



# Resource Development Council

Marie N. Greene, NANA Regional Corporation, President/CEO

## INTRODUCTION

Unnuksraalautak. Uvana atiqā Kasajnaaluk. Ipnatchiaqmi. Good Afternoon. My name is Kasajnaaluk, (Marie Greene); I am originally from the village of Deering.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon. Thank you to the Resource Development Council board and the entire RDC staff for the work you do to facilitate responsible resource development in Alaska.

Let me begin by recognizing my peer and fellow Alaskan Native, Andrew Guy from the Calista region. It's a pleasure to share the podium with you.

I've been asked to speak on NANA's perspective regarding responsible resource development.

Some of you may be aware that the NANA region and its people actually have some history in the mining industry prior to statehood. In fact, several of our villages, like Kiana, were established because of mining.

In 1909, Kiana became a key supply post for placer mines along the Squirrel River. Its post office was established in 1915.

Between 1902 – 1908, 100,000 tons of coal was mined at Chicago Creek, Seward Peninsula to provide coal for local placer- mining operations, primarily the operations near Candle which is part of the Fairhaven Mining District.

The district (including Candle) produced about 600,000 ounces of gold with minor amounts of chromium, copper, lead, platinum, mercury, silver, and rare-earth elements.

My own village of Deering was established in 1901 at the mouth of the IPNATCHIAQ River approximately 60 miles southwest of Kotzebue and 107 miles north of Nome. Its Western name derives from the schooner, Abbie M. Deering.

Deering was settled as a supply outpost to miners operating in Candle. At the height of the gold mining activity, the population of Deering peaked at more than 543 people. In 1910, after a decline in production, that dropped to 207. Today, some 100 years later, 122 people call Deering home.

What remains from that time are abandoned gold dredges and tailings along the hillsides and creeks; a stark reminder of what not to do if responsible resource development is to take place. Today, employment opportunities are limited in my hometown, so subsistence continues to be an important way of life.

The Iñupiat of Northwest Alaska are resource developers, conservationist and land managers. We have learned to work together on how to use our lands in ways that benefit our people and protect our subsistence resources and our traditional culture. We have also learned from contact with Western culture, how to negotiate and leverage assets to ensure our survival.

We use the raw materials of the land and sea to survive, we track the herds, and we take seriously our duties as caretakers of the land. We have learned from those who came before us and we continue to pass this knowledge on to our children and grandchildren.

This is a living and dynamic knowledge; it adapts and changes to the weather, the availability of materials and, since the time of Otto Von Kotzebue, Western economic influences. We had to adjust and endure.

We have made these adaptations for one reason and one reason alone – survival. Survival is not a metaphor or exaggeration. I am speaking literally, of the struggle to remain alive.

For our region, responsible resource development has meant survival in many ways.

Our region and our communities have utilized resource development to preserve our subsistence way-of-life and our lands.

When we look to responsible resource development as an option, we begin in our communities. It doesn't matter if the project is large or small in scale; we start with the people at home.

Many of you know the history of Red Dog Mine, and the decade of community consultation and work with our partners at Cominco (now Teck), and state and federal regulators to make the mine a reality. For more than two decades, the mine has operated on the pillars of partnership: community engagement, protection of subsistence, economic opportunity and respect for culture. We have worked hard with our counterparts at Teck to build bridges of understanding and ensure that NANA shareholders and the region receive maximum benefit from the mine and the zinc it harvests for the world.

Many of you know about the Upper Kobuk Mineral Project, and the years of continued engagement in regards to the advanced exploration taking place there. Since that project began in 2011, 167 NANA shareholders have been employed by it, earning \$1.3 million in combined wages in an area of the state where prices are high and jobs are scarce.

But, you may not know much about the NANA community that started our pursuit of naturally occurring asbestos legislation or why we, as the regional corporation for Northwest Alaska, became involved.

