

# Many needed

It is a problem for which there is no one miracle solution. There is no button we can push or law we can invoke or regulation we can pass to solve the problems which alcohol abuse has wrought on our villages.

Experiences shared at a recent seminar on the criminal justice system and alcohol abuse showed the tragic extent to which alcohol has brought some of the rural villages of Alaska.

Stories of all the sons in one family dying violent alcohol-related deaths; of drunken mothers failing to recognize they were in the final stages of labor and causing injuries to their newborns that resulted in their deaths; of men severely beaten as they lay in drunken stupors in their own beds.

Alcohol, when abused, can devastate a person, his family, and his friends. The drink consumed affects more than the person holding the glass — it can harm all around him.

But in this dismal picture is one small ray of light — that this and other seminars on the effects of alcohol are held at all; the fact that there are people who care enough to take on the thankless job of trying to help people find within themselves the will not to drown in booze.

There also is the small light that was brought with the passage of the law which allows villages to ban importation of alcohol to their boundaries.

But these small rays of light need much nurturing to grow. They need the support of their communities to back them in their efforts.

Being an alcohol counselor or law enforcement officer trying to rid people of the demon of alcohol on their back is no easy task. The people who take on this awesome task need support of village Elders, village councils, teachers, healers, politicians, men, women and children.

Police officers alone cannot do it although they can do part. The courts alone cannot do it although they can do part. Counseling can do part. Individuals can do part. Elders can provide much-needed wise advice but they need people to listen. Concerned relatives need the courts, police and others to help.

The flood of booze coming into our villages can only be turned back if there is a unified fight to build a dam.

Many hands are needed for that job.