

COYA 2012

The NORTH is the Future

FINAL REPORT



CONFERENCE OF YOUNG ALASKANS (COYA)
OUR PLACE IN ALASKA; ALASKA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD
JANUARY 4-7, 2012 • JUNEAU, ALASKA – CENTENNIAL HALL

HOSTED BY THE INSTITUTE OF THE NORTH • BROADCAST PARTNER: 360 NORTH – DELIVERED STATEWIDE ON GAVEL TO GAVEL



Reflection –

On behalf of the Institute of the North and a dedicated steering committee, I want to thank all the delegates to COYA, as well as the sponsors, subject matter experts, speakers and observers who made COYA a success. Judging from the experience and final product, COYA remains a unique platform for empowering the next generation of Alaska's leaders.

The Institute of the North was excited to host the 2012 Conference of Young Alaskans in our state's capitol and we believe that all those involved were inspired by the energy and atmosphere of possibility felt in Juneau. In the years to come, Alaskans will have a chance to continue the conversation begun here, by following up on the vision, goals and action items brought forth at this event. All of us have an ownership stake in addressing the critical challenges facing Alaska.

Representing 28 communities from across the state, COYA delegates brought a unique and valuable perspective to these issues and were careful to set aside personal agendas on behalf of the common good. Time and time again I watched as a carefully negotiated compromise was struck in order to benefit a greater spectrum of Alaskans.

Adapting the lessons learned from others and sharing our experiences while building relationships along the way is an integral part of leadership. I hope that everyone who reads this final report will keep this in mind as we work to tackle these challenging issues. It is up to each of us to embrace the opportunity to lead by integrating new ideas and best practices and by strengthening partnerships.

Governor Hickel spoke often of the "obligations of ownership." Though I know that by the phrase he was referring to the responsibilities that come with citizenship to manage our resources for the maximum benefit of all, I like to think it has a broader meaning of ambassadorship. Ambassadorship is an obligation Alaskans have both in how we engage with one another and how we represent our communities and our state on a national and international stage.

As you read through this report to the state and its people, I want to thank you for your commitment to this Great Land, where each of us acts as an Alaska ambassador. I know that delegates will return home to their communities, and places of work or education better informed, more energized and more committed to Alaska than ever before.

Nils Andreassen
Managing Director
Institute of the North





“
The conference has made me realize that people actually take me seriously and I can make a difference just by putting myself out there.
”



“
The conference has changed my feelings about my role in Alaska. I can see how much of a difference we as young people can make. The conference has changed my opinion about Alaska's role in the world because now I see that Alaska is in many ways a role model.
”



“
The conference has made me feel that I can influence Alaska's policy more than I thought. I also think I have a responsibility to return to Alaska after college in order to not contribute to the Brain Drain.
”

“
My appreciation for the state and its diversity and uniqueness increased 10 fold. It's a land I want to get to know, grow with, and experience more. I have a re-found sense of pride, wonder, and home that Alaska has come to mean to me.
”

“
COYA taught me important leadership skills along with teaching me how to get involved with others to discuss things and most importantly, how to respect the different kinds of backgrounds from where people come from.
”



“
I have realized just how important youth's role is in the future of our state, and that if we remain uneducated about our government, young Alaskans will not have as much of a say in our home's future.
”



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“ I feel more empowered than ever and now I’ve made incredible connections with other very engaged people. I feel very optimistic about my ability to make a difference in Alaska. I have fully realized Alaska’s full potential to be a global leader—we have the resources, the power, and the people to achieve this and should strive to do so. ”

**We, the undersigned Delegates of
The Conference of Young Alaskans 2012,
Submit this report of our deliberations to you, our fellow Alaskans:**

 Hannah Atkinson	 Jodie Gatti	 Samuel McElwee	 Ashley Sockpick
 Jean Bennett	 Drake Goodson	 Chaylene Mills	 Krista Soderlund
 Paige Bowen	 Samuel Gottstein	 Kate O'Brien	 Helen Adele Solski
 Wendi Castellon	 Glenn Gregoroff	 Rachael Peltola	 Elise Sorum-Birk
 Jennifer Chaudhary	 Brad Gusty	 Beau Poppin-Abajian	 Desiree Strickland
 Sonia Christensen	 Kayleen Hansen	 Eiden Pospisil	 Lauren Suiter
 Jon Derman Harris	 Jalene Herron	 Joshua Proper	 Timothy Treuer
 Molly Dischner	 Lauren Heyano	 Matthew Robinson	 Emelia Van Wyhe
 Liana Elkins	 Lila Hobbs	 Kirk Rose	 Noah Warnock
 Signe Engler	 Bryant Hopkins	 Nathaniel Rubin	 Brianna Webb
 Michelle Fernandez	 Mylinda Johnson	 Jenna Schmidt	 Leonty Williams
 Shelby Fisher-Salmon	 Iva Karoly-Lister	 Samuel Schmidt	 William Willis
 Sharayah Foster	 Reid Magdanz	 Jeremia Schrock	 Clarissa Zeller
 Penny Gage	 Katie Marquette	 Eli Shayer	

2012 CONFERENCE OF YOUNG ALASKANS: VISION STATEMENTS, GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

**indicates action items passed with unanimous consent*

The Vision Statements, Goals and Action Items below are the result of four days of intense deliberation and dialogue. The 55 delegates, working from their own knowledge base and personal experiences, as well as with input from nearly 40 subject matter experts and community leaders, spent an incredible amount of time in small group settings brainstorming values and creative ideas that address perceived challenges. In this setting, delegates negotiated with one another, finding compromises that moved their priority forward and incorporated the input of other delegates in a series of rotations between groups. In plenary discussions, each group’s recommendations were vetted and voted upon. You can see the approval percentages next to each statement. Vision statements were framed by, “What should Alaska look like in the next 50 years?” Goals are listed in the priority order they were voted upon in the plenary, and the percentage reflects the final day’s voting on unanimous consent items. Many items that were unanimous consent are the result of amendments – given more time to amend and fine tune some of these statements delegates would have no doubt arrived at broader agreement. That said, the fact that many have high percentages without amendments is indicative of the thoroughness of the overall process.

Economic Resilience & Fiscal Policy

We envision an Alaska that maintains a diverse and sustainable economy through the responsible development of Alaska’s vast and unique resource potential, for the maximum benefit to all Alaskans.

Goals (approved, in priority order, by 95%)

1. Support diverse economies that sustain our cultures and unique state
2. Find a balance between production and conservation, yielding economic sustainability
3. Increase investment in Arctic infrastructure
4. Foster small business growth and entrepreneurship in Alaska
5. Promote Alaska’s brand and tourism potential

Action Items

Near Term—

- *Invest from the current budget surplus in educational programs that will achieve economic development (i.e. STEM, fisheries, business, vocational). (100)
- Encourage competition among electricity and internet providers to decrease cost and increase high speed internet availability in rural Alaska. (98)
- Except for slight modifications based on research and knowledge, Alaska should maintain its current oil tax structure. (96)
- Create tax incentives and regulations that encourage safe and responsible in-state manufacturing. (98)
- Promote Alaska hire within the seasonal industries. (98)

Long Term—

- Work with the Coast Guard, the State government, interested parties, shipping entities, and other stakeholders to build infrastructure to safely utilize Arctic shipping lanes and prepare for inherent risks. (98)
- Provide all Alaskans the knowledge to be financially and economically literate citizens in our unique marketplace (i.e. education, public relations, and community dialogues). (96)
- Increase funding to DOT to create interconnectedness between roadways, waterways, bridges, railroads, airports and other forms of transportation infrastructure. (67)
- Every decade, examine and adapt Alaska’s tax policy to remain competitive in the world market. (98)
- Increase investment and encourage development of Alaska’s agriculture and farmland for food security (i.e. community gardens, community supported agriculture, incentives). (98)
- Reinstate the state income tax. (69)

Education & Workforce Development

Alaska's workforce development and education system will foster life-long learning, community engagement, and respect for diversity. Creative approaches to learning will provide equal opportunities to all Alaskans regardless of socioeconomic, geographic, and other barriers.

Goals *(approved, in priority order, by 100%)*

1. Educate Alaskan students in ways consistent with their cultural traditions and interests
2. Create and expand programs that incentivize and retain quality educators and professionals
3. Create community engagement through service-learning and volunteer work
4. Ensure all Alaskans have a safe and healthy learning environment
5. Expand and diversify class and program offerings across Alaska

Action Items

Near Term—

- The State of Alaska shall immediately apply for a waiver from No Child Left Behind. (96)
- School districts shall strictly enforce a no-tolerance policy for bullying, including cyber bullying, and increase funding for psychological support for bullies and the bullied. (93)
- The State of Alaska will provide funding for school districts to establish school gardens as a way to promote hands-on learning. (84)
- The State of Alaska shall provide funding support to the Alaska Humanities Forum in order to expand its culturally specific teacher training programs. (95)
- The State of Alaska will provide loan forgiveness for a wider range of high demand jobs and provide guidance and training for the unemployed. (96)
- *The State of Alaska and school districts will establish and fund language programs consistent with regions and needs, and install Alaska Native language programs in urban centers. (100)

Long Term—

- Alaska school districts shall develop curricula that integrate culturally-specific, non-traditional and experiential learning methods into traditional subject areas such as math, biology, and English. (95)
- The state will adequately fund current, and support future, district-run and other programs that provide early childhood education. (96)
- To make Alaska's residents more competitive in the global market, the state will expand funding for vocational training and workforce development in high-demand technical fields. (93)
- *The State of Alaska will develop a dynamic, rigorous, challenging and globally competitive set of pre-K through 12 curricula; as well as assess the educational system and provide recognition for teacher excellence. (100)
- *The state of Alaska will provide adequate funding to support students with special needs by providing technology resources and trained professionals to ensure their inclusion in the education system. (100)

Energy & Power

Our state shall lead the world by maximizing the efficient utilization of our energy resources, providing all Alaskans access to safe, affordable, sustainable, and inexhaustible power.

Goals *(approved, in priority order, by 98%)*

1. Make energy prices more affordable for all Alaskans
2. Maximize efficiency of energy usage
3. Work with communities to increase cooperation and utilization of local resources.
4. Become global leaders in developing and employing alternative energy sources
5. Improve safety and reduce impact on human and environmental health while meeting energy needs

“I’m connected to and believe in my peers, dynamic change makers committed to Alaska. I’m more confident in the political process. The conference broadened my understanding about Alaska’s role in the world on countless levels.”

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Action Items

Near Term—

- Host an energy conference bringing leaders together from around the state promoting cooperation, resource evaluation and creating energy action plans. (98)
- *Create energy incentives that include tax breaks, grants and expand on climate-appropriate housing. (100)
- Create a comprehensive Arctic Oil Spill prevention and relief plan. (98)
- Increase funding for the Renewable Energy Fund (grants) and establish a revolving green fund (loans). (93)
- Support funding and permitting for renewable energy infrastructure, particularly tidal energy products. (95)
- Incentivize investment in renewable energy research and development. (96)

Long Term—

- Create a strategic energy infrastructure plan that minimizes negative effects on the environment. (98)
- Aggressively reduce reliance on fossil fuels through efficiency and renewable energy products. (95)
- By 2062, have the ability to be reliant on renewable energy sources. (95)
- The State of Alaska will mandate that all utilities will employ net metering at competitive rates. (81)
- Alaska will pursue an in-state natural gas pipeline and create spur lines from any such project to assist in providing affordable energy prices in rural Alaska. (83)

Ilakuyulluta (Living Harmoniously with Oneself and Others)

We envision mentally, physically and culturally healthy communities promoted through contextually appropriate education and respectful communication.

Goals *(approved, in priority order, by 96%)*

1. Provide access to the education, preventative care, and resources necessary for healthy lifestyles
2. Enhance preservation, understanding, acceptance and celebration of diverse cultures and traditions
3. Foster healthy families and communities through mentorship and intergenerational communication
4. Ensure innovative access and funding to quality healthcare for all Alaska communities
5. Reduce rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, and eliminate “rape culture”
6. Encourage communities to utilize the land to improve their health and well-being

Action Items

Near Term—

- Educate and increase awareness to eliminate “rape culture” throughout Alaska with 1) training workshops for selected community or regional representatives; 2) awareness campaigns incorporating all media; 3) education of communities; and 4) evaluation processes and workshop re-trainings. (96)
- Repeal Article 1, Section 25 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska. (91)
- *Extend comprehensive suicide prevention programs to individuals experiencing struggles, parents, teachers, friends, and communities throughout Alaska. (100)
- Establish a statewide mandate for all inclusive education from kindergarten through 12th grade on age-appropriate fitness, sexual and mental health, eating disorders, suicide prevention, the use and misuse of substances, and other health issues. (95)
- Properly equip a central location in every Alaska community where patients can access telemedicine, traveling practitioners, and emergency care. (95)

Long Term—

- Establish an on-call system within Alaska hospitals and the UA system to ensure biannual dental visits for rural communities. (98)
- Create community centers in local schools, which offer affordable services such as health care, banking, training, and recreation to members of the community. (91)
- Professionally educate communities on how to develop their land and encourage the local stores to buy locally. (87)
- Use the model of gifted mentorship in the Anchorage School District to develop inclusive and affordable mentorship and job shadowing programs throughout Alaska. (95)
- *Work with the University of Alaska and the State of Alaska to create programs that allow Alaska Native elders without advanced language teaching degrees to teach Alaska Native language and tradition in secondary and post-secondary education. (100)

Natural Resources & the Environment

Alaska will establish a land ethic based on maximum sustainable yield that would foster recreational and subsistence opportunity, establish a research base to diversify energy dependence, and ensure ecological stability through extended sustainability plans. Alaska will integrate traditional knowledge and modern science to adapt to climate change, increase food security, and lead the world in renewable resource innovation.

Goals *(approved, in priority order, by 96%)*

1. Alaska will preserve and value traditional Alaska culture and protect subsistence lifestyles
2. Alaska will be proactive in climate change adaptation
3. Alaska will collaborate with and lead Arctic nations in the responsible development and protection of the Arctic
4. Alaska will strive for sustainability through the practice of maximum sustainable yield
5. Alaska will responsibly manage collective natural resources by combining traditional and local ecological knowledge and scientific innovation

Action Items

Near Term—

- Reinstate the Coastal Zone Management plan and advocate the ratification of Law of the Sea. (91)
- Protect and expand personal use rights to natural resources. (87)
- Alaska will establish in-state recycling collection and treatment infrastructure. (98)
- Permit food stamps to purchase local agriculture. (91)
- Amend Alaska’s Constitution to bring State subsistence law into compliance with ANILCA. (98)

Long Term—

- Provide a fund for protection and relocation of communities affected by climate change. (94)
- Collaborate with Arctic nations through joint research programs to establish consistent circumpolar conservation policy. (96)
- Create collection, treatment, and distribution infrastructure for state composting. (95)
- Establish aggressive best-practice standards to minimize waste from natural resource extraction. (92)
- Alaska will develop a climate change and permaculture curriculum for all levels of education. (93)

“ After seeing the group work as a whole, it’s very clear that Alaska’s young people are going to be very strong in the future. With the right leadership Alaska has the potential to remain strong in national and global markets. It’s our duty as young leaders to play a role in the state’s growth. ”

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*We Are Alaska’s Children Resolution

We are still Alaska’s children, humbled and thankful for the precious gift we have inherited. We express our gratitude to our forebears for building a mature state and honoring a wild frontier. They planted the seeds from which our home was grown, and now we celebrate the unique culture that has blossomed. We see a land as rich in ideas as it is in beauty and resources. We embrace the Alaska Spirit to pioneer toward new opportunity, and share our lives and culture with our youth. Just as our predecessors challenged us, we challenge you to help others to love and cherish our homeland, and lead Alaska forward. We are Alaska’s Children.

~ Delegates of the 2012 Conference of Young Alaskans

Special Thanks to Observers from Brave New Alaskan Voices, a youth empowering poetry cohort for 13-18 year old observers; and the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA), who brought two youth from that region. These seven youth attended the majority of COYA’s sessions, interacted with delegates, and participated in many of the discussions that took place throughout. The Brave New Alaskan Voices also composed poems on Alaska at 100, based on their COYA experience.

Brave New Alaskan Voices delegation,

led by Kima Hamilton and Trey Josey:

- Wang William Gat
- Aaron Campbell
- Calesia Monroe
- Davina Ve
- Allison Harrington

APICDA delegation,

led by Lauren Delgado:

- Shannon Johnson and Becky Shellikoff (from Nelson Lagoon)
- Gabriel Fulton (from Unalaska)

An Extra Special Thanks to the 2012 COYA Steering Committee

- Terin Porter and Galen Pospisil, co-chairs
- Dani Carlson
- Weston Eiler
- Courtney Enright
- Kristine Hildebrand
- Joseph Kelly
- Ottar Mobley
- Sophie Wiepking-Brown
- Theresa Woldstad



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“ The conference empowered me to play a more active role in my state at the local and state level. I didn’t realize how big of a role Alaska plays in foreign affairs. I now plan on looking at our foreign policy more closely as well as all of Alaska’s diverse issues as they all play a role in the well-being of our state. ”

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“The conference has tilted my decision of where to live in favor of staying in Alaska. I feel more hope for the direction of the state and more appreciation for what makes the state special.”

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Outcomes

After reading the resource materials and participating in COYA 2012, delegates feel more knowledgeable about:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| ○ Alaska history | 89% |
| ○ Personal role in the state | 93% |
| ○ Local, state and federal governance | 82% |
| ○ Alaska's international role | 89% |

Of those who indicated they did not vote prior to the conference, 87.5% of those eligible to vote, plan to do so in the future. That is a 70% increase in voting after attending the conference.

Of those who responded, they feel more empowered to make a difference at

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| ○ local level: | 100% |
| ○ state level: | 100% |
| ○ national level: | 78% |
| ○ international level: | 76% |

71% of delegates are considering influencing state policymaking by seeking office.



“ I believe that COYA has helped me gain a broader understanding of my state and its people. COYA has also allowed me to build upon my interpersonal communication skills. ”



“ Seeing the diversity of our state’s people and cultures really re-emphasized the feeling of our state’s exceptionalism. ”



“ The conference has given me a better understanding of my role in Alaska, in particular my role as a rural resident in sharing my experiences with other Alaskans. ”



“ The conference impressed upon me the importance of compromise and collaboration and my role in both. ”

The NORTH is the Future

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