



We all must join fight against AIDS

by Terrance H. Booth Sr.

AIDS Program Manager, Alaska Native Health Board

The AIDS prevention message needs to be heard and understood by all of our Alaska Natives — from youth to adults to our respected Elders in every village and community.

During the 1990 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, two major presentations were provided with the important message of HIV/AIDS and what it means to our Alaska Natives.

We can learn from the medical perspective about HIV/AIDS and from service providers about what happens to a person who has HIV or AIDS and learn what needs to be done to effectively get the message across to our Alaska Natives.

This must get out to all age groups. Community leaders and elected Alaska Native officials need to become more aware of this life-threatening disease. Communities need to develop specific prevention plans and AIDS awareness presentations for all age groups.

Elected officials of the villages and communities or boroughs need to develop resolutions or proclamations to bring about AIDS awareness and wage war on this disease. HIV/AIDS is a disease that needs to be dealt with for it can and it is taking away lives.

Every Alaska Native family needs to begin to talk about sexuality and become totally aware and informed about how HIV/AIDS is sexually transmitted or transmitted by use of shared needles. A united effort needs to be made by all agencies involved serving our Alaska Native population to encourage a healthy and protected environment for all.

Part of the mission of the Alaska Native Health Board's AIDS Prevention Program is to help your communities develop your own plans to get the HIV/AIDS prevention message out to all of our people. The AIDS staff of the ANHB has the most recent information and is ready to help you in your community to present the HIV/AIDS prevention message.

Videos, posters and pamphlets are available on request. The AIDS staff also provides technical assistance and "training of trainers" for regions and villages.

The importance of the HIV/AIDS prevention message does need to get out to all of our people for the preservation of ourselves, to maintain our rich culture and heritage and for the continuation of our existence. Of more importance is to ensure that we have a new generation and live to see that there is a future life for us. The children of the current generation are the bearers of our future.