

CINA Ascent gives students job boost

By Mike Williams
for The Tundra Times

Hundreds of Native youth have and are benefitting from an on-the-job program at Cook Inlet Native Association in Anchorage.

During the past three and a half years the Ascent program has had over 500 students and averages about 160 students per year.

The program is called Ascent. It helps the youth to become aware of the business world and also makes them more aware of their cultures. Evelyn Stands, the counselor at CINA said, "I've seen a lot going against the Native people, this is why I want to help the young Natives."

There are two phases to the program. The first is in the classroom where the students learn about listening skills; how to make decisions; how to make out resumes; and how to take care of other paperwork associated with getting a job.

The second is a form of on-the-job training where the students are interviewed. They then decide which job they want. After that, they work at the decided job for a period of 10 weeks.

The students vary from Eskimo to Tsimshian, and from Aleut to Inupiat.

The only requirement to participate is that the students are between the age of 14 and 21.

According to Cynthia Sabon, who is now on the 10-week portion of the program working as a secretary at CINA, "I like it because it is what I want my career to be."

Chris King, who is now working at Alexander's Body Shop doing an assortment of things such as covering windows and chrome before a paint job or taking out grills and radiators, said, "I signed up for



Harley Booth, from southeast Alaska, changes a tire at Fireweed Chevron. Booth is participating in the on-the-job portion of the program.

the experience but after my raise I will be working more for the money."

Cecil Wentz, who trains as an administrative assistant scheduling activities and making sure the other employees of the after-school program are doing their jobs, said, "the program has given me friends and inner growth."

Susan Larson, a clerical aide in the accounting department at CINA said, "I liked the experience and meeting new

friends. The job I'm in now is real good experience because it will help me in the future." Larson helps in getting out the paychecks and in setting up the salary schedules.

Paige Booth, who went through the program in 1980, said, "What I can remember of it was fun. I liked learning about attitudes and responsibilities on the job." Booth's on-the-job training was to entertain the children in the hospital. She is now a secretary

for the Ascent program.

Joey Lee and Vernon Booth are both working at Fireweed Chevron as mechanic's helpers. Lee said, "I came in to learn about filling out resumes and paperwork." But Booth said, "I liked learning how to act during an interview."

In learning how to act during an interview the students are told to study before as if it were a big test.

During the interview the students were told to answer questions quickly, to sit in an upright position, and not to exaggerate on anything they've done that would pertain to the job they are applying for.

Evelyn Stands is the counselor and assistant to the staff and students of Ascent. She helps the students throughout the program, by helping them with their resumes and classwork. Stands also helps with any problems between the student and job supervisor. One problem could be that the student has missed a few days without calling in. Another could be that the supervisor expects too much from a student.

Leonard Hamilton, the director of career development division at CINA, handles all youth and adult training programs from Ascent to Adult Career Training (ACT), which is somewhat like Ascent except that the age group is different.

Hamilton says former Ascent students seem to do better in other programs compared to

people who haven't been through Ascent. "They seem to have a better grasp on what they want to do in the job field," he says.

The program is federally funded through CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act).

The students are paid to participate in the program, which means that the students have more responsibilities such as meeting their own expenses.

John Turner, the Ascent coordinator, supervises the counseling staff and does all of the job coordinating. Turner started the program three-and-one-half years ago. "I had to do all of the hiring. We got together and brainstormed; we decided what we wanted to accomplish. With this Ascent was made," said Turner.

Turner wanted to make young economically disadvantaged people aware of what they could do if they tried; he also wanted to make these youth prepare for the world of work.

Last year Ascent was switched from community education to the Human Resources Development Division (HRDD). When this happened the classroom portion of the program was turned over to Judy Lape of the ACT program.

After the program is completed some of the students are picked up permanently by the employer.