“Skin in the game” was an appropriate talking point as Nome government, business, industry and Alaska Native-represented organizations asked questions of Commissioners Drygas and Johnson about the State’s fiscal challenge, and with regard to budget cuts impacting NACTEC the past two years.

Whether it be State of Alaska partners in Nome’s: Youth Facility, DMV office, Job Center, or Bering Strait School District, Nome Public Schools and UAF-Northwest Campus partners or our many business, industry, and Native Corporation partners it truly “takes a village” to build and support NACTEC. We thank you all for stepping forward in this dialogue, so important to our region’s future direction.

Douglas J. Walrath, Ph.D.
Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center

NATIVE ARTS - BUSINESS/MARKETING/ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRAND

With nearly 95% of NACTEC’s students of Alaska Native heritage, the culturally relevant Native Arts strand was highlighted with the fabrication of a 20’ traditional Inupiaq Umiaq project (left). Ten time Greenland kayaking champion Maligiaq Padilla, who leads NACTEC’s kayak fabrication, showed his handicap to Commissioner Drygas and Commissioner Johnson. The Business, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship strand is infused with skin sewing, bone/ivory carving, or traditional kayak/umiaq fabrication.

This strand capitalizes on the region’s talented Native Artists, who mentor students at home, combined with 21st century information technology tools used to market to a global audience. Pictured to right, Maligiaq Padilla teamed up with the late Vince Pikonganna, a King Island elder, to fabricate the first King Island style kayak made in over 70 years at NACTEC in June, 2016.

KATIRVIK CULTURAL CENTER

Commissioner Drygas met briefly with Kativik Cultural Center Director, Lisa Ellanna in the new Foster Building. NACTEC’s importance working with regional youth, preserving culture while developing their vocational training skills, was emphasized as critically important. The beautiful craftsmanship of the King Island style kayak, proudly displayed above the Kativik Cultural Center’s entrance, preserves a lasting legacy of the late Vince Pikonganna. It will continue to impact future generations, just as with these students from a 2016-17 NACTEC training program (above).
UAF-Northwest Campus Director, Bob Metcalf, discussed the importance of Healthcare training underway on campus with CNA training, as well as Health Aide Pre-session training at NACTEC. Pictured above (top) recent high school graduates display their completion of training certificates to enter the Health Aide training field.

While at UAF-NWC Commissioner Drygas met with High Latitude Range Management students and Bering Strait School District classroom aides, working toward teacher certification, all thankful for opportunities to further their Education.

Another topic of significant interest was Maritime-related needs. Pictured to right a Shaktoolik student assists Commissioner Johnson on a Boating Skills Virtual Trainer. The morning began with an observation of NACTEC students involved in morning swimming, similar to immersion suit training (right). Apprenticeship training, as is occurring with Calista Corporation, was noted in the Maritime sector.

**REGIONAL PRIORITIES**

NPS Superintendent, Shawn Arnold, led Commissioner Johnson through Nome Public Schools and met with the Bering Straits Leadership Team, noting regional education priorities: Cultural Relevancy, Early Childhood & Elementary Education, Growing Our Own Teachers, and Post-secondary Preparation and Transitioning Success which emerged for the 2015 Norton Sound Education Summit.

NACTEC Director, Doug Walrath, led Commissioner Drygas on a partner’s tour including Nome One Stop Job Center, UAF-Northwest Campus, and Norton Sound Health Corporation. A locally delivered CNA to RN program was highlighted. While touring Quyanna Care Center, NSHC’s Megan Mackiernan (left) noted 40% of current CNA’s are locally grown, with a goal of 100% in the next two years. Commissioner Drygas identified the role apprenticeship training could serve in future training. With 650 employees, NSHC is the largest Bering Straits regional employer.
As highlighted by NACTEC’s industry partners, Class D licenses become step #1 toward CDL licensure and the need for locally grown heavy equipment operators to address future regional growth in Maritime, Construction, and Natural Resource Development sectors.

Commissioner Drygas and Commissioner Johnson work alongside a White Mountain freshmen (left), operating motion-based heavy equipment simulators. Bering Straits Native Corporation, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, Shell Exploration, ConocoPhillips, and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative partners utilized Education Tax Credits, and corporate contributions to build this eight-machine training center; alongside boating, aviation, and welding simulators, bringing workforce development training tools into the student dorm.