

# Election '90: Sovereignty, subsistence To be key issues

by Geoff Kennedy  
for the Tundra Times

Subsistence and Native sovereignty will be the dominant issues in the 1990 statewide elections for several representatives of Alaska Native organizations.

"Subsistence will be number one," said Matthew Nicolai, president of the Calista Business Investment Corp., a subsidiary of Calista Corp. "Anchorage legislators will have to deal with it."

The vice president of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Myron Naneng of Bethel, agreed. He said the key issue will be whether to amend the Alaska Constitution to allow a rural or a Native preference.

Mitch Demientieff, president of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, calls subsistence a "very, very major" issue. He doesn't know yet, however, what kind of subsistence law TCC will support.

In December, the Alaska Supreme Court declared the state subsistence law unconstitutional for setting a preference for rural residents. The court gave the state until July 1 to devise a new law.

The Alaska Federation of Natives supports changing the constitution to provide the rural residents preference again. AFN Executive Assistant George Irvin says subsistence will continue to dominate Native politics throughout the year. If the state fails to resolve the problem, the U.S. secretary of the Department of the Interior may step in and manage fish and game on federal lands in Alaska, he said.

Irvin said another important issue will be Native sovereignty.

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"It's a dominant and recurring issue at the heart of the Native community," he said.

A federal court last month ruled that Alaska Native groups do enjoy the status of tribes in other states, but the court did not consider the extent of their tribal powers. Irvin said the Alaska Native community generally supports the concept of sovereignty but different regions and different villages apply the concept differently.

Tribal sovereignty was a top issue for Demientieff.

"We may find a candidate who's willing to accept tribes in Alaska and to promote that fact," he said, but the state, in his opinion, is always fighting tribal status on "every little thing."

That's ironic, he said, because tribal status frequently enables Native non-profit organizations to administer social services in Alaska. Without tribes to run the federal programs, he said, the federal government could leave the responsibility for such programs to the state.

He said rural Alaskans also need the state to continue spending money on water and sewer projects and on coping with hepatitis and other recurring health problems.

Nicolai also cited the unitary tax. Alaska is the only state that taxes large corporations on their earnings worldwide, he said, and the state needs to tax them on the profits they make in Alaska.

"We have a lot of resources that are yet to be developed," he said.

Even though the 1990 federal census will occur before the elections, reapportionment still will remain an important issue, Nicolai said. Keeping Alaska Natives on the reapportionment board will be important for years to come, he added.

Alaskans so far have nine gubernatorial candidates to choose from.

Three persons have said they plan to run as Democrats:

•Tony Knowles served two terms as Mayor of Anchorage.

•Stephen McAlpine the former

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*—Mitch Demientieff*

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The problem, he said, is that attorneys-general frequently create policies when they issue legal opinions. To some extent, Demientieff said, the selection of governor is less important than that governor's selection of attorney general.

Jim Hart, president of the Bristol Bay Native Corp., considers the Alaska economy the top issue in 1990. He said the state must create an investment climate that creates economic opportunities and more jobs in the private sector without risking harm to the environment. At the same time, he said, the state government must control its spending.

Irvin and Naneng agreed education was an important political issue.

Irvin said providing enrichment programs for students in very small schools, sending students to regional high schools instead of high schools in their own villages, or sending students from very small villages to Mount Edgecumbe in Sitka are all options, but the AFN hasn't taken any position on any of them.

Naneng's major considerations are how schools can serve the future needs of their students. He said politicians need to find ways to provide technical, business and administrative skills for Native Alaskans. When fish, game, and wildlife management positions become available in rural Alaska, he said, the people there should have the skills to fill them.

Naneng is also concerned with keeping the same level of state services to rural Alaska as oil revenues shrink. The state spent a lot of money to build facilities in the early 1980s, he said, but now the state has to spend the money to maintain those buildings.

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Mayor of Valdez, is completing his second term as lieutenant governor.

•Anchorage construction worker Ryal White ran for the U.S. Senate in 1988.

Five more are competing as Republicans:

•Anchorage Sen. Arliss Sturgewski won the 1986 GOP primary in the governor's race but lost in the general election.

•Don Wright of Fairbanks served as AFN president and ran for governor as the Alaska Independence Party candidate.

•Chugiak Sen. Rick Halford is serving his third term in the Senate after two terms in the House.

•Anchorage businessman John Lindauer served one term in the State House and was the first chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage.

•Anchorage businessman Jim Campbell served on the Anchorage Assembly and chaired the North

Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

Daniel DeNardo of Anchorage has added his name to the list as a write-in candidate.

Two Democrats are running for lieutenant governor:

•Former AFN President Willie Hensley of Kotzebue, president of NANA Regional Corp., served two terms in the State House and three in the State Senate.

•Kenai Mayor John Williams serves as president of the Alaska Conference of Mayors.

Three Republicans are running for lieutenant governor:

•Jack Coghill of Nenana is serving his fifth term in the State Senate and has served in the Territorial House.

•Anchorage businessman Don Smith has served on the Anchorage Assembly.

•Glenn Fredericks of Anchorage co-chaired the AFN.