I want to share this with you because it is recent; because it is an example of how we move projects forward in the region; and it is an example of how the survival of one NANA community – and the tools they feel they need to survive - impacts our corporate actions, the region and the state.

## **AMBLER PROJECTS**

Ambler, or Ivisaappaat in Iñupiaq, is about 129 air miles north of Kotzebue. It is home to 259 people.

Like many communities in the region, it is not connected to other communities by road. In winter, trails are marked for intra-regional snowmobile travel. All-terrain vehicles are used throughout the year. Village roads do extend a short way, providing access to the airport and sanitary landfill.

Ambler also has some of the highest costs of living in the state with stove oil around \$11 per gallon and gasoline at \$10.75.

To give you some comparison, you would need \$82 to buy a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread, five pounds of sugar and a pack of diapers in Ambler. In Anchorage you'd need \$19.91.

In 2003, the community was struggling.

Many of Ambler's projects were on hold because the local source of gravel was considered contaminated by Naturally Occurring Asbestos or NOA.

Asbestos, as you may know, is a commercial term that describes certain naturally occurring silicate minerals in the form of long, fibrous crystals.

In rural communities gravel is the essential construction material and is used for runways, sewage lagoons, roads and road improvements, house pads, covers, fill, erosion control, and emergency use among other things.

The discovery of NOA in Ambler suspended critical infrastructure projects including the city's water and sewer project that was being executed by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, or ANTHC, and the community airport project – both critical projects for the village.

So, in 2003, NANA began working with the community and regional partners to resolve the issue.

First, NANA and OSHA inspected the gravel site. NANA also conducted community outreach about the issue and closed the site while further study was conducted.

In 2004, the Alaska Department of Transportation began to actively explore sites for new gravel.

Again, there were multi-agency meetings, community outreach, and NANA also conducted a detailed geological evaluation of the gravel pit.

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, or ANTHC, put their water and sewer project in Ambler on hold through all of this and the airport project was completely halted.

From 2005 to 2009 several steps were taken to ensure safety of residents and to evaluate the risk to humans and migratory animals in the area.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the tireless work of one person and one organization during this time. The former mayor of Ambler, Morgan Johnson, worked with the



city council to pass supporting resolutions, wrote letters, held many meetings, and made phone calls to all who would hear him to make sure his community had the tools it needed to survive.

The Northwest Arctic Leadership Team, or NWALT, an organization comprised of the Northwest Arctic Borough, the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Maniilaq and NANA worked very hard with state agencies and legislators to advocate on behalf of Ambler.

In 2009, the City of Ambler, along with NANA, Maniilaq (the local health non-profit for our region), ANTHC, and DOT met with then Representative Reggie Joule to discuss possible legislation to help Ambler out of its predicament.

Rep. Joule introduced House Bill 333 which grants immunity to land owners who sell gravel containing NOA if they follow state approved standards and operating procedures; while HB 333 did not pass, it jumpstarted the efforts to find a legislative solution to the issue.

NANA, Ambler and regional partners also redoubled efforts surrounding the challenge with gravel and worked with state agencies and legislators to find the solution.

We would not give up!

Finally, on May 7, 2012, Governor Sean Parnell signed HB258. It directed the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to:

- Develop and implement standards and operating procedures;
- To evaluate site-specific use plans;
- And to designate project areas concerning gravel or other aggregate material containing naturally occurring asbestos.

It was sponsored by Representatives Joule, Johnson, Wilson and Pruitt.

#### **FROM THE COMMUNITY TO JUNEAU**

Here is the photo of the signing day with Ambler Mayor at the time, Morgan Johnson, Governor Parnell, former state representative and now Northwest Arctic Borough Mayor Reggie Joule, and NANA's Sonny Adams.

This is what cooperative success looks like. This is what the result of community-led initiatives supported by regional partners, including NANA, looks like.

I'm happy to report that since this photo was taken and because of the passage of HB258, Ambler's projects moved forward and so did the City of Kobuk's. In fact, Kobuk was able to build a new school thanks to HB258.

