

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON WORLD TRADE, TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INTERNATIONAL
TRADE AND TOURISM
March 16, 2010
9:43 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON WORLD TRADE, TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION

Senator Lesil McGuire, Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski

HOUSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TOURISM

Representative Jay Ramras, Chair
Representative Nancy Dahlstrom

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON WORLD TRADE, TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION

Senator Hollis French
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Gary Stevens

HOUSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TOURISM

Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Kyle Johansen
Representative Reggie Joule
Representative Mark Neuman
Representative Harry Crawford
Representative Lindsey Holmes
Representative Chris Tuck

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Rural Alaska Honor Institute Student Documentary Film Debut

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

DENISE WARTES, Program Coordinator
Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI)
Fairbanks, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the RAHI program.

SAMANTHA FOSS, RAHI student
Pedro Bay, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Rural Alaska Honors Institute documentary film.

LAURA FOX, RAHI student
Takotna, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Rural Alaska Honors Institute documentary film.

COREY JOSEPH, RAHI student
Kwigillingok, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Rural Alaska Honors Institute documentary film.

JAYNA KELLY, RAHI student
Pilot Station, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Rural Alaska Honors Institute documentary film.

NELLIE IYAPANA, RAHI student
Little Diomed Island and North Pole, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Rural Alaska Honors Institute documentary film.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:43:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR LESIL MCGUIRE called the joint meeting of the Senate Special Committee on World Trade, Technology and Innovation and the House Special Committee on Economic Development, International Trade and Tourism to order at 9:43 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Wielechowski and McGuire; and Representatives Dahlstrom and Ramras.

RURAL ALASKA HONOR INSTITUTE STUDENT DOCUMENTARY FILM DEBUT

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE announced the business before the committee would be to view films by students from the Rural Alaska Honor Institute (RAHI). She welcomed the students and relayed that the noon viewing would be televised on Gavel to Gavel.

[9:45:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RAMRAS welcomed the students and provided a short lesson on the legislative committee process. He also mentioned the number of females in Alaska who are in positions of influence and counseled the female students to be strong role models. He related that one objective today is to interest Alaska Airlines in offering these documentary films to travelers for in-flight viewing. This would be a great way for Alaskans and visitors to the state to see Alaska through your eyes, he said. He expressed hope that this will become an annual event and emphasized the importance of hearing the strong vibrant voices of young Alaskans.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE encouraged the students to visit other committee meetings during the day. She explained that the Alaska State Legislature has a committee-driven process so a lot of the decisions are made at this level. Topics that are currently being debating range from oil and gas taxes to scholarships for Alaska students. She asked the program advisor to talk about the RAHI program and each student to tell what inspired their work.

[9:50:44 AM](#)

DENISE WARTES, Program Coordinator, Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI), reported that the RAHI program started in 1983. It was the result of a series of meetings between the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) and University of Alaska officials to address the alarming retention rate of Alaska Native and rural students. This competitive 6-week summer program is on the Fairbanks campus for juniors and seniors interested in going to college. All expenses are paid and the students receive college credit.

MS. WARTES relayed that RAHI student Jerica Aamodt who is from Barrow was not present because she had a conflicting school event. Her documentary focuses on climate change and the receding pack ice.

[10:01:21 AM](#)

SAMANTHA FOSS, RAHI student, said she is a senior in high school and was recently accepted to UAF. She decided to produce a documentary on the effect the Pebble Mine potentially will have on her village because she believes that young people should be more attentive to issues that will affect them in the future.

MS. FOSS said that she is half Deg Hit'an Athabascan and half Yupik Eskimo. She lives in the small village of Pedro Bay on Lake Iliamna. Her family has lived in Pedro Bay since the '30s and has always respected the ability to hunt and fish and pick berries. She fears that Pebble Mine will take that away.

MS. FOSS highlighted that Pebble Mine is partnered with Northern Dynasty and Angelo American and has reportedly made a very large gold and copper discovery in Southwest Alaska. Their goal is to get the resource from the mine to Cook Inlet for shipping and that will be done by building 86 miles of road that will run through her village. This will affect Lake Iliamna's watershed, the fresh water seals, and sockeye salmon, she said.

In closing Ms. Foss questioned what will happen to Pedro Bay after Pebble Mine and whether the definition of rural Alaska will have changed.

[10:15:53 AM](#)

LAURA FOX, RAHI student, said she is a high school senior living in the small village of Takotna. She has applied to attend UAF and she hopes to become a lawyer one day. She explained that her documentary focuses on the affect that alcoholism has on children in a family and how a child in that situation sometimes has to assume the role of an adult because the parent is incapable. She believes that this is wrong.

Ms. Fox said hers is a story about a young girl and her brothers becoming warriors through love and devotion. She told about being a child and a caregiver to her brothers and alcoholic mother for five years after their father and grandmother passed away. She and her siblings were eventually separated and later reunited to live with an elderly couple. This couple provided many opportunities and taught the siblings lifelong skills. In particular they learned that they don't need to drink; the experience they had was enough.

[10:17:18 AM](#)

COREY JOSEPH, RAHI student, said he is from Kwigillingok and he is Yupik. He said his language is dying and that is a concern because people who lose their language also lose their world view and perspective. His culture has sayings and teachings that he accepts and believes because he can speak Yupik. If the language is lost, it won't be possible to pass on the thousands of years of wisdom to the children. "How can we teach the wisdom of our people in a foreign language?" he asked.

MR. JOSEPH and his grandmother spoke Yupik throughout his documentary. He described how Kwigillingok began and how the Yupik culture is disappearing as Western innovations become more commonplace. "These things, like a river, cause the old ways to erode," he said.

[10:20:57 AM](#)

JERICA AAMODT, RAHI student from Barrow, describes past and present life of the Inupiat people who live above the Arctic Circle, in the Land of the Midnight Sun. They are a unique people living in a unique place, in a time of great and irreversible change, she said.

MS. AAMODT said her people live near the Arctic Ocean; they are people of whaling. But climate change is changing the definition of the Arctic. The pack ice is receding and no longer protects the shoreline from erosion. Also, it is no longer always within striking distance for hunting. The ocean is changing and now there are just memories of what used to be, she said.

[10:28:29 AM](#)

JAYNA KELLY, RAHI student, said she is from Pilot Station on the Yukon River. She graduated from high school last year and hopes to attend UAF this fall. She is Yupik and she was inspired to document her family and her culture. She and her siblings are often asked to teach the Yupik language to people living in the Yukon area. Many have lost this ability, she said.

MS. KELLY titled her documentary, "Living an Alaskan Life." She told about caring for her brothers and sister. Losing their mom was hard, but they are moving on. Summers are fun; they swim, camp, and fish with family and friends. Her brothers go net fishing in the summer and ice jigging in the winter. When her brother was lucky enough to get a black bear they brought it home and ate it for dinner. Special occasions, birthdays, and

holidays are celebrated surrounded by family and friends. There are many smiles. At the end of the day they tell their brothers that they can have fun again tomorrow.

10:32:10 AM

NELLIE IYAPANA, RAHI student, said she is originally from Little Diomed Island in the Bering Sea, but since age 9 she has lived in North Pole. She is a first-year student at UAF and she was inspired to document her life experiences. Ms. Iyapana explained that because her biological mother was addicted to alcohol, she was unable to take care of herself and had to relinquish her parental rights.

MS. IYAPANA talked about everything happening for a reason. If she hadn't been placed in state custody, she wouldn't be where she is today. She is the only person from Little Diomed who is getting a college education and she knows she has a bright future. Ms. Iyapana's documentary is very appropriately titled, "Let Your Light Shine."

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE thanked the students and the following people for their tireless and expert help: Denise Wartes as the project leader; Ann Ringstad from UAF; Tara Sweeney with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation; Hugh Short with Alaska Growth Capital; her aide, Shalon Szyamanski; and Jane Pierson and Margaret Dowling, aides to Representative Ramras.

10:36:51 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair McGuire adjourned the meeting at 10:36 a.m.