



At a community send-off ceremony co-sponsored by AFN Sobriety Movement and the Alaska Native Health Board, Brooks signed posters and talked to youth about dog mushing, the importance of education, and living a drug-free and tobacco-free lifestyle.

Brooks blazes Iditarod for sobriety pledges

Tundra Times staff

Athabascan-Eskimo Ramey Brooks is on the trail – a long, cold trail, traveling by day and night against elements that try to force him back. He finds ways to stay on the trail with-

out falling off, getting trampled by wild animals, or getting lost. It is a heavy load to carry, but the strength within him keeps pushing him further and further ahead. Go Ramey, Go!

The trail – Iditarod. The load – So-

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briety signatures collected by the Alaska Federation of Natives Sobriety Movement Council. By resolution, AFN selected Ramey Brooks as the official 1996 musher to carry sobriety pledge signatures from men, women, and children across the state to Nome.

At 26 years old, Brooks believes in sobriety, being drug-free, and having a tobacco-free lifestyle. He was the perfect choice for AFN Sobriety Movement and Alaska Native Health Board to co-sponsor for the 1996 Iditarod race.

This is his third year of running the Iditarod. In 1994, Brooks finished the race in Nome at 17th place, running the long 1,049 mile stretch in eleven days. In 1995, Brooks improved his time by placing 16th in ten days.

Brooks began training his dogs in late September, running them everyday, starting them at six miles the first day. By the end of the training and just before the big race, the dogs were running 150 miles a day, cruising at speeds of 13-14 miles per hour.

Since before kindergarten, Brooks has been running dogs, learning the trade from his family. Arthur Wright, his great grandfather, served as an Athabascan interpreter for an archdeacon who traveled village to village by dog team. Brooks grandfather, Gareth Wright, developed a special breed of dogs for racing, blending Irish Setter, wolf, and St. Lawrence Siberian Husky. One of Brooks' goals is to prove the worthiness of this special breed by racing them in the grueling Iditarod.