

Tanana Chiefs, AVCP consider rejoining AFN

by Steve Pilkington

Tundra Times reporter

Members of the Tanana Chiefs Conference and Association of Village Council Presidents, after a lengthy dispute with the Alaska Federation of Natives, will attend this year's AFN Convention, spokesmen said.

But the two non-profit regional corporations, which split away from AFN in 1987, have yet to decide whether they will rejoin AFN's roster of active, voting members.

The two corporations are the only ones to have split from AFN in recent years.

Will Mayo, director of planning and management for TCC, said members of the Fairbanks-based corporation could participate in the convention, but it would be on an individual basis and they would avoid certain issues.

"There's some interest by our staff to get involved in alcohol and drug abuse issues, but that really isn't cleared or anything," Mayo said.

The disagreement with AFN stemmed from the sovereignty debate, but is more related to the political structures of the two organizations, he said.

Mayo said he could not reveal exactly what the differences between the groups are.

"It gets around to problems of the structure, the voting powers of AFN and that sort of thing," he said. "It's not so much issue oriented as structure oriented."

Mary Jane Fate, co-chairman for AFN, has been negotiating with TCC since last year. Fate is also president of Baan o yeel kon Corp., the village corporation for Rampart, which is in the TCC region.

"I know AFN is doing everything they can to make them a member

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throughout TCC's region feel differently than the administration.

"The individuals in the TCC area are saying, 'Do all you can to motivate the administration to get us in,' " she said.

Fate said it would help villages in the TCC region if they became active members of AFN again.

The Association of Village Council Presidents, which is based in Bethel, is planning to send its executive committee to the convention, said Myron Naneng, the group's vice president.

But he was not sure what the committee's involvement would be.

"We will — unless the committee votes to re-enter AFN — not have any official part in the convention," Naneng said.

Officials from both sides of the dispute say they are unsure whether TCC or AVCP will ever re-enter AFN in a voting position.

The annual AFN convention is scheduled to take place Oct. 19-21 in Anchorage.