

# Love, respect will defeat alcoholism

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

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The way to fight and defeat the problem of alcohol and drug abuse in the Native people is to work together, respect each other for themselves, and never lose sight of the strength of the village group.

That was the message given to 25 members of the Alaska Native Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse who gathered at a two-day meeting of ANCADA in Anchorage recently.

Joan Cannelos of RuralCAP stressed her message of village strength by a traditional Yup'ik story of how the man and the woman in the moon came to be.

She told of a hunter who had been away from his village for many days and, upon nearing the village on his return, saw a young maiden walking toward him. He asked her to become intimate with him but she said, 'No, you are married.' He insisted but she ran from him and away from her village.

"He chased her with his sled. She ran so fast she became airborne and they both ended up on the moon and I can see them clearly to this day, him chasing her forever.

"There are two morals to this story . . . one, despite what Art Hippler says about Eskimo culture, you don't mess around with a married man . . . and two, if you need help, don't run away from your village. Run toward it. Our people are there and they will get you help," said Cannelos.

She spoke of how the basically non-confrontative Eskimo and Native cultures accepted the values of the Gussucks when they first came to their land and imposed new education and religion and language on them. It wasn't polite to argue about it, she said.

"As one Elder told me, 'we did what they told us to do but now look at our children,'" In cases where people are well adjusted you find they are secure in their Native culture," said Cannelos.

She spoke of keeping traditions to remain proud of the cultures and remembered that when she returned home after years in college, she forgot to visit one couple of relatives. "My family hid their faces in shame because we don't forget things like that."

"When I found so-called 'saved Natives' I try to get to know what took them away from drink. I find people who feel good about themselves as Native people. If you feel good about your self-worth, and have respect, you are less likely to get drunk and stay drunk."

Cannelos said that every village has natural counselors to whom people turn automatically for guidance when they needed it. These people can still be found, despite the gradual change in the villages now.

They also can be used to help give alcohol counseling to people needing it, she said.

Frank O. Williams, vice-chairman of ANCADA, also gave a message of respect for young and old alike to insure the feeling of self-worth in all people.

Williams said that "When the younger people speak of respect, they speak of Elders, but it goes around too. A father, an Elder has respect for children too. At potlatches there is respect . . . you hear people say, 'where are the children? If they have true respect they jump up and dance and shout.' There is proudness there."

He said that instilling self respect in young people is not always easy now because of the many outside influences in the lives of the young.

"You talk about newspapers. They say we got 44 million acres and \$500 million. They make it sound like we got that for nothing. They don't say we gave up everything . . . and when our children are growing up they hear that."

He said that educating the young of their rich and proud heritage should extend to non-Natives too. The others have 80 percent of the voting population and they can pass anything they want regardless of what we say.

"By educating them, we make it easier for our children to grow up."

The theme of unity also was presented by Daisy Mae Lamont, executive director of ANCADA, who said "We cannot begin to attempt to center our own future unless we work together as a total Alaska Native community. The same intent has to be shared by rural and urban Alaskan Native peoples, regardless of their location, and the same unity of action should be equally shared.

She said that to fight alcoholism and drug abuse successfully will require the development of Native leadership and fighting the outside manipulation of persons who would pro-

fit from any discord between rural and urban Alaskan Native people."

Police Chief Tom Bunnell of Bethel told the group that his city has a drug dog to sniff incoming packages but the courts have radically limited the police ability to use that dog because that would infringe on the rights of privacy of the owner of packages.

He said that since the repeal of the state's public drunkenness law, homicide has gone from one in 1981 to two in 1982 and five in 1983.

"Every homicide I have investigated has been alcohol or drug-related." He said that he has tried to get Bethel to pass a public drunkenness law and added that "If we had had that power we could have saved some lives."

Sexual assault has increased 17 percent in the last two years and most were related to alcohol.

ANCADA is an Anchorage-based organization with members from each of the 12 Native regions. ANCADA advocates for alcohol and drug treatment funding and research.