

ANCADA Opens Doors On New Headquarters

Natives Open Alcohol Center

Unspiked punch and traditional Native foods met visitors to the open house of the Alaska Native Commission on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ANCADA) Friday. The new headquarters are at 528 West Fifth Avenue, Suite Nine.

Formed several years ago by a group of concerned persons, the commission attempts to speak to Native alcoholic problems in what some might call the alcoholism shouting match for funds.

"As you probably already know, with state and federal funding, whoever speaks loudest gets the most," explained George Barril, executive director of the commission. "Because rural Alaska had no spokesman, we usually were left with whatever was left over."

The group now has an 18-member commission including representation from each of the 13 Native regional corporations. As one of four alcoholism organizations in Alaska, ANCADA has projects going in 166 villages and \$1.6 million public education program to start soon.

Their most successful project so far comes from small grants supplied by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Through these grants, rural communities are able to put human resources together for projects of their own choosing to reduce the need to consume liquor.

"This is providing an alternative to drinking; renewing traditional lifestyles by providing activities to unify the community," explained Ralph Amouak, project director for the 166 grants. "For instance, many communities are building community halls — the program gets people aware of village problems through their own city council, which has the job of administering the programs."

Amouak said a 70 per cent reduction in drinking has been documented in Galena since their community hall was built about eight months ago. Barril says the most important part of the agency's job is educating people.

"Alcoholism is a problem Caucasians are having trouble understanding," Barril said. "And its compounded in Natives — its been less than 100 years since it was introduced to Alaska Natives and treatment for anybody just started within the last 10 years."

Don Lee, field supervisor for the commission, recently visited in the Nome area at nine villages where persons are interested in doing something else beside feed alcohol addiction with their spare time and money. He says a lot of rural people have heard about alcohol and drug prevention, although little has been done about it.

We have a lot of alcohol kids who go outside to their villages to drink for an escape," he said. "It's part of the frustration, it's a symptom."

Next month, in connection with the National Council on Alcohol (NCA) the commission will start educating rural Natives with its portion of a \$2.5 million package allocated to combating the problem through Senator Ted Stevens, R-Alaska.

"We're not a temperance unit," added Barril, "we're just trying to educate people in the problems of drinking and it's influence on their lives." — Anchorage Daily Times — June 3.