

Bethel corporation to get hospital land

BETHEL — The Bethel Native Corp. and the federal government have resolved a long standing dispute over ownership of land under the new Bethel Hospital, according to Ruth Richardson, president of BNC.

The settlement gives the hospital land the new hospital sits on, as well as additional land for building future staff housing.

The hospital also will have the use of certain portions of the land surrounding the old hospital for varying lengths of time. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service receives its new headquarters site free of any encumbrances.

BNC will receive the majority of the land around the old hospital, according to Richardson, and will receive the old hospital site when it has been cleaned up. In addition, BNC is to receive the old Bureau of Indian Affairs school ad-

Bethel Native Corporation

ministrative site in downtown Bethel.

Richardson noted that the exchange agreement provides land which BNC can use for development in the community.

Richardson noted that the dispute originated in 1981 when the Indian Health Service built its new hospital on land which had been claimed by the corporation under the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. However, the dispute was relatively dormant until 1983 when the Bureau of Land Management affirmed the corporation's rights to the land.

Since 1983, the corporation has been actively seeking ways of settling the dispute in a manner which would not have an adverse impact on the health care services provided by the IHS through the Bethel Hospital.

Richardson noted that BNC's goal of not doing anything that would hurt the level of health care provided by IHS often complicated the negotiations and limited the types of action the corporation could take to resolve this

matter.

Richardson said Alaska's congressional delegation has been very helpful and supportive of BNC during the past six years. She noted that the delegation introduced special legislation and provided staff assistance to aid the corporation's efforts.

Richardson praised Congressman Don Young, R-Alaska, in particular saying he was instrumental in getting the situation resolved.