Ambler was able to move forward with their airport access/grizzly bridge project; airport runway project; sewage lagoon road project; NIHA housing projects, and riverside erosion work.

The thing about this picture is that it could be very different. Had Ambler stated they didn't want that gravel, NANA would have advocated the other way. In fact, we have spent time and money on those options when we initially presented them to the community. But we believe the people who live there know what they want. Our job, as their regional corporation, is to listen to – and assist them with the ends in mind they wish to achieve.

For example, before we engaged in the Red Dog Mine project, the NANA leadership at the time spent years conducting outreach with NANA communities.

Before we engaged in the Upper Kobuk Mineral project, we spent years discussing and surveying our communities to better understand their vision of their future.

Before NANA developed and passed an offshore oil and gas policy, we conducted Listening Sessions in all the regional communities to hear, first hand – the hopes and concerns of our shareholders.

We do this because NANA, as a corporation, is just another resource we developed. It is another adaptation and tool we use to secure the future of our region and our people. We are charged with moving forward in a way that is in alignment with Iñupiat survival. This is why engagement is important. This is why, when we talk to our partners in development, we let them know that consultation with our communities is the most important step they can take. We will move forward when there is consensus. We will move forward with consultation, and we will advocate for, and conduct our corporate actions based on that consensus and cooperation.

### **A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE**

When our partners in the resource development industry see the opportunity to explore or potentially develop, NANA sees the opportunity to create local revenue sources, jobs and a chance at lowering the cost of living for shareholders and its communities, and an economic base for village survival.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

It is the Iñupiat way to find ways to work together so people with different interests can find a common path forward, together.

The starting point is NANA shareholders and communities, including the Elders and local leadership.

While debates continue about development, we seek not to debate – but to find ways to collaborate with all parties. Differing perspectives are too often viewed from an adversarial standpoint rather than an opportunity to examine their beliefs.

As the Arctic opens – it will be more important than ever to be open to all ideas. As Alaskans, we have a common challenge - our state has declining oil revenues. To overcome this challenge, we will need the strengths of a diverse group of people. Chances are good we will not always

agree. Chances are good we will see different solutions. In the end, if we find a way to work together, we will benefit as the best ideas will rise to the top and we will be made better.

I also want to take this opportunity to discuss subsistence. Subsistence is not simply the act of hunting and fishing, it is sacred to Alaska Native people. We cannot, now – or ever – separate our subsistence way-of-life from our Native identity. It is more than food. It is woven into the fabric of our cultural soul. It is who we are. It is our art, culture and songs. It is in the hearts of the Elders and the cries of the newborns. It is more than a word, *or a political position*, it is part of our Ilitqusait – that which makes us who we are.

Many of you in this room know this. Many of you have spent time with the diverse Alaska Native cultures around the state and understand what I am saying.

This is why NANA will continue to use all our resources to protect subsistence. We will work in cooperation and collaboration with our Native and non-Native partners to preserve this sacred right for future generations.

As we move forward, we are mindful of cooperation. It is the primary skill we use to survive. We know that if we are divisive – if it is urban vs. rural, Native vs. non-Native, subsistence vs. development, environmentalists vs. industry – we move forward at our own peril. There is a danger in not being able to find the balance needed to respect all rights.

As leaders in our respective industries, I would like to challenge us to be mindful of opportunities to collaborate. This is the way we will continue to grow and learn. I'm challenging us to do this because, at the end of the day, we need each other to survive.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you about NANA's engagement in resource development.

Aarigaa. Taikuu.

Before my time is up, I do want to end by showing you a video about our partnership at the Red Dog Mine. Next year is the 25th anniversary of operations at Red Dog, and this video is a glimpse at what the power of partnership can do to transform people's lives, change the destiny of a region, and provide benefits to the state, nation and to the world. Taikuu.