

Kotlik seeks answers to substance abuse

by James J. Akaran
for the Tundra Times

Many suggestions about what to do about substance abuse and suicide intervention were offered at a recent three-day workshop in Kotlik, ranging from monthly social activities for elders and youth to the sponsoring of outdoor sports activities.

The Kotlik City Council sponsored the workshop last month.

During this workshop, discussion focused on making the community free of chemical substance abuse, as well as suicide intervention within the community. The emphasis was on what ordinary citizens can do to help individuals in a crisis situation.

Invited guests from outside the community included representatives of the Yukon/Kuskokwim Health Corp., the Lower Yukon School District and Sisters from the Catholic Church.

The local panel members who participated in panel discussions were city police, local clinic representatives, people from local churches, elders, high school students, young adults and middle-aged people.

During the panel discussion, many questions, ideas and suggestions were brought up from the audience on how community members should work together to reduce the chemical substance abuse and help with suicide intervention in Kotlik.

At the last evening of the workshop, the participants separated into eight large groups and made suggestions to a Citizens' Action Committee — a Kotlik support group — to work toward those goals and implement them for the community needs.

Among suggestions were monthly social activities for elders and youth, indoor games, potluck dinners, elders

telling stories, special church gatherings and outdoor sports activities.

The careful watch on drugs and alcohol brought to the community through airlines and waterways was brought up, as well as a careful watch on the purchasing of yeasts from local merchants. Frequent crisis intervention workshops also were suggested.

The emphasis of the suggestions from the groups to the community focused on communication between elders and youth. Sharing, helping, understanding and learning how to take time to listen for others' needs in

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crisis situations was expressed.

Everyone who participated in the workshop felt the discussions went very well with a sharing of ideas and feelings among the people. Some people who listened to others talk felt that they have had similar experiences in their lives.

More than 150 of the community attended the workshop each night.

The workshop ended with an elders and youth Native dance.

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