

State delays Eagle IRA appeal

by Linda Lord-Jenkins

Tundra Times

A petition by the Native Village of Eagle to have its IRA constitution approved by the Department of the Interior appears to be nearer to approval by the department of Interior but is facing a roadblock by the state of Alaska.

The village is one of 10 Native village to petition the Department of Interior for IRA status but those petitions have been delayed for years while the Dol studies and constitutions and the relationship of Indian Reorganization Act villages to the State of Alaska

land the federal government.

But the Dol announced recently that Eagle's constitution is nearing approval and the Sheffield administration immediately asked Interior to delay any approval while the state reviews the matter.

According to Sheffield Chief of Staff John Shively who has worked in Native affairs for years, the state is concerned that the constitution for Eagle is much more specific than constitutions for other IRA constitutions already in effect in the state.

"It's not the constitution (of Eagle) so much as the

change in policy. They have enumerated powers (in Eagle's constitution) as opposed to giving a statement of general powers," said Shively.

Shively said that the Eagle constitution claims tribal powers that haven't been included in other constitutions, such as the power of tax. "If the IRA can tax, what area can they tax? Can they tax everything or just certain things or on what lands can they tax?"

The issue seems to be caught up in the opposite of a tug of war between the state and federal government with the

Continued on Page Six

State delays Eagle IRA

Continued from Page One

state's congressional delegation saying the issue of IRA governments and tribal sovereign powers to be decided by the state and the state saying it is a federal matter.

"The state can't decide anything," said Shively. The state can question. . . The state can't give them the power to tax. And if the federal government gives them the taxing powers then we should know what they are over."

Horace Biedeman Jr., presi-

dent of the Hungwitchin Corp., the for-profit village corporation of Eagle, said the village council won't do anything immediately to counter the state's move.

"I feel it was uncalled for. Our governor stated in March (at a Doyon Ltd. annual meeting) that he had no opposition to the new form of council. He's got to be not telling the truth to one of us."

Biedeman said that he hasn't heard anything from the governor's office "except what we read in the paper.

"Like I say, I think the man is breaking his promises."