

Working Together for the Future of Lake and Peninsula Communities Storybook



**Lake and Peninsula Borough Assembly and
School Board Joint Convening**

May 12, 2026
BP Energy Center

ALASKA
HUMANITIES
FORUM

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1. CONTEXT

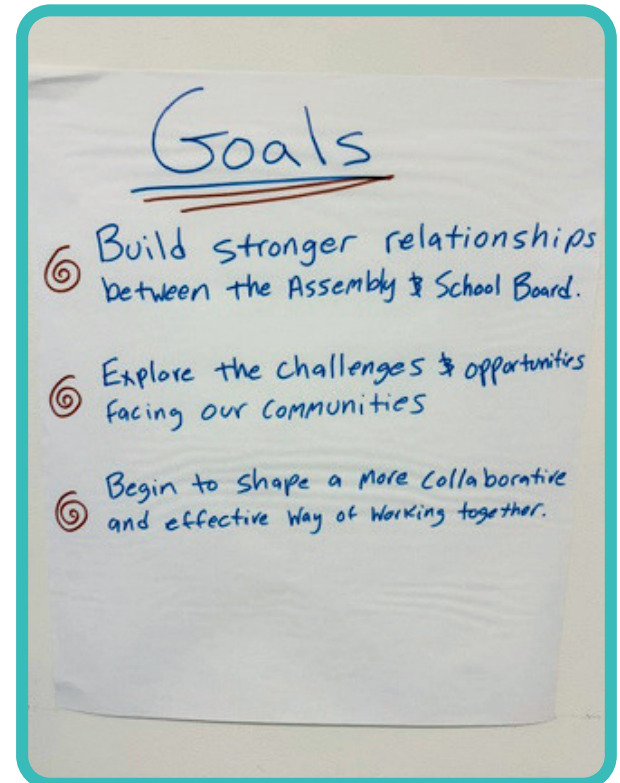
This report summarizes the second joint convening between the Lake & Peninsula Borough Assembly and the Lake & Peninsula School Board held on May 12, 2026. The workshop brought together the full Assembly and full School Board to strengthen relationships, improve communication, and explore shared challenges and opportunities facing communities across the region.

The gathering created space for participants to reflect together on the future of their communities, schools, and young people. Through conversation, small group activities, and shared reflection, participants discussed both the challenges communities are facing and the opportunities that exist through stronger collaboration and continued communication moving forward.

2. WORKSHOP GOALS

The workshop centered around three shared goals:

1. Build **stronger relationships** between the Borough Assembly and School Board.
2. Explore the **challenges and opportunities** facing communities across the region.
3. Begin shaping a more **collaborative and effective** way of working together moving forward.



3. JOURNEY OF THE DAY

The workshop was designed as a shared journey. Rather than jumping immediately into policy discussions or formal business, the day moved through a series of activities intended to:

- build connection,
- create shared understanding,
- identify common challenges and opportunities,
- and explore ways the two bodies could continue working together.

The overall flow of the day included:

1. Opening and Check-In
2. Bringing Wisdom Into the Journey
3. Mountains We Must Climb Together
4. Exploring Possible Paths Forward
5. Reflections and Closing

The structure of the workshop focused on conversation, listening, reflection, and relationship-building.



4. OPENING & CHECK-IN

The workshop began with introductions and a brief opening reflection. Participants shared their role or connection to community along with one hope they had for the workshop.

Many hopes centered around:

- stronger collaboration;
- better communication;
- creative solutions to regional challenges; and
- building stronger relationships across communities and leadership.

The opening helped create a positive and welcoming tone for the day ahead.



5. BRINGING WISDOM INTO THE JOURNEY

The **“Ancestors and Future Generations” activity** invited participants to ground the conversation in **responsibility, stewardship, and long-term thinking.**

Participants reflected on:

- an ancestor, elder, mentor, teacher, or respected guide,
- and a future generation such as a child, student, grandchild, or young person they care deeply about.

Participants were asked:

- What wisdom would these individuals bring into the room?
- What advice would they offer this group as they think about the future of communities, schools, and young people?

The activity helped remind participants that **the challenges communities face today are part of a much longer story — one shaped by the people who came before us and the generations who will come after us.**



6. ADVICE SHARED FROM...

ANCESTORS, ELDERS, MENTORS, AND TEACHERS

- John Christensen Senior (father) — **“Remember to act on your words.”**
- Mary Olympic — **“Never give up on our kids. They are the most important for our future.”**
- Mary — **“Be patient. Be persistent. Be thankful.”**
- Alex Alvarez — **“Endeavor to persevere.”**
- Frank Hill — **“Let’s grow our own.”**
- Katy Wilson — **“Embrace education.”**
- Boris Kosbruk Senior — **“Listen to all people.”**
- Elias Ishnook Senior — **“Always listen with an open heart. We are all different.”**
- My father — **“It is all about the Almighty dollar!”**
- Grandpa Johnny Christiansen — **“Lead with honesty and integrity and leave it better than you found it.”**
- R. Chmiel — **“If you are going to do it, do it well.”**
- Pete Hill — **“My best teacher and education was out of a one room schoolhouse in Levelock.”**
- Willard Anderson — **“Be honest and true to your word.”**
- Grandfather — **“If you’re going to do something, do it right.”**

