

PAROLE COUNSELING LACKING

Native Volunteers Help to Solve Problems For Young Parolees

By MADELYN SHULMAN
Staff Writer

During recent months, the Fairbanks State Department of Corrