

CRNA looks for solutions to \$160,000 deficit

Tundra Times staff

The Copper River Native Association, facing a deficit estimated to be as high as \$160,000, is taking a hard look at finding solutions to its problems.

So far, no one has any answers, but many say they are concerned about losing the services the association provides in the Ahtna Region.

Wilson Justin, president of the beleaguered association's board of directors, noted that the deficit is a problem that has been growing over the years.

CRNA spokesmen said the association has simply spent over its budget,

(Continued on Page Eight)

•CRNA deficit

(Continued from Page One)

but that no one particular event can be identified as the cause.

Roy Ewan, president of Ahtna Inc., said Ahtna has always supported CRNA, and, in fact, subsidized its nonprofit arm with \$40,000 last year. But Ewan said the \$40,000 infusion of cash was nearing the limit of Ahtna's ability to assist.

Ewan stressed, however, that it's important for CRNA to survive.

"I hope they do," he said. "I feel bad about the whole situation."

Ewan said the Legislature was approached last year, but no state money was forthcoming to solve the deficit.

Justin said CRNA has now hired a controller to audit its accounts. He said much of CRNA's energy is being put into dealing with the deficit and working on funding.

"We've cut travel, we've laid people off and we've merged positions. We've done all the routine stuff, and it's too soon to tell how it will affect us," he said. "We're trying to find long and short term solutions."

He said the deficit resulted from accumulation over several years.

"We just got in deeper and deeper," Justin said.

"There's been a number of changes. We've shrunk from a few years ago, but our service hasn't changed," he said.

The association provides services to villages in the Ahtna Region in areas such as mental health, higher education, adult vocational training and forestry.

Justin stressed that the health programs were the most needed.

He's confident CRNA will come out of the crisis in one piece.

"The CRNA board of directors is motivated and willing to try a variety of approaches," he said.