FUTURE GENERATIONS

- Bret Kosbruk (grandson, 6 years old) — **“Thank you for planning for our future.”**
- Jon Salmon — **“Do not lose our focus.”**
- Tianah Ravenmoon Hyde — **“Don’t forget I love the outdoors.”**
- Julius Anderson — **“Looking for Salmon jumping!”**
- Kaelyn Overton — **“AI is not real.”**
- Gabriel — **“Why? How come? Tell me?”**
- Austin Shangin Junior — **“Use technology to our advantage.”**
- Grandson — **“Provide general education, but promote individual opportunities for professional opportunities.”**
- Kavi Hill — **“Be kind.”**
- Future generation — **“Be a good person.”**
- T.S. Jones — **“Shared adversity inspires.”**
- Brett Kosbruk — **“Don’t forget who you’re doing this for.”**
- Future generation — **“Don’t forget your roots. The structure and strength you came from.”**
- Child — **“Make space for the unexpected / Be flexible.”**
- Struder Anderson — **“Help where it’s needed.”**

7. MOUNTAINS WE MUST CLIMB TOGETHER

The **“Mountains We Must Climb Together” activity** focused on identifying both the challenges and opportunities facing communities across the Lake & Peninsula region.

Participants worked in small groups to:

- identify major concerns affecting communities,
- reflect on strengths and opportunities already present within the region,
- identify patterns and connections,
- and highlight the most important realities communities are navigating together.

The purpose of the activity was not to solve every issue in one conversation. Instead, the goal was to build a stronger shared understanding of:

- the challenges communities face,
- and the opportunities and strengths that can help move the region forward.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that many of these issues are connected and cannot be separated cleanly between schools, local government, families, workforce systems, culture, or community wellbeing.



8. SHARED CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

COST OF LIVING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the strongest themes in the conversation was the high cost of living in rural communities. Participants discussed:

- fuel prices,
- transportation and shipping costs,
- housing shortages,
- energy costs,
- aging infrastructure,
- and access to healthy and affordable food.

There were also concerns about maintaining facilities and infrastructure in small rural communities with limited resources.

WORKFORCE AND POPULATION LOSS

Participants shared concerns about:

- population decline,
- keeping young people in the region,
- workforce shortages,
- and the difficulty of sustaining communities long-term.

There were repeated concerns about shortages in:

- trades,
- mechanics,
- healthcare workers,
- administrators,
- and other skilled positions.



8. SHARED CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Participants discussed:

- communication challenges,
- fear of change,
- language loss,
- and tensions between different perspectives and systems.

There was also strong recognition that communities are strongest when people:

- listen to one another,
- stay connected to shared values,
- and work together respectfully.



EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Participants emphasized the importance of creating stronger pathways for young people after graduation.

Themes included:

- career exposure,
- workforce training,
- entrepreneurship,
- connecting education to community needs,
- and helping young people see opportunities within the region.



8. SHARED CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

FUNDING AND OUTSIDE SUPPORT

Funding was identified as one of the most significant and recurring challenges discussed throughout the workshop.

Participants spoke about:

- limited funding,
- mandates and restrictions,
- red tape,
- and frustration with limited outside support.

There was also honest discussion about difficult decisions related to local funding priorities and how existing resources should be used within the region.

Participants acknowledged that these conversations can sometimes create tension between different bodies and priorities, including questions about:

- what should be funded,
- what investments are most important,
- and how to balance immediate needs with long-term goals.

While these conversations are not always easy, there was also recognition that continued communication and collaboration are important in helping the Assembly and School Board work through these issues together.

HEALTHCARE AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Participants discussed a number of concerns related to health and community wellbeing across the region.

One of the strongest parts of this conversation focused on substance abuse and the impact it is having on individuals, families, and communities. Participants spoke honestly about the challenges communities are facing and the need for continued attention, support, prevention, and healing.

Participants also discussed:

- healthcare access,
- elder care,
- stress on families,
- and uncertainty about the future.

There was recognition throughout the discussion that community wellbeing goes beyond schools alone and requires broader community support, coordination, and long-term investment.

9. SHARED OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

WORKING TOGETHER

One of the clearest themes throughout the workshop was the importance of collaboration. Participants emphasized:

- stronger communication,
- regular opportunities to meet together,
- shared problem-solving,
- and stronger relationships between governing bodies, schools, tribes, staff, and communities.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Participants identified opportunities to strengthen:

- career and technical education,
- workforce pathways,
- entrepreneurship,
- leadership development,
- and local hiring.

There was strong interest in helping young people build skills connected to meaningful careers within the region.



9. SHARED OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE, AND VALUES

Participants expressed deep appreciation for:

- local knowledge,
- elders,
- culture,
- language,
- subsistence traditions,
- and connection to the land.

