

WASHINGTON, D.C. TRIP REPORT
NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BY ANDY BAKER AND JERRY COVEY

OVERVIEW

On February 2, 2020, a team from NSBSD traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Conference on February 4-6. We also used the trip as an opportunity to visit with our legislative delegation and leaders from federal agencies for the purpose of obtaining capital funds to complete the renovation of the Residential Learning Center (RLC), provide additional teaching space if needed, and purchase equipment to support the Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum.

PARTICIPANTS

Superintendent Kathy Agheak, Board President Roxanne Brower, Board Member Qaiyaan Harcharik, Finance Director Fadil Limani, and consultants Andy Baker and Jerry Covey.

MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

- Participated in the NIEA conference where we listened to presentations by NIEA partners and participated in Advocacy Training.
- Met with Senator Sullivan and staff members Quinton Carroll and Sara Berkemeier Bell at 3:00 PM
 - Andy guided the meeting and Jerry provided a brief history of the project and explained the technical and logistical aspects of the funding request.
 - Kathy explained the educational needs that the RLC would meet and explained the critical need for this project to provide much needed course offerings for our students.
 - Roxanne and Qaiyaan explained the benefits of the program for students from small high schools and cited that the RLC is a model used by other rural Alaska districts.
 - Fadil spoke to the North Slope Borough CIP process and the borough's commitment to the project.
 - Senator Sullivan and his staff were very encouraging to our team and provided important guidance that included several potential funding sources. He also suggested that we work closely with Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, at the United States Department of the Interior. Following up on a dinner conversation from the previous evening with Andy, Senator Sullivan asked if we would like to meet with U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to explain our project and capital request. Of course, we said yes.
 - Prior to leaving Senator Sullivan's office, Roxanne provided the Senator with a gift on behalf of NSBSD, and we had time for a group photo.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

- Thanks to Senator Sullivan's connections, we were able to secure a meeting with Education Secretary DeVos on Thursday February 6.

- Kathy and Fadil attended a NIEA session on Federal Appropriations for Native Education at the Capitol Visitors Center.
- Andy worked on meeting arrangements for Thursday with Senator Murkowski, Assistant Secretary Sweeney, Secretary De Voss, and Congressman Young.
- Jerry and Andy worked on developing a Capital Project Overview handout for Thursday's meetings.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

- Met with Senator Murkowski and staff members Nona McCoy and Keli Chong at 11:00 AM.
 - Andy thanked Senator Murkowski for meeting with us, updated her on our meeting with Senator Sullivan, and upcoming meetings with Assistant Secretary Sweeney, Secretary De Voss, and Congressman Young. He also explained that Senator Sullivan recommended Assistant Secretary Sweeney take the lead on coordinating the efforts of our delegation and the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Andy provided the Senator with a brief overview of our purpose for meeting.
 - Jerry provided background on the project and discussed support from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and stipend funding from the Alaska Legislature.
 - Kathy spoke to how the RLC would offer CTE courses that would benefit all students in the district.
 - Qaiyaan explained how the RLC program would provide short duration CTE classes in subjects that could not be delivered in small schools and that students would remain enrolled in their village high schools.
 - Fadil spoke to the North Slope Borough CIP process and the borough's commitment to the project.
 - Senator Murkowski pledged her support and the support of her staff to work with Assistant Secretary Sweeney and others to advance our important project.
 - Nona McCoy's participation in our meeting is significant because she serves on the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and may have an opportunity to advance our capital request.
 - Kathy provided Senator Murkowski a gift from NSBSD, and we had time for a photo opportunity with the Senator.
- Met with Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, at the United States Department of the Interior and staff member Stephanie Conduff at 1:00 PM.
 - Andy, who has met with Assistant Secretary Sweeney on two previous occasions regarding our project, thanked the Assistant Secretary for meeting with us, updated her on our meetings with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan. He also shared with her that Senator Sullivan recommended that she take the lead on our request and clarified that both Senators are committed to working with her.
 - Jerry provided background for the project and updated Assistant Secretary Sweeney on approvals and support for the project from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the Alaska State Legislature.
 - Kathy explained who the RLC program will serve and discussed how distance delivery will impact and benefit all students in the district.

