Mayor's Message

We are entering one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. The month between Thanksgiving and Christmas is one filled with friends, food and family. It’s a time of the year when we find ourselves expressing thanks for the good things in our lives. This year, that seems a little harder to do given the terrible things happening all over the world.

I was thinking about this as I was preparing my recent status report for the Assembly. I looked at the reports compiled by my various departments to help me highlight their activities for the month and I realized I did have something to be very grateful for. In fact, everyone on the North Slope has something to be very grateful for. We have a well-funded self-government that allows us to provide for our own people as we see fit. Thanks to the hard work, dedication and foresight of some of our great leaders of previous generations, we do not have to stand

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1st Housing Summit held in Barrow

The North Slope Borough Department of Administration & Finance, along with the Mayor’s office, conducted a Housing Summit in Barrow on November 17th-18th, 2015. This is the first Housing Summit we’re aware of held in Barrow within the North Slope Borough. Jacob Adams, CAO, gave a welcoming speech to the group. Patsy “Aqi” Neakok was the facilitator at the Housing Summit and did extremely well running the workshop.

The guest speakers came from different entities within the State of Alaska. Those entities were: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA), United States Department of Agriculture USDA personnel, Tagiugmiullu Nunamiullu Housing Authority (TNHA), Native

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Ryan Beene, Detective
October 2015

Ryan Beene, a detective with the North Slope Borough Police Department, is our Employee of the Month for October, 2015. Detective Beene has been with the department since 2003. He and his K-9 partner, Bolt, were assigned to the Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Taskforce (WANNT) unit in Anchorage in June 2015. As a member of this task force, he and his partner work to stop shipments of illegal alcohol and other drugs to communities across the state of Alaska with an emphasis on the North Slope.

Detective Beene and Bolt have been instrumental in the seizing of 124.04 liters of distilled spirits; 17.75 pounds of marijuana; 3.0 pounds of hashish; 25.5 pounds of methamphetamines; 1.29 pounds of heroin; and 18 pounds of cocaine. These substances were brought into Alaska with various final destinations, including communities on the North Slope. Detective Beene has participated in investigations that led to approximately $1,182,500.00 in seized assets.

Detective Beene and Bolt have received letters of praise and appreciation from the Alaska State Troopers as well as the United States Postal Inspection Service. They are both well respected by their peers and, perhaps most importantly. Thanks to their dedicated efforts, are villages are safer, healthier places to live.

Quyanaqpak Ryan and Bolt for your unswerving dedication to the safety, peace and health of our communities.

John Long, Jr., Village Supervisor
November 2015

John Long Jr. is the November Employee of the Month. He is a valued employee of the North Slope Borough Department of Public Works who began work as a Temporary Laborer with Sanitation in 1982. Since October 2009, John has worked as the Village Services Supervisor in Point Hope, a position he takes very seriously. Not only is he incredibly committed to ensuring that the residents of his community receive the best services possible from his team, but he also notifies the department when there are improvements to be made and what support is needed in the village to accomplish those tasks.

John has shown leadership by example, using a variety of skills he has acquired throughout his career. He has played a big role in the successful implementation of the Point Hope Maintenance Contract with Tikigaq Construction. His ability to communicate issues and resolve conflicts has been key to utilizing the contract to provide the best services to Point Hope. He communicates effectively with the staff in Barrow as well and serves as an advocate for the entire community. John’s dedication ensures that Point Hope’s infrastructure and services are maintained and supported in the best way possible. After decades of excellent service to the Borough and to the Point Hope community, John continues to impress his department with his work ethic. Quyanaqpak John!
Nellie Gomez Wins National Indian Health Nursing Impact Award

Public Health Nursing Program, was nominated by her peers for the National Indian Health Board’s (NIHB) National Indian Health Board Area Impact Award. This award is given annually at the NIHB Consumer Conference. Nellie was nominated because of her years of service at the Public Health Nursing Program, specifically the way she provides culturally appropriate services to communities across the North Slope. The following is the nomination submitted for Nellie:

“The North Slope Borough (NSB) Public Health Nursing (PHN) Team elected Nellie Gomez to be selected as a candidate for ‘The Local Impact Award’. Nellie is respected by her peers because she is a very hard worker, who cares about her community. Nellie’s reflection of her Inupiaq values is not displayed by words, but by actions. Nellie works diligently to ensure people in the community and surrounding communities receive good preventive health care and correct health information. No task is too big. She never complains about the work load. Nellie enjoys her work. She ensures children are scheduled for their immunizations. When parents miss their children’s appointments, she never scolds them. Instead she politely calls and reschedules the children. Nellie realizes the importance of immunizations and assists the PHN team in creating vaccine campaigns and distributing vaccine flyers throughout the community. Nellie assures the school nurse receives immunization records in a timely manner, so children can attend school.

