

ANLP trains Alaska Natives to be leaders

by Steve Kakaruk

Tundra Times

The Alaska Native Leadership Project (ANLP) in its sixth year continues to teach lessons about Native political issues that life does not.

ANLP was developed to provide Alaskan Natives an opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills.

Paula Rasmus-Dede, ANLP Director, addresses this year's crop of young leaders: "you were all hand-picked, a process that selects individuals for our unique program." There are seventeen 'leaders' listening in a small make-shift classroom at the Mat-Su Resort. Paula reminds the ANLP group they are the leaders of today and tomorrow representing the future of their people.

"There are only a few weeks between this and the third session in Juneau where you will shadow a leader — it could be the Governor's Assistant or Sam Kito — you won't know until we arrive in Juneau." Paula continues, "you'll get a chance to sit with Governor Sheffield and ask questions."

As Paula describes the Juneau trip Leona Johnson, ANLP Program Assistant, gives out travel itineraries. Leona and Paula together are a dynamic team. The program has been recognized by leaders in Juneau. Paula said, "when in Juneau, key people will watch you; when you ask questions, they'll listen."

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Don Hoff, Treasurer of the Ketchikan Indian Council (KIC), is a recognized leader. Each year Ketchikan sends someone to participate in



ANLP Director Paula Rasmus-Dede here outlines the events of the day. TCC Mike Smith (far left back) awaits his moment to take the floor.

photo by Steve Kakaruk

the ANLP program. What KIC may not know is that communities across Alaska may endorse more than one individual.

Hoff, a Tlingit Indian, is reminded of the political issues in his region and thinks them through over and over. The community is aware of his progress. Hoff brings all of his experiences back to his council and people.

"I told my IRA Council that I'd come back with all new information and I have it, along with lots of

positive energy," Hoff said.

Hoff would like to propose an adoption of Inupiaq Values. "I'm starting to think that adoption of these values will only benefit our people and our Tribal Elders Advisory Board."

Pat Norman, Port Graham, has brought the values to his elders and adopted them. These values are of all Indigenous tribes.

Hoff continues, "tons of new information that affect me are discussed here, like the Indian Child Welfare Act...the stuff we learn I can bring

back and use, like subsistence. If that's taken away, what do we have left?"

To date, there are about 2250 in membership at KIC. Like all subsistence users, Hoff wants to preserve the subsistence rights of his people.

Hoff adds, "if subsistence is taken away here (in so-called 'urban' areas), beware! They (bureaucrats) could take it away from anywhere in Alaska."

Summing up his experiences in the program, Hoff said, "I'm building

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confidence." If you were to meet Don Hoff, you would not think he is unassured. "If you tell the truth you're always going to draw controversy; we always have this problem of taking a chance. If one Native is trying to make changes, ten are holding and trying to bring he/she back."

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Past participants of the program visit, some are scheduled to speak on topics of their expertise.

Mike Smith, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Indian Child Welfare Act Liason, said, "ANLP made me aware of how much I really did know, what I was capable of, and (how) to be confident in a number of ways." Smith never finished school and applied twice to ANLP before being accepted. He said, "it didn't help my confidence (applying twice). ANLP'ers learn to be confident and are aware of their capabilities when the program is over."

The ANLP'ers break into two groups and begin to work for consensus on developing a mission statement

and a philosophy statement. These will determine ANLP's theme for 1986.

Consensus, as opposed to a simple majority vote, requires that as a group sacrifices will be made for the sharing of ideas and compromise. The program teaches the importance of this.

Lobbyist Sam Kito is a familiar face and friend to the ANLP group by the second session. A few haven't ever met with him and saw him as a person that was out of arm's reach before the first session. The highest paid lobbyist in Alaska tells the group that he had to learn how to be patient. Sam reminds the group as he said in the first session, that leadership is not an easy task. "The university of hard knocks is the best education. For every leader

in a village or town, or city government, there are ten people holding you back. They want you to fail."