- Qaiyaan spoke of the value of short courses for students, the intent to integrate local culture and language courses into the curriculum, and how the program would ensure students remain anchored to their local high school.
 - Fadil spoke to the borough's commitment to the project.
 - Assistant Secretary Sweeney was well prepared for our meeting and provided the team with numerous suggestions to research for funding for our project. She also shared with the team that her agency was best prepared to coordinate with other agencies to help us achieve our goals. Assistant Secretary Sweeney mentioned that working with the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) would be the organization most likely to partner with NSBSD to provide access to capital funding.
 - Assistant Secretary Sweeney suggested we work closely with Assistant Secretary Frank Brogan at the U.S. Department of Education on this project.
 - At the end of our meeting, we had an opportunity for a photo session with Assistant Secretary Sweeney.
- Met with U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and Assistant Secretary Frank T. Brogan at 3:00 PM.
 - The meeting began with Assistant Secretary Brogan providing an introduction of his education and leadership background. He then engaged our team with some brief questions about the nature of our request and asked questions about NSBSD operations, schools, and students.
 - Secretary of Education DeVos joined the meeting, introduced herself to our team, and shared her insights about education in rural Alaska that were gathered during a July 2019 visit to Alaska with Senator Sullivan, Assistant Secretary Sweeney, and Andy. At that time, Andy provided Secretary DeVos with a brief introduction to our project.
 - We also had time for a photo-op with the Secretary at which time Kathy was able to provide her with a gift from NSBSD.
 - Our team, led by Andy, was able to engage Assistant Secretary Brogan in an in-depth discussion regarding our capital request with each team member providing specifics and answering questions to ensure Assistant Secretary Brogan's understanding of our issue and its importance to the education of our students.
 - The meeting, which lasted well over an hour, ended with Assistant Secretary Brogan's commitment to call together a team from his department to work closely with Assistant Secretary Sweeney and search for available funding to support our project.
 - Kathy, on behalf of our team, invited Secretary DeVos and Assistant Secretary Brogan to Utqiagvik during the summer of 2020. They thanked her for the invite and expressed an interest in the trip.
 - Jerry and Andy will continue to work with Assistant Secretary Brogan and his internal team to provide additional project information.
 - Met with Congressman Don Young, Deputy Chief of Staff Alex Ortiz, and staff member Kevin Swanson at 5:30 PM.
 - Andy thanked Congressman Young for seeing us and provided him an overview and the purpose for our meeting.

- As we did during our other meetings, our team provided Congressman Young with a thorough explanation of the project. Both Kathy and Qaiyaan engaged the congressman of the need for the project, the details of delivering it, and the district's desire to partner with other residential schools to avoid duplication of resources.
- Congressman Young asked many questions about our request and said he was 100% on board with it. He committed to having his staff take an active role in working with Assistant Secretary Sweeney, our Senators, and the U.S. Department of Education to locate and secure funding for our project. The Congressman also said he would work with members of the House Appropriations Committee to recommend funding for the project.

SUMMARY

The trip, arranged on short-notice, was very successful for several reasons. First, we were able to meet directly with Senator Sullivan, Senator Murkowski, Congressman Young, U.S. Secretary of Education DeVos, Assistant Secretary of Education Brogan, and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Sweeney. Second, our delegation and federal agency leaders included key staff members in our meetings to ensure a thorough understanding of our request. Third, thanks to Senator Sullivan's lead, Assistant Secretary Sweeney has offered to work closely with our team and coordinate efforts of our delegation and federal agencies to bring about the best result for NSBSD.

North Slope Borough School District

Residential Learning Center

Capital Request Overview

ASK

The North Slope Borough School District requests 10 million dollars for capital expenditures to complete the remodel of a residential facility and purchase equipment for a Regional Learning Center.

Goal

Establish a Residential Learning Center (RLC) to provide important career and technical education (CTE) and academic opportunities for North Slope Borough School District middle and high school students.

Project History

Initiated by regional leaders in 2012, the RLC project has been carefully developed, vetted by North Slope residents and local employers, and approved by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. Student stipend funding to support the program has been approved by the Alaska State Legislature.

Commitment/Accomplishments

The North Slope Borough School District, North Slope Borough, and a regional employer have taken lead roles and invested significant resources over a period of eight years to bring this project to completion. Currently the school district and borough government are retrofitting a locally donated building to be used as the residential facility. Classroom space to support the program has been allocated at Barrow High School.

Timeline

Remodel of the residential facility is expected to be completed by late fall 2020, and the RLC is expected to begin operation in January 2021.

Capital Needs Breakdown

	\$ 4,000,000 for final renovation of residential facility
	\$ 2,000,000 for additional instructional space
	<u>\$ 4,000,000</u> for equipment to support CTE program
Total	\$10,000,000