

Coordination and Convening of the 2016 Arctic Science Summit Week

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The Arctic Science Summit Week, Arctic Observing Summit, Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials, Model Arctic Council, and International Arctic Assembly were convened on the campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks with great productivity and satisfaction of the participants. We were pleased to welcome over 1000 participants from 30 different nations and over 130 different institutions. The organization and execution of these meetings was extensive and complex involving more than 250 coordinators, volunteers and contributors from across Alaska. The participants were enthusiastic in their praise of the content and accomplishments of the meeting, but they were equally happy about the genuine welcome offered to our guests by the people of Alaska. Hosting a complex event such as this summit required an army of supporting services and we were blessed to have volunteers from Fairbanks, North Pole, Anchorage and other communities throughout Alaska helping us meet these needs. This truly was an event hosted by the people of Alaska.

The significance of these events cannot be overstated. The US and global communities are finally coming to the realization of the important role that the Arctic plays in international politics, economics, and science. The Arctic has experienced tremendous changes in recent years, offering new opportunities that may be addressed through international collaborations, and serious challenges that must be addressed through active investment, adaptation and national and international coordination. Over 10% of the meeting participants were indigenous peoples, from indigenous organizations or hailed from small remote communities. This is still lower than we had hoped, but it is greater participation than similar meetings have experienced in the past. It is through such engagement that we can attack problems related to the changing environment, stagnant economies, and social ills.

In many respects, the Arctic retains many of the problems and questions that we have acknowledged for decades. In some cases, our ability to address these challenges is simply limited by the lack of measurements and limited understanding. Many of these sessions focused upon this lack of observations and how agencies and nations may cooperate to improve our ability to make more accurate weather and climate predictions, but also to make better appraisals of how ecosystems, coastlines, and wildlife populations will change.

The meeting participants and organizers were extremely pleased with the results and products of this meeting. Problems, questions and challenges were identified and defined. Collaborations were established. Cooperation among nations was enhanced. People returned home with a clearer vision of the issues before us and the pathways towards resolution of those problems. We still have much work to do, but through continued dialogues and committed partnerships, we can make the Arctic and the world a better place for all.

On behalf of the organizing committees for these meetings, we thank the Department of Energy for your help and support in bringing these discussions to Alaska. We will continue our efforts to advance Arctic science and policy and look forward to hosting the Arctic Council Ministerial in May 2017.