

Sheffield talks of Native sovereignty

Gov. Bill Sheffield took a break from his busy schedule in the interior town of Fairbanks to address the shareholders at Doyon's annual meeting Satur-

day at the Polaris Hotel.

One of the issues addressed by Sheffield was the state's position on the Indian Reorganization Act and certification

of constitutions which would re-create new IRA councils in Alaska.

Sheffield told the group that his staff had been working on the IRA problem and he feels strongly that some resolution will be forthcoming to the complex business of defining the state of Alaska's relationship to the IRA councils.

Sheffield said that he has been working with the Alaska Federation of Natives and will very soon be appointing a task force made up of representatives from AFN, United Tribes Alaska, both Houses of the State Legislature, and members of his

administration, as well as federal agency representatives. The task force should be named later this month.

Sheffield went on to say that he feels certain that the IRA issues will eventually end up in the courts, however, he said he is committed to some administrative resolution through the task force approach, rather than waiting for the judicial branch to act.

One question raised by Tanana Chiefs Conference President Spud Williams on the IRA matter was "Over 70 applications for the certification of constitutions for new IRA coun-

cils continue to sit on the desk of U.S. Interior Secretary Clark whose excuse for taking no action has been that he is waiting for a response or direction from Sheffield's administration in Alaska."

Sheffield reacted strongly to that statement, saying "I have continually told Clark and his people that he does not have to hold up those applications for the state. Certifying IRA applications is a federal responsibility and the State of Alaska has nothing to do with it."

Sheffield promised to again call Clark next week to reaffirm his position on the matter.