Many participants emphasized the importance of protecting these strengths while planning for the future.



STRENGTHS OF RURAL LIFE

Participants highlighted the many strengths of living in the region, including:

- strong families,
- local foods,
- clean air,
- wildlife,
- freedom,
- beauty,
- and connection to place.

These qualities were seen as important community strengths worth protecting and building on.



9. SHARED OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

COMMUNITY VISION AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLS

An important conversation emerged around the role schools play within individual communities and what communities want their schools to become moving forward.

Participants discussed the idea that schools in the region may not always need to follow a single traditional model or outside formula. Instead, there was interest in asking deeper questions such as:

- What kind of school does each community want?
- What does success look like locally?
- How can schools better reflect community values, culture, strengths, and priorities?

There was recognition that communities across the region are unique and may have different goals, needs, and visions for education.

This conversation connected closely to broader themes around:

- local decision-making,
- culture and identity,
- workforce development,
- youth opportunity,
- and long-term community sustainability.

Participants expressed interest in continuing these conversations and exploring what it could look like to create educational approaches that feel grounded in the realities and strengths of the region.

INNOVATION AND FUTURE THINKING

Participants also discussed opportunities related to:

- technology,
- tourism,
- partnerships,
- alternative energy,
- and creative problem-solving.

There was strong interest in preparing for the future while staying connected to the values and way of life that make the region unique.

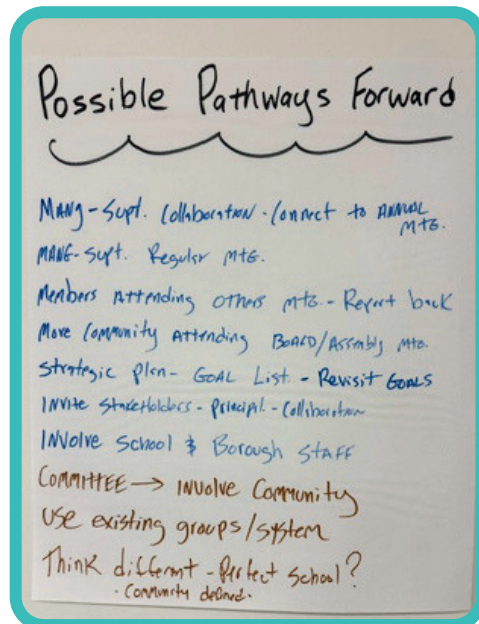


10. EXPLORING POSSIBLE PATHS FORWARD

The **“Possible Pathways Forward” activity** focused on exploring what kinds of **structures, communication pathways, and collaborative practices** could help support stronger coordination moving forward.

Participants reviewed examples from other communities and discussed what approaches might make sense for Lake & Peninsula.

The discussion emphasized that the goal was not to create unnecessary bureaucracy, but rather to identify realistic and meaningful ways to strengthen communication, alignment, and collaboration.



The following ideas emerged during the discussion:

- Hold two in-person joint meetings each year.
- Hold Zoom meetings every other month between in-person gatherings.
- Continue regular joint meetings between the Borough Assembly and School Board.
- Include youth in conversations and planning processes.
- Create a joint committee or working group.
- Hold collaborative budget discussions before budgets move forward formally.
- Share successful practices and ideas from other communities.
- Continue using workshop-style approaches in addition to formal meetings.
- Use existing fall meetings as regular collaboration opportunities.
- Strengthen communication between the Borough Manager and Superintendent.
- Encourage Assembly and School Board members to attend one another's meetings.
- Increase community involvement and participation.
- Develop shared priorities and strategic goals.
- Include principals, staff, stakeholders, and community members in future conversations.
- Build on existing systems and relationships when possible.
- Support each community in defining its own vision for the future.

11. FINAL REFLECTIONS & NEXT STEPS

The convening showed that **while communities across the Lake & Peninsula region face real challenges, there is also strong commitment, resilience, and a genuine desire to work together.**

Throughout the day, participants repeatedly emphasized:

- the importance of relationships,
- the need for communication and coordination,
- the value of listening,
- and the importance of keeping future generations at the center of decision-making.

One of the strongest themes from the workshop was that many of the region's challenges are connected and cannot be addressed in isolation.

At the same time, the gathering also highlighted the many strengths that already exist within the region:

- strong communities,
- deep local knowledge,
- cultural strength,
- creativity,
- and people who care deeply about the future of their communities and young people.

As the workshop came to a close, there was clear interest in continuing the momentum that had been built during the gathering.

Participants expressed a strong desire to:

- continue meeting together,
- create more regular opportunities for communication,
- meet in person whenever possible,
- and develop clearer structures for ongoing collaboration between the Borough Assembly and School Board.

Several possible next steps emerged from the conversation, including:

- regular joint meetings,
- continued workshop-style gatherings,
- collaborative budget discussions,
- stronger coordination between leadership,
- and creating ways to continue building relationships and shared understanding over time.

More than anything, the convening created space for people to **step back from day-to-day pressures, think together about the future of their communities, and begin building stronger relationships for the work ahead.**