

Writer Poses

Health Matters

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

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August 6, 1974

Commissioner Frederick McGinnis
Department of Health & Social
Services

Pouch H
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Commissioner McGinnis:

It seems that every time I write to you concerning health matters within the TCC region I'm either complaining about specific circumstances or sending you copies of resolutions requiring that the State of Alaska alleviate serious health shortcomings experienced by the Native population. The reason I am writing to you now poses one of the most serious mental problems presented experienced by this state. I urge the State of Alaska to seriously consider their actions when making drastic cuts on budgets for alcoholism programs.

It has come to my attention that the Galena Alcoholism Project has been reduced in budget by \$21,750 from last year's funding level. This gives the Galena Alcoholism Program a total amount of \$4,250 which virtually eliminates the successful program that Galena has had in the past. Repeatedly, Native leaders on a statewide basis have expressed the necessity of the state and federal government to address alcoholism programs throughout all rural areas of Alaska.

During the First Annual Conference on Rural Health you stated that you chaired a conference of similar nature in 1951 at which there were 100 participants. You also stated that the subject areas expressed during the conference were the same, health problems being brought to the attention of the state and federal governments. If the State of Alaska continues to drastically reduce alcoholism budgets, the same priorities will be expressed over and over again in 1981. Alcoholism is the No. 1 health hazard presently experienced in the State of Alaska. However, the state has not placed alcoholism No. 1 on priority in meeting this serious health need. If the state priorities do not mesh with the priorities expressed by the Alaskan Natives, all conferences on rural health will end up with the same results.

The Tanana Chiefs Health Authority (TCHA) must now supplement the State of Alaska's

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budget by providing health programs, namely alcoholism, in meeting the priorities expressed by the rural areas. Our planning recognizes the establishment of an Alcohol Awareness Program with outreach workers in each of the villages within our region. I am hopeful that the funding for this program will come from the National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse. The State of Alaska's reduced alcoholism programs will be minute in the over-all rural health delivery system in the implementation of these alcoholism programs. Therefore, I am optimistic of the future funding of alcoholism programs on behalf of the State of Alaska if the responsibility to the residents of rural Alaska by supplementing the state's alcoholism budgets.

It is with great concern that I write this letter as an advocate of the Native population residing within the TCC region. The City of Galena is now not going to have an alcoholism program which has undoubtedly proved its successfulness to the state. I look forward to a trip to Juneau in the very near future and request that I be given the opportunity to meet with you on this

serious problem and others that the Tanana Chiefs Regional Health Board (TCRHB) have identified in their deliberations. Enclosed you will find a copy of the TCHA work program for FY 75. The work program is projected partially into 1976. I hope this identifies the programs which we will be involved in the oncoming year. Alcoholism programs at this time are not expressed in narrative form in this work program because of the inability of the TCHA to identify the exact funding resource from which we may implement a comprehensive alcoholism program. However, alcoholism programs are needed now and shouldn't only be plans for the future.

My office and staff are open and welcome your suggestions or comments. Please call on me if I may be able to further clarify my comments.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

**TANANA CHIEFS HEALTH
AUTHORITY**

Claude Demientieff
Director