Inupiat means real people. Nellie is a genuine person who practices her Inuit values to include knowledge of language, sharing, respect for others, cooperation, respect for elders, love of children and hard work. Nellie’s title is ‘PHN Office Specialist’. There is nothing on her job description that states she must keep up her certified nursing assistant’s (CNA) license. Nellie keeps that license updated so she can assist the Public Health Nurses on home visits. She translates to the elders in Inupiaq making the visit easier for the client, the client’s family and the nurse. She ensures that homebound elders have the opportunity to receive a flu vaccine in the fall. She fills PHN condom baskets throughout the community to decrease the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Nellie is an integral part of the PHN administrative team. PHN could not provide the services we offer without the PHN administrative team.”

Nellie travelled to Washington D.C. to accept the award with other Native American/Alaska Native people across the United States.

North Slope Borough Staff Travel to Russia with Concerns about Pending Polar Bear Quota

In October, the North Slope Borough sent seven representatives from the Department of Wildlife Management, Department of Law and Mayor’s Office to the 7th Meeting of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission and 6th Annual Meeting of the Scientific Working Group, in Sochi, Russia. These meetings are held in accordance with a treaty the U.S. signed with the Russian Federation in 2000 for the management of polar bears in the Chukchi Sea, referred to as the Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population. This treaty was implemented in the U.S. in 2007, through changes to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. These changes limit how bears can be harvested and allow for the implementation of a quota establishing how many bears can be harvested.

The two countries met to discuss new science, provide updates on subsistence harvest and agree to a quota level. Mike Pederson and Andrew Von Duyke, from the Department of Wildlife Management, served as Delegates on the United States delegation. The other Borough representatives attended as Observers to the meeting. The North Slope Borough sent a larger contingent this year because of concerns with US Fish and Wildlife Service’s plans to move forward with implementing the quota beginning in January 2016.

The Borough is worried because the current quota is not based on reliable science. In fact, the best available data suggest that the Chukchi Sea bears are doing well — bears are in good body condition, and they are producing many young. The Borough will do all it can to make sure that if there is a quota that it is based on reliable science and uses local, civil co-management – similar to the quota on bowhead whales and the work of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. The Borough will continue working with the Alaska Nanuuq Commission on these goals.
I’m thankful for everything. Thanksgiving is happy! I’m thankful for God, food & prayers.
— Irene Gallahorn

I’m thankful for this community gathering and to always have a Thanksgiving feast. I’m also thankful for the Eskimo dancing and everything else.
— Rhoda Ahgook

I’m thankful for the Lord for providing and thankful for the community gatherings as well.
— Chris Palagaan Hugo

I’m so thankful for this day, especially for Thanksgiving. We’re so blessed this year for our kids, God’s been giving us blessings abundantly with animals, berries, and ippiqs and everything that God’s been providing for us. He pour down his blessings again and I’m so thankful for that. And for our families, even though we miss our loved ones that have gone before us, but we continue to live on. I’m also so happy this month for anjiruq. It was kind of late but it was a very very good whales’ tail feast. I thank God for this Thanksgiving Day. Have a blessed Thanksgiving Day and enjoy your Eskimo food and your Eskimo dancing. Happy Thanksgiving!
— Irma Hunnicutt

I am most thankful for my good health and also for my family. Thank you.
— Elizabeth Hollingsworth

I’m most thankful for our new addition to our family.
— Lloyd Leavitt

I’m so thankful for everything. Thanksgiving is happy! I’m thankful for God, food & prayers. Happy Thanksgiving!
— Irene Gallahorn
As the Thanksgiving holiday nears, it’s time to reflect on some of the things we are most thankful for. North Slope residents share some of their thoughts.

We have to be thankful and happy for food our hunters provide. Give thanks to God. I am thankful and happy for those that are home now from long medical leave.

— Lydia Sovalik, Nuiqsut Elder

I am most thankful for getting all my grand-kids together with their mother. Thanks be to God for getting us to this Thanksgiving, without Him we have nothing.

— David Stone

I’m thankful that we are not in a war torn country but we must not stop our compassion to those that are in need of a place. Happy Thanksgiving!

— Roseann Leavitt

I’m thankful that we made it this far this year. I have a lot of meat that the hunters have been sharing with us, I’m very thankful for that because I have no one at home to hunt for me. I am very thankful for them. I’m also happy that my children and my family seems to be doing good this past year. Happy Thanksgiving!

