

Tanana Chiefs Conference reverses stand on Tanana Hospital

In its last annual meeting, the Tanana Chiefs Conference passed a resolution reversing itself on a 1979 decision supporting closure of the Tanana hospital. TCC is now on record with the Alaska Native Health Service in support of keeping the 20-bed facility open.

The Indian Health Service already had announced that the hospital, where average daily care rates are about \$800 compared to \$450-500 a day in Fairbanks, according to TCC Health Director David Mather, would be closed in October of this year.

TCC now is waiting word from the Alaska Native Health Service to see if their new position has changed this. If not, Mather says the Confer-

ence will push to keep the hospital open, as directed by the resolution.

Mather said the closure originally was supported as part of a Tribal Specific Health Plan.

Under the plan, the Indian Health Service would have retained an outpatient clinic and full emergency services in Tanana.

In addition, facilities for residential care for the elderly would have been established in the old hospital, along with a children's receiving home where children in crisis situations could come to for temporary care, and a residential therapy area where families having problems, such as those related to alcohol, could have received help.

Of the current \$2 million

budget of the hospital, Mather says \$400,000 would have remained in the community to run these services, and the remainder would have been transferred to the Fairbanks native hospital to beef up patient care, provide more travel for physicians going to the villages, and boarding services for people coming into Fairbanks from rural areas.

Arguments presented by the Tanana people in favor of keeping the hospital open included a statement that TCC should support village economies and the hospital was definitely a part of Tanana's economy, and that the atmosphere provided in the hospital was more comfortable to elderly patients and less threatening than an urban hospital in Fairbanks could possibly be.