The ANLP group listens intensely as Kito talks about issues that affect all Alaska. The group's interest intensifies as the question period closes in on him.

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The Alaska Native Leadership Project selection process selects individuals that are high in values, sharing, knowledge of culture, cooperation and many other respects for life.

Lee "Guy" Stephan, President of Board, Executive Director of Ikluat Inc., a Non-Profit of Eklutna Village Corp. views a history of events from the passage of ANCSA till the present for his enrollment of the ANLP program.

"ANLP made me aware of how much I really did know, what I was capable of, and how to be confident..."

Guy said, "I viewed ANCSA from the sidelines; at first I didn't know what it was about." Guy experienced an illness around 1982. His exposure to the American preoccupation for 'party life' temporarily blinded his perception of Native issues. Guy's illness directed him to leave the party behind and go forward.

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On "Culture Day" scheduled Sunday of every session, ANLP'ers do a unique cultural event. Thelma "Bay" Beans of Mountain Village poses in her Parka of squirrel skin and wolf ruff.

photo by Steve Kakaruk

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Guy said, "all this has provided me with the insight to step in to the Director position." He said, "I had respect for the Elders, I let them handle it (issues)."

One of the greatest fears is to lose land and the community believed in him and supported him in his efforts and elected him President and Executive Director and urged him to apply for the Alaska Native Leadership Project.

Guy said "I'm in the learning stage and I've learned more usefull things here about the land claims, management and leadership than before, ever!" He continued; "ANLP shall impact what I am to learn beyond words. This program is so irreplaceable, most if not all its content should be given to each and every Alaskan Native person alive."

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"This program is so irreplaceable..."

This year's group comes from all over Alaska. From Ambler is Sidney Cleveland; Kotzebue, Barbara Curtis, Oscar Walker and Donna Westdahl; Noorvik, Gladys Chesley and Elsie Sampson; Shungnak, Reginald Cleveland; Nome, Rose Atuk-

Fosdick; Mountain Village, Thelma "Bay" Beans; St. Mary's, Lewis Paukan; Dillingham, Kimberly Phillips; St. Paul, Hedy Lestenkof; Port Graham, Pat Norman; Ketchikan, Don Hoff; Eyak, Nancy Barnes; Eklutna, Lee "Guy" Stephan; Anchorage, Steve Kakaruk.

Many topics discussed during the first week demonstrated leadership roles and learning were breaking new ground for program directors as well as the group.

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The issues of Politics effects all Alaska Natives and Non-Natives alike and is like a huge puzzle. Separate pieces represent portions of the puzzle.

Nancy Barnes, Chairman of Board,

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Eyak Corporation said, "I was getting chunks and didn't know where they fit, now I can visualize where the pieces fit." Speakers and guests offer solid facts to today's role as leadership models. Nancy said, "I expected to learn something and I have. I'm aware what's at stake as a leader and different view points help clarify the issues."

Nancy said, "I see myself more confident and can share as others have shared with me." Most of all Nancy sees something in ANLP perhaps no other organization offers. "Most meetings go from nine to five and when a session is over at five the learning stops, with ANLP it just continues... on through life."

Nancy sees ANLP as a "catalyst" that grows in the mind with education. The ANLP group hopes many others apply.

1985-86 Mission Statement:

The goal of ANLP is to bring selected Native peoples together in a unique environment to develop effective leadership through sharing and managerial skills. To achieve this goal, ANLP provides quality education on Native issues and concepts, and development of the self-awareness, and interaction with influential people affecting Alaska.

We shall accomplish this by building bridges between past, present, and future with a focus on Native culture and values. ANLP is accredited through Alaska Pacific University.

1985-86 Philosophy Statement:

ANLP exposes us to the tradition of leadership, challenging us to unite for the preservation of our land and our people.

The knowledge we share as indigenous people guides us to honor traditional values in developing our leadership role for today and tomorrow.



Lobbyist Sam Kito and the 6th Alaska Native Leadership Project group examine political issues affecting Alaska Natives. photo by Steve Kakaruk