— Bertha Long

I’m so thankful for my home in Barrow, my children and my friends. Most of all I’m thankful for God watching over the U.S. Thank you for having me with the elders from all over Alaska.

— Sadie Rexford
Fun activities across the slope

The North Slope Borough Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council and the Healthy Communities Initiative and the Health Department’s Prevention Team sponsored events across the slope.

“One of the simplest and best ways we can start addressing the problems of addiction and violence is to give people healthy alternative activities that are fun and filled with companionship.”

— Mayor Charlotte Brower

Left: Arthur Bordeaux, 1st place winner, Atqasuk Fishing Derby

Above: Halloween contest in Point Lay enjoyed by many.

Right: Kim Chee making class in Point Hope enjoyed by all ages.

Left: Raymond Nashookpuk announcing the winners at the Alak School Halloween Parade.

Kids enjoying eskimo games in Point Hope.

Kaktovik youth enjoy pumpkin painting.

Kids enjoying eskimo dancing in Point Hope.
in line, hat in hand, waiting for the state or federal government to give us our fair share of the profits reaped from resources extracted from our ancestral lands.

The Department of Inupiat History, Language and Culture has now hired five oral historians based in communities around the North Slope to capture and preserve our oral traditions and stories. I am grateful that we have the financial means to protect our culture and ensure that it survives for years to come.

The Department of Wildlife Management attended a Bilateral Commission on Alaska/Chukotka Polar Bears. We sit at the table as equal partners in the effort to preserve our environment and mammals in the face of rising global temperatures. I’m grateful that the creation of the North Slope Borough allowed us to create a department with the expertise to sit at a table of leading scientists and researchers. Our presence ensures that Inupiat concerns and suggestions will be heard and taken seriously.

I’m grateful that because of our tax base we are able to fund our own Search and Rescue Department. We no longer have to depend on outside flights to handle emergency medical cases or search and rescue efforts. We put our own staff on the job and their record of positive results speaks for itself.

I could go on, but you get the idea. In a year when it seems as though it might be a little harder than usual to come up with things for which we should be thankful, we only need to think back to the generations that preceded us with the initiative, intelligence, wisdom and tenacity needed to create a new independent spirit on the North Slope. Because of the efforts of our aapas and aakas, we are a community of self-government that is in the center of any and all issues that affect our lives, our culture and our way of life. We have a voice, a loud and strong voice, in matters that can make a difference in our future and our children’s future. For that, we should be truly grateful, not just to our forefathers and mothers but also to the God who has watched our journey and made it so fruitful.

The twin epidemics of suicide and domestic violence still rage in our communities and I am committed to supporting any and all efforts to eradicate these scourges. But on this Thanksgiving, I am also extremely grateful to have a platform to use to highlight the problems created by these issues and the funding to do something about it without waiting for some outside agency to approve our plans. We can create programs that reflect our Inupiat values without looking to someone else to say that they approve of what we want to do.

For this, and the support, love and encouragement I receive every day from people across the North Slope, I am so very grateful.

Can you guess who this groups of people are? Looks like they’re enjoying the dinner company?
Village of Barrow (NVB), Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), Alaska Village Initiative (AVI), NSB Planning Department, NSB Capital Improvement Program-Management (CIPM), Osborne Construction Company. All village representatives from each of the villages with the exception of Atqasuk attended the Housing Summit.

The first day we heard all the concerns from the villages and we found each village is unique and has different issues. Overall, the mold in the majority of the units is in dire need of removal with any attendant upgrades deemed necessary to prevent a recurrence. The other issue is housing shortages in all the villages. These two issues were about the biggest complaints we received from all the villages during the first day of the workshop.

The land issue is a real problem in all the villages. There are limited lands for distribution in each of the villages as well as shortages of available land. We will need to work with the village corporations, city administrators, tribal governments, and private land owners to lease and/or purchase outright the land in order to build the housing units. We will also need to look at NSB lands for availability to build duplexes and/or apartment complexes. These are acceptable in the villages per the representatives from each of the villages.

The following day the discussion was to find solutions for each of the villages. All of this will be combined into a report by the facilitator and sent to each attendee in a couple of weeks or less.

Overall this workshop went very well and the residents from each of the villages were very happy with the Housing Summit. All attendee’s would like to do a follow up in about six (6) months to continue to collect data and ascertain whether improvements have happened as well as to research the future direction we would like to take.

Above: One of the designs being looking at for future housing on the North Slope.

Happy Thanksgiving!