

Election '90



Knowles: Native concerns to be top priority

by Holly F. Reimer

Tundra Times reporter

Tony Knowles, Democratic gubernatorial candidate, said issues that concern Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans will be top priority in his administration if he becomes Alaska's next governor.

Specifically, Knowles said economic development and resource management could mean big projects and more jobs for Alaska and Alaska Natives.

Knowles said one big project which he would like to see get under way if he were to lead Alaska in the next four years is development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where there may be oil and gas. But the candidate said there would be a long string of very defined regulations attached to

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• Knowles praises Hensley's leadership

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exploration and production procedures.

"We will insist that Alaskans are hired. We will insist that the environment and wildlife are protected and we will insist that we get a fair share of the resources," he said.

He also included tourism as a means to gain more Alaska Native hire throughout the state.

Knowles said one rural economic development issue which needs to be addressed is fishing.

He said the fishing industry is Alaska's biggest private employer, but one that hasn't reached its maximum potential yet.

"We haven't even scratched the surface. We need to stop interception by foreign driftnetters, and we need to concentrate on fish enhancement," he said during an interview at his campaign headquarters in Anchorage recently.

As a member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council from 1988-1989, Knowles said he led the fights against high seas fishery interception by foreign fleets and wasteful roe-stripping.

Knowles said the quality of fish products also needs to be enhanced by getting fish processed locally, in Alaska, instead of selling to foreigners or shipping it out of state.

"We need to do our own processing," he said.

Knowles said the University of Alaska might be able to help in this area. He said Alaskans — specifically Natives — can learn how to run their own businesses, such as a fish processing plant through furthering

education.

Education, Knowles said, is the core of economic and rural development, resource management and even tourism.

"Education is the key to a successful state," he said.

Knowles said even though subsistence isn't on the ballot that this is still an important issue that his administration will address.

"We must maintain subsistence for those people who depend on it. It's a priority to protect subsistence," he said.

Another tough issue that Knowles may face is state reapportionment.

Every 10 years the state of Alaska reapportions its districts to ensure that each person gets an equal vote according to the current population.

This decennial, if census predictions are correct, the state Native population has decreased compared to the rest of the state's population, so Native majority voting districts will be cut.

Knowles, who served two terms as mayor of Anchorage from 1982 until 1987, said he understands that rural and urban populations are interdepen-

dent on each other and reapportioning the state should not diminish rural or Alaska Native presence in the Legislature.

Knowles is running with lieutenant governor candidate Willie Hensley, who is an Alaska Native from the NANA region.

Knowles said Hensley will be playing a major role in his administration,

if elected.

"He was extremely effective while a representative in the Legislature and has been an advocate of Alaska Native issues since statehood, such as the land claims," Knowles said. "We'll look to Willie for his leadership."

He also said Hensley was instrumental while at NANA in getting the Red Dog Mine under way.