

Native patients have new voice in care

BY MARY HARTICH

Fairbanks area Native health care consumers have a new voice for improving their health care services. A Patient Advocacy Committee has recently been formed at the Alaska Native Health Center in Fairbanks.

The purpose of the committee is to review patient complaints about medical services received either at the ANHC or from the contract medical services. (Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and many private physicians have contracts with Alaska Native Health Service.) The PAC advises the Service Unit at Fairbanks on developing new policies and procedures for providing new services at the clinic. It also assists in developing educational and informative materials which would better explain services for the Native people in the community.

The PAC, comprised of Fairbanks area health consumers, was formed at the request of the Tanana Chiefs Regional Health Board. The first meeting was in November after the representatives had been selected by the Fairbanks Native Association Board of Directors and by the Tanana Chiefs Regional Health Board.

The members are: Mary Ann Warden (Chairman) from Barter Island, Jean Frank from Kotzebue, Nita Marks from Nenana, Alice Killbear from Barrow, and Helen Simpkin from Fairbanks. All except Ms. Marks now live in the Fairbanks area.

They have set up PAC policies and procedures and have offered suggestions to the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital Community Blood Bank. They have reviewed plans for the new ANHC clinic and have made recommendations regarding it. They have also made recommendations regarding patient housing policies for rural Native residents coming to Fairbanks for care. In addition, they have reviewed several patient complaints.

The following procedures were set up by the PAC to assist a patient in taking action on a complaint. First, the patient is encouraged to take the problem to the individual staff person involved, or to his superior. If this does not yield satisfaction the patient should then see the Service Unit Director, Tom Hartrich, at 528 5th Ave., Room 210, or call 452-1905. Patients may also directly contact one of the PAC members.

The PAC will either ask the patient to present his problem in person, if appropriate, or the committee can present the complaint for the patient at a regular monthly meeting.

Expanded services at the ANHC clinic will begin in mid-June. There will be an additional physician, dentist, psychiatric social worker, nurses, dental therapist, public health nurse and administrative support staff.