘at the table’ and have resources to maintain my seat.”
- “The Dialogue gives me a better idea of how my peers view their role and involvement in Alaska.”
- “Reminds me that I have not only a role in, but also a responsibility to my community.”



## *Thank you for supporting the 2013 Emerging Leaders Dialogue*

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### ***With appreciation for***

*Senator Gary Stevens*  
*Representative Alan Austerman*  
*Mayor Pat Branson, City of Kodiak*  
*All of our 2013 Emerging Leaders Dialogue participants!*