

Hosting Future Leaders from the North

High School Students from Northwest Arctic Borough Communities Visit Headquarters

By Jennifer Ewald

High School students representing four communities within the Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) visited with officials at BOEM, the Department, the White House and Congress during a visit to Washington, D.C. this month. The seven students were winners of the NWAB Subsistence Youth Essay Contest sponsored by the NWAB Subsistence Mapping Project, a four-year project to promote the subsistence way of life and maintain the Iñupiaq culture in the region for future generations. Involving the youth was a key component for success in the project. Additionally, these youth leaders engaged in the Generation Indigenous Challenge, a White House call to action in addressing issues facing Native youth and creating opportunities to promote youth voices in their communities and with agency leadership.

The NAB is the second largest borough in Alaska, comprising approximately 39,000 square miles along the Kotzebue Sound, Wulik, Noatak, Kobuk, Selawik, Buckland and Kugruk Rivers. The region experiences a transitional climate, characterized by long, cold winters and cool summers and is home to about 7,500 people.

The students — representing the villages of Kotzebue, Kiana, Noorvik and Kobuk — were interested in discussing how they can affect public policy and the decision-making process for the Arctic in the future. They are:

- Brianna Riley (Kianna High School)
- Dustin Harvey (Kobuk High School)
- Jeremy Barr (Kianna High School)
- Kaelyn Stalker (Kianna High School)
- Kalyne Shieldt (Kotzebue High School)
- Melody Smith (Kotzebue High School)
- Wilfried Zibell (Noorvik High School).

Read about their visit in a group essay edited by Wilfried Zibell [click here](#)



Elizabeth Ferguson (far left) describes her Gen-I challenge. She is the first youth Council Member in Kotzebue, AK.



Discussing their vision for the Arctic future.



L-R: Wilfried Zibell, Brianna Riley, Kalyne Shieldt, Melody Smith, Kaelyn Stalker, Dustin Harvey, Jeremy Barr



A visit with former Director/now DOI Chief of Staff Tommy Beaudreau, who grew up in Alaska.