

# MESSENGER

Spring 2021



## FISH STORIES

By Jens Laipeniks CEO/General Manager



The second week of December 2020 was unlike any in the history of ASTAC. In the 10+ years that I have been with the Cooperative, our annual meetings had always taken place in the first two weeks of July. It became one of my favorite weeks of the entire year, filled with both new and familiar faces. Visiting with the members and village reps, enjoying conversations with elders, hearing stories of hunts and fantastic fishing stories, witnessing the results of the beluga harvest, and best of all, seeing the endless beauty in the landscapes of the North Slope.

Typically, the week was always a bit hectic, especially for the uninitiated unaccustomed to small planes, and 12-14 hour days. Most days consisted of two meetings in two different villages, one midday, and the other in the early evening. We would always rise early, spend hours flying between villages, with just enough time to get set up before members began to arrive. After the meeting, we would hustle back to the plane and zip on to the next village for the evening meeting. Some years the weather was perfect, with light winds to keep the mosquitoes down, and everything went like clockwork. In other years, flights were delayed, the fog was thick as concrete, planes had mechanical issues, and frantic rescheduling took place over the phone, updating members over the VHF. There was always something that made each trip particularly memorable and they were always a great adventure for me. It was this adventure that I missed most in 2020.

As a result of COVID-19, the ASTAC annual meetings were postponed from the normal July window as we monitored to see how the virus would impact our plans. Finally, as October approached, we had to commit to a virtual meeting format, and per our Bylaws, we had to complete the meetings by December. In many ways the scramble was familiar, setting up web pages for registration, learning to use Zoom (ahh Zoom!) to present powerpoints, videos, election results and Bylaw amendments.

continued on page 2

**AFFORDABLE**  
**MANAGEABLE**  
**FASTER**  
**LOCAL**

**HOME INTERNET +**  
Choose your plan  
**SIGN UP TODAY!**



## DECEMBER SURVEY WINNER

ASTAC would like to thank all those that participated in our customer satisfaction survey in December. The information is invaluable to us and we appreciate everyone taking the time to provide their feedback. Emmanuel Samuelu of Utqiagvik was the winner of our drawing for an Xbox Series X gaming console. Congratulations Emmanuel!

## GIVING BACK DURING THE HOLIDAYS



In true holiday spirit ASTAC employees participated in Alaska Child & Family's Christmas Toy Donation program this holiday season. Alaska Child & Family is an organization that brings hope to troubled young lives through a broad range of services to help young people build strong, positive and healthy lives.

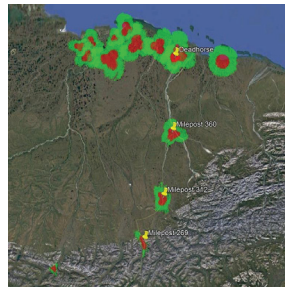
## Fish Stories continued from page 1

In keeping with our tradition, we even took our door prizes to a new level with a virtual spinning wheel of names. We held 9 individual meetings, two per day and one for each market, to ensure we maintained a personal experience with our members.

It is difficult to predict how 2021 will unfold, but we are coming out strong with our new Home Internet+ products, with many enhancements scheduled to follow which will make our products even more robust and manageable. The annual meeting scramble will surely come again and I hope to see everyone in person and hear more fantastic fishing stories.

Jens

## DALTON HIGHWAY LTE SITES



ASTAC turned up three new 4G LTE sites in late December making it the first telecommunications company to bring wireless coverage from the Brooks Range to Deadhorse, where no other coverage had existed previously. These sites will improve safety and connectivity along this remote 414-mile critical Alaskan corridor for both

ASTAC and AT&T wireless customers. ASTAC plans to turn up three additional sites on the Dalton Highway this year.



## REFERRAL PROGRAM

Earn ASTAC cash telling friends and family about your great ASTAC service! Once your referral has signed up for new service and your eligibility has been verified, ASTAC will add a \$50 bill credit to your account for every new customer you refer.

## SWOOSH PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

ASTAC has been hosting a Swoosh free-throw contest in each of the eight residential communities it serves since 2009. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ASTAC changed its annual contest from an in-person free-throw competition to a photo contest.

In October & November last year, participants submitted photos of themselves shooting a free-throw in various locations. All North Slope Borough residents were eligible to participate and need not be an ASTAC member. Three winners were randomly selected from the 14 entries received.



### Grand Prize Winner:

Roy Akootchook, Kaktovik, Trip for two to see the NCAA Men's Final Four in Indianapolis, Indiana



### 1st Place

#### Prize Winner:

Tayshaun Johnson,  
Point Hope,  
Dribble Up  
Basketball



### 2nd Place

#### Prize Winner:

Molly Ahkivgak,  
Atqasuk,  
Trickster  
Basketball

## 2020 ANNUAL MEETINGS

One hundred and thirty-one ASTAC members participated in their community's Annual Meeting in December. The meetings were held virtually in an effort to protect and accommodate our member communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff presented an overview of the Cooperative's 2019 activities, answered pre-submitted questions and awarded door prizes. We'd like to thank those that attended and extend our appreciation for everyone's patience and understanding with the change in meeting delivery. A list of door prize winners can be found on our web site under company, member info, annual meetings.



## ELECTION RESULTS

Director elections in Anaktuvuk Pass, Kaktovik and Wainwright were held in November. Pearl Burris of Anaktuvuk Pass, Carla SimsKayotuk of Kaktovik and Isabel Nashookpuk of Wainwright were all re-elected to three-year terms. Included on the ballot was a Bylaw amendment increasing board compensation. The amendment passed with 67.7% voting for and 32.3% voting against it.

Of 2,007 eligible members, 163 ballots were cast yielding an 8.12% participation rate.

## 911 EMERGENCY NUMBERS, ALL LOCATIONS

### FOR POLICE AND FIRE, CALL 911

Notice: The 911 emergency number has been developed to quickly respond to crisis situations. Call 911 only when human life or property is in jeopardy.

## CALL 8-1-1 BEFORE YOU DIG

Just one easy call provides free utility locate services, call 1-800-478-3121.



**APPLY TODAY! \$2,500** TOWARDS TUITION

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2021**





## BATTERIES + BULBS

Batteries + Bulbs and ASTAC have teamed up to provide each ASTAC member a 20% discount on all device repairs, plus free shipping, and free loaner phones! Contact us our Customer Experience team at 1-800-478-6409 to get started.



## ASTAC WINS USDA GRANT

In November the USDA announced it awarded ASTAC with a \$5.3M grant as part of its RUS Rural E-Connectivity (Reconnect) program. ASTAC will match the grant with our own \$2M investment to expand our network to provide customers in Kaktovik with access to affordable high-speed broadband. Fiber to the Home work will begin this summer, but the tower construction activities will not begin until next winter for the Camden Bay Tower. Services in the community will begin in the summer of 2022.

## CHARLIE CARPENTER RETIRES



Chief Network Officer Charlie Carpenter retired on December 31, 2020, after more than 17 years with ASTAC. Charlie has been an integral part of ASTAC's Operations team as they have supported our cooperative's network evolution, including Fiber to the Home, IP switching and 4G LTE projects. He will be remembered for his outstanding leadership, tireless hard work, and Hawaiian-themed shirts. Charlie will be spending his well-deserved retirement in Anchorage enjoying more time with this family, fishing, and traveling to see his grandchildren.

## BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Congratulations to the following four teams for winning their district battle and advancing to the state competition!

**Nuiqsut Trapper:** 3rd Grade Team

**Eben Hopson Middle School:** 5-6th Grade Team & Middle School Team

**Barrow High School:** High School Team

In addition to ASTAC's \$15,000 donation that covers the cost of books and materials for the district, ASTAC also produces t-shirts for each participant and coach. This year's t-shirt was designed by Flora Rexford of Kaktovik.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Marietta Aiken**  
PRESIDENT, UTQIAGVIK

**Carla SimsKayotuk**  
VICE PRESIDENT, KAKTOVIK

**Sophie Tracey**  
SECRETARY/TREASURER, POINT LAY

**Isabel Nashookpuk**  
ALTERNATE SECRETARY,  
WAINWRIGHT

**Pearl Burris**  
DIRECTOR, ANAKTUVUK PASS

**Marlene Bolt**  
DIRECTOR, NUIQSUT

**Della Segevan**  
DIRECTOR, ATQASUK

**John Long Jr.**  
DIRECTOR, POINT HOPE

**Trish McFarlin**  
DIRECTOR, PRUDHOE BAY

## ASTAC OFFICE

4300 B St. Suite 501,  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
907-563-3989 Anchorage  
907-852-7100 Utqiaġvik  
800-478-6409 Toll-free  
E-mail: info@ASTAC.net

