

Commission on Rural Governance and Empowerment

Press Release

Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, Anchorage
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Veronica Slajer, (907) 360-2288, vaslajer@northstargrp.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rural Governance remains unfinished business in Alaska.

This week a group of concerned and committed Alaskans are reopening important conversations critical to rural Alaska. The statewide discussions will kick off during the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, with announcements and presentations about the findings compiled from a reconvening of the Rural Governance Commission held last year.

Concluding that “rural governance is unfinished business” in Alaska, the group came together in December of 2013 to revisit the work of the original Alaska Commission on Rural Governance and Empowerment (RGC). The group —11 of the original commissioners and 40 committed Alaskans from across the state— agreed that **the original 1999 RGC Report to the Governor could have been drafted either fifty years ago, five years ago, or five weeks ago.**

The participants of the reconvened 2013 RGC identified a series of issues and action items key to rural governance and empowerment that will be described in the Final Report to be issued in conjunction with the Alaska Municipal League annual meeting in November. As a first and critical step, **the RGC participants called on the State of Alaska to clearly and officially recognize tribes as governments.**

The 2013 gathering was co-hosted by First Alaskans Institute and the North Star Group. Unlike the first commission, which was a state sponsored Commission, this event was privately funded and self-initiated, **reflecting the urgency felt by the participants that Alaskans must act to ensure rural communities have the recognition, support and tools they need to survive and thrive.**

The final report of the reconvened Rural Governance Commission will be released in November, then presented at the annual meeting of the Alaska Municipal League (AML) in Anchorage, Nov. 21-23, 2014.

The reconvening report will include personal commitments and clear strategic focus areas to spur discourse and policy action. In addition to the report, First Alaskans Institute is compiling the high-level recommendations of various commissions and reports into one comprehensive resource that outlines and further affirms the need to support local governance, tribal sovereignty and empowerment. This report will also be made available in the next month.

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COMMISSION/PARTICIPANTS

Agatha Erickson
AlexAnna Salmon
Arliss Sturgulewski*
Arnold Brower, Jr.*
Bernice Tetpon
Brad Angasan*
Byron Mallott*
Christopher Cooke*
Chuck Greene*
Crystal Dushkin
Dalea Sambo Dorrough
Diddy Hitchins
Edward Thomas
Elizabeth Hensley
Esther Wunnicke*
Evan Peter
Gene Peltola*
Gilda Shellikoff*
Greta Schuerch
Gunnar Knapp
Jean Gamache
Jennifer Johnston
Jim LaBelle, Sr.
Jim Nordlund
John Binkley*
Jolene John
Jorie Paoli
Karen Crane
Karlin Itchoak
Kathryn Dodge
Kimberly Martus
Kristina Woolston
Kyle Wark
Lamar Cotton
Lee Stephan*
Lisa Rieger
Liz Medicine Crow
Majja Lukin
Mara Kimmel
Margaret Roberts*
Marlene Johnson
Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle
Nancy Cecile Barnes*
Niles Cesar**
Oliver Leavitt
PJ Simon
Richard Peterson
Robert Keith*
Rosemarie Maher**
Roy Ewan*
Stephen Trimble
Steve Ginnis*
Susan LaBelle
Tiffany Zulkosky
Tony Knowles
Valerie Davidson
Veronica Slajer*
Victor Fischer*
Weaver Ivanoff*
Will Mayo*
Willie Kasayulie*
Wilson Justin

*Original Commission member/staff
** Deceased Commission member

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