

# Multi Region Leadership Conference (MRLC) February 2018, Buffalo NY

“The Frozen North”

By: Michael Bogue

You never think about just how small NH is until your sitting on a plane and a voice from the seat behind you winds up belonging to a fellow ASCE-NH



Board member (Tim Dunn, PE - Clerk). No we weren't going to the same conference, I was heading to Buffalo NY and he was heading to Arizona. While I was

heading out to spend two days of meetings in The Frozen North, he was heading out for a weekend of sun and biking! My efforts to convince him to trade weekends with me were unsuccessful to say the least.

After the unexpected company on the flight to Detroit, I made it to Buffalo right around lunch time. As I walked out of the airport I found myself flanked by several other folks heading to the bus stop. We were all trying to find the least expensive and efficient method to get to downtown Buffalo. As it turned out we were all heading not only to the same area, but the same conference. I had come across a large group of southerners heading to the 2018 MRLC, already shivering and questioning why we planned a conference in Buffalo in February. We exchanged pleasantries and decided to split an



UBER as opposed to waiting the 45 minutes for the bus to get there to pick us up.

We gathered in the hotel lobby and registered for the conference around 4:30 that afternoon, then boarded tour busses to head to Niagara Falls for some pre conference networking. Representatives from all up and down the east coast



were there ready to share experiences and make new connections. Fighting through traffic the tour guide attempted to wow us with his extensive knowledge about the Falls, and the surrounding area. He was definitely knowledgeable about the historical events, but when he attempted to sprinkle in some science pertaining to Nikola Tesla, let's just say we found a few flaws in his information. None the less, we enjoyed the majority of the bus ride through Buffalo traffic and arrived at the Falls well after night fall.

While visiting Niagara Falls at night in February is beautiful, it is also vaguely similar to hanging out in a beer cave at the grocery store while the sprinklers are going

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off! We explored quickly and managed to get some great photos but always returned to the busses much earlier than scheduled.



We also learned that this was the sight of the first Major Hydroelectric Power Plant in the world. Designed and built by Nikola Tesla and George Westinghouse, it made Buffalo the beginning of the age of electricity! Of course as engineers, the statue of Tesla was a huge draw, some of us even felt the need to climb up into his lap as if he were Santa and we were a bunch of children eager to give him our Christmas lists!

Our first night of networking concluded with several of us wandering out to a late dinner at Bada Bing! Of course wings were the main draw, I mean who can go to Buffalo without getting the signature



dish! We parted ways and attempted to get a good night's sleep, as the first meeting the next morning was at 7am.

The true purpose of the MRLC began Friday morning bright and early. We assembled in the hotel conference room and shared a light breakfast while we got down to business. ASCE President Kristina Swallow kicked off the festivities with a welcome



speech and a rundown of the agenda. We had a big weekend planned, meetings were scheduled from 7am-5pm Friday and 7am-3:30pm on Saturday, culminating with an awards banquet Saturday night. We all just planned on not sleeping much for this trip. There were even discussions scheduled during lunch to maximize the time we had to get things accomplished.



Meeting/discussion topics ranged from regional breakout sessions to discuss section needs with our governors, to a Q&A with the president

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elect, changing requirements for MWBEs in NY, a meet and greet with the 2018 ASCE Presidential candidates, and continued discussions on raise the bar. While some discussions were quick and cordial, others were, as always, hot button topics.



Endless conversations continued throughout lunch and into the halls during short breaks. I even got into a heated discussion about raise the bar with the panelists that had been invited to join us, at the hotel bar after the completion of the conference.

There were also round table discussions about where we would like to see ASCE go and how we can get there, through coordination of best practices and developing connections to other regions to avoid reinventing the wheel. Topics during the round table discussions included K-12 community outreach programs, increasing membership, professional development, fundraising strategies and several others.

With the meetings, voting and discussions (arguments) concluded, the weekend was wrapped up with a tour of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Martin house before

the Awards banquet. I would have loved to share some interior photos with you as I have always been a huge FLW fan, but we were asked to refrain from taking any pictures during the tour.

After the tour we were escorted across the



courtyard and into the banquet hall where the ASCE Buffalo section hosted a Younger Members awards banquet. President Swallow addressed us once again and reminded us of the 8 Canons of ASCE. The newest of which “Treat All

Persons Fairly” we had already discussed at length during one of our many meetings. I had the fortune of sitting next to KN (Guna) Gunalan during the banquet. Guna is running for ASCE President and was seen throughout the weekend answering questions, and giving every member as much attention as they wanted. I unfortunately did not have



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the opportunity to speak one on one with Louis C Aurigemma the other presidential nominee, but I did hear him speak during a Q&A earlier in the day alongside Guna. Both candidates were well spoken and had some great ideas for the future of ASCE. I encourage all of you to spend some time reading about the candidates and making an informed decision at election time in a few months. The candidate’s bios can be found here <http://www.asce.org/elections/>.

All in all the weekend went great! The meetings were well organized, the food was surprisingly good, and the networking events had no shortage of fun. While I was in Buffalo they continually reminded us that they were known as the city of good neighbors, a fact that I found to be true when I wound up at a whiskey bar at 2 in the morning hanging out with the owners of Boones



Hillside Barbeque! Buffalo in February at first thought was a CRAZY idea, but after enjoying the food, the sights and the company, I really think it was the right choice!

