

Good health begins with self care: Conference

For the second time, the Alaska Native Health Board and the Alaska Federation of Natives co-sponsored a very successful Statewide Native Health Conference.

On October 18 and 19, 1982 an outstanding lineup of health care providers met at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel to share information on a major component often lacking in the Native health care system: The attainment and maintenance of good health through self-care and culturally relevant, low cost programs.

A majority of evaluation forms completed by conference participants and subsequent letters received indicate the conference lived up to promises of being most informative and exciting.

Focusing on the theme, "Who Is Going To Provide Health Care To Alaska Natives?" the conference agenda included a very large health fair, 16 diverse and timely workshops, and presentations by many well-known and informed health authorities. Presentors and participants were looking for answers to that important question.

Many of the more than 300 participants left with realiza-

tion that Alaska Natives must provide for their own health care, by taking care of themselves, living healthier lives, becoming informed as to what good health care means and working to preserve the traditional ways of dealing with health problems. Also we must improve communications among Native people so that true needs become expressed and addressed by the various health and government agencies.

The conference began with a General Assembly on Monday, October 18. A presentation by Peggy Williams, Executive Director of the Central Health Planning and Development Council, focused on Alaska's Health Status. The presentation provided the audience with a look at major health problems affecting Alaska Natives. Information was presented concerning causes of death and illness among the Alaska Native people. The audience heard what was behind the statistics presented and how the presentation related to the conference theme.

The next guest speaker was Richard O. Schafer, Ph.D., president of Lifestyle '80's

and nationally known promoter of the development of lifestyles which enhance health, prevent disease and improve the quality of life. The title of Dr. Schafer's presentation was *Wellness or Worseness - Whose Responsibility?*

The primary emphasis of his presentation was the need for Alaska Natives to recognize the many health problems and tragedies non-Natives have experienced and the need to work to avoid the same. Although health care for Alaska Natives has improved through new programs, Village Sanitation Programs, and health statistics for Alaska Natives are beginning to duplicate those of non-Natives.

George Wasson, an Academic Counselor at the University of Oregon and a Coos Bay/Cosquille Indian, provided an enlightening presentation most concerned with creating an understanding of what stories are important. It is one of the oldest aspects of human culture and a key aspect of education.

The general session concluded

ed with a timely and quite informative presentation by Mr. Bill Wilson, Special Assistant to the Director of Indian Health Service. Mr. Wilson presented very recent data on IHS budgets, proposed reductions in federal health programs and the subsequent effects on Alaska Native Health Care Programs.

A very large and well-organized Health Fair with 40 screening, health education and referral stations was provided on Monday, October 18. The free Health Fair was planned and coordinated with the excellence of the staff of the Alaska Health Fair '82 Project.

The conference wrap-up included modeling of authentic Alaska Native dress by a talented group of youth in a Native Dress Review on Tuesday afternoon. Coordinated by Audrey Armstrong, the group has made presentations at many Alaska and national conferences. The presentation was an enjoyable and relaxing wrap-up to a busy conference.

A special feature at this year's conference was the honoring of one Outstanding

Health Care Worker from each of the twelve regions at an Awards Banquet held Tuesday evening, October 19. At this function, Ms. Ethel Lund, former Chairperson of the ANHB, was the guest speaker.

Mr. Phil Tutiakoff served as an excellent as well as enjoyable emcee for the Awards Banquet and Health Conference General Assemblies. The honorary Host and Hostess for the banquet were Albert and Florence Kahklen. Prior to being appointed Superintendent of the Anchorage Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mr. Kahklen spent many years in the employ of the Alaska Area Native Health Service.

The Alaska Native Health Board would like to express its sincere appreciation to all who took part in the conference. We are especially grateful to all who helped plan and organize the conference, those who made presentations in the workshops, and the many individuals and organizations who participated as exhibitors. The Health Fair portion of the conference.

