

An education for elections, living is needed

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The recent election shows the need we have for well-educated voters in Alaska.

In the coming years people will have different kinds of jobs, will move from place to place and be involved in a variety of projects. But the one thing all of us will have to do is learn to vote intelligently.

The schools — especially the high schools — have to teach people how to be informed and wise voters.

For instance, we have to learn to look beyond the smile and friendly handshake of the candidate and look at what they stand for. When the person has been in office, we have to learn how to look at their actual voting record to see if they have done what they say they would do.

If they are challenging an incumbent, we have to see how realistic their promises are.

Another very important need for rural voters is to make sure they have good representatives on the statewide level. As the urban population grows, the power of the rural vote will decline.

The people we elect will have to be people who can see beyond their own neighborhood and look at what is good for the entire State of Alaska.

Intelligent voters have to know how to spot mis-information, half-truths and just outright lies. For example, I saw a campaign ad which implied that the Natives had been "given" 40,000,000 acres of land.

That's not really true at all. In fact, the Natives had laid a good legal claim to more than 300 million acres.

In the Settlement Act, the people agreed to give up their claim to all the rest, and kept 40,000,000 acres. The Natives really gave up their claim to more than two hundred million acres. The money which they received was a small payment for the land they had given up. So to say that the Natives "got" 40,000,000 acres is only partly true. They got title to that much. They gave up much more.

On another topic, there is also a great need for Native people to understand the workings of corporations. Like it or not, the Settlement Act made a lot of people shareholders or stockholders in corporations.

There is no reason why our high schools should not teach about corporations.

They don't have to teach just about Native corporations, but all kinds of corporations. The large oil companies that work in Alaska are corporations. Many of the people some day will be working for some kind of corporation. Many may decide to buy stock in corporations.

No matter what kind of a job one has, corporations will be a very important part of our lives from now on.

School advisory committees

might want to check to see if their schools teach anything at all about corporations and how they work.

Finally, technology is making many changes especially in the field of communications. If we want to have some influence on decision-making, if we want to get a message to our elected representatives or government officials, we have

to learn to use the modern media.

We have to know how to use a computer, a teleconference call, and the other media in the same way that we have had to learn to use outboard motors and snow machines. We also have to know how people may manipulate the media so that we learn to question what we see or hear.

These are issues for future education, not just for Natives, but for all Alaskans.

Some parts of our nation look down upon Alaska as kind of a rural, unsophisticated, ill-informed part of the country. I think that our last election shows that we do have intelligent voters who worked hard to be well-informed about the issues.

I was proud to see so many Native organizations working actively to get the message out to all the people.

We can't let down now. In another two years there will be another round of elections.

Maybe we can show the nation that Alaskans not only turn out to vote, they turn out and vote on issues, ideas and then they vote wisely.