

Important to Life

By NANCY BRELSFORD

Sometimes it takes a life and death situation before a fact really hits home. The situation is even more frightening when it involves the life or death of your own infant son.

My son, Gregg, age five months, almost died November 18, 1974. Had he not received the medical attention right away, he would not be here with me today. At the time of this writing, little Gregg is still hospitalized and slowly recuperating from his traumatic experience.

My husband and I were just fortunate that we lived in Anchorage at this time. However, had we lived in the bush far away from a hospital, it probably would have been too late for my son, for he required emergency treatment like blood transfusions.

The fact then really became clear why Health Careers Development Program is here as part of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., Health Affairs Division. Now I really appreciate its purpose.

In order to handle emergencies like Gregg's, the village and/or village health corporations need the trained Personnel to help increase the chance of survival in anyone else's emergency situation.

This is where Health Careers Development Program comes in. The program encourages any Alaska Native who is interested in a health field to participate.

This includes high school and college students, persons working in a health career who want to upgrade their education, and anyone with a desire to ask about the wide range of health career opportunities which number over 200.

The people who work for Health Careers can help you find out about these health career opportunities. Don Bantz heads Health Careers Development.

Before he came to Alaska, he worked for the Native American Training Associates Institute, Inc., in Sacramento, California as a Health Administration trainer and planner.

He's also worked for the Tri-County Indian Health Project, Inc., in Bishop, California. The Assistant Director, Sam Lamabull, came to Alaska from working for the Boston Indian Council.

He's also worked as a consultant for the Office of Education, Washington, D.C. Last but not least, he's also gained experience as a juvenile delinquent counselor for the State of Oklahoma. As for the writer, for the want of an appropriate title, I am known as a media specialist.

I fill several roles: counselor, advisor, teacher, and journalist. My previous experience includes working as a counselor dealing with academic advising, individual, group, and marriage counseling.

Before this I worked as a graduate assistant for the University of Alaska while studying for an advanced degree in Special Education. I've also taught adult basic education for urban Indians in Tacoma, Washington. I was born in Pilot Station, Alaska and all 4/4's of me are Eskimo.

This is a brief introduction to the staff. Now for what we do. The goal of Health Careers Development Program is to establish and operate a program which will identify and recruit Alaska Natives into health careers. More specifically, our program objectives are:

1. Identify and increase the enrollment of students in health professional schools.

2. Identify potential high school students with an interest

in health careers. AFN, Inc. Health Affairs Division has been contracting with Native regional health authorities throughout Alaska to identify people who may have an interest in a health career.

3. Provide individual advising and counseling for students already enrolled in school. In most cases, this is supplemental to whatever resources are already open to them.

4. Provide meaningful work experiences for health career students in a healthy agency. This experience is best described as work-study. In most cases, the student is getting some kind of college credit for this, too.

5. Publicize and secure financial aide for students. There are many sources of financial aides available for Natives who are interested in a health career. The staff will be happy to share this information with anyone interested. This type of information will be sent out to the twelve regional corporations.

6. Develop a health administration/planning curricula, geared to the needs of the regional health authorities, leading to a four year degree. Presently, there are not such degrees in health administration or planning in Alaska. AFN, Inc., Health Affairs Division will be developing this degree in cooperation with the directors of the regional health authorities and local universities.

In summary, the main emphasis of Health Careers Development Program is the identification of interested students, information and education about various health careers, recruiting Alaska Natives into health careers and supplemental advising and counseling for students already enrolled or prospective students investigating possibilities for a career in health.

In this way, Health Careers can help to fill the huge demand for health manpower in Alaska, and to train Natives to reach policy making levels where they can exercise effective community control — Alaska Native control over Alaska Native Education.