The community of Watford City, ND served as a great example for the theme of the tenth Class V seminar, Leading in a Changing World. Our seminar kicked off with a luncheon and presentations from Darick Franzen, President of the Watford City Area Chamber of Commerce and Doug Bolken, McKenzie County Tourism Director. They both discussed the opportunities and challenges that the oil and gas industry have brought to the area. One of those small challenges was the inability to find propane in town one day to grill steaks.

We then participated in some change process exercises lead by RLND Director, Marie Hvidsten. Our day continued with a short walk to the Long X Trading Post Visitor Center and a tour of the Pioneer Museum from Class III alumna, Jan Dodge. Some of the highlights included a 60 million year old petrified tree stump, a scale model drilling and workover rigs as well as a video on the hydraulic fracturing process.

The day concluded with a Leadership Dinner at Tobacco Gardens Resort, owned and operated by RLND Class II alumna Peg Hellandsaas. McHenry County Commissioner Ryan Taylor provided us with some insight on leadership with a little horse sense, cowboy logic and roping tricks.

Day two brought a wide variety of individuals together for a well-rounded panel discussion entitled: Leading in Fast Forward. The panel discussion was moderated by McKenzie County JDA Executive Director, Gene Veeder. Panel members included: Kirk Olson (ND Farm Bureau State Board Director), Dale Patten (McKenzie County Bank President), Brent Sanford (Mayor of Watford City), Jay Frederick (District Ranger for the the USDA Forest Service), Lynn Welker (Stakeholder Relations Advisor with QEP Resources, Inc.), Blaine Hoffman (Northern Rockies District Superintendent for Whiting Oil & Gas, and Matt Kelly (Attorney with Tarlow Stonecipher & Steele, PLLC).

Each panelist gave an overview of their roles and the positive and negatives of the booming energy industry in Western North Dakota.

After hearing so much about the activity in the area, it was time for us to get outside and take a look for ourselves. Our adventure began with a tour of the Target Logistics workforce housing facility north of Watford City and continued around the community viewing new housing and commercial developments built or in the process of construction including the Connie Wold Wellness Center.

The remainder of the afternoon was in the oil patch learning from Doug McCartney, Kent Pelton and Lynn Welker of QEP Resources about the oil drilling process in various stages of development. Our evening concluded with a dinner hosted by Class V classmate Vawnita Best and her family at their Elkhorn Creek Ranch with musical entertainment from Gene and Jessie Veeder.

Saturday morning we were back in the classroom learning about the World Cafe process, the RLND Alumni Association and finding our voice as we move forward from our RLND Class V experience. The class shared with each other what they learned about themselves and each other over the past 18 months. The world is changing, we are ready to lead, so let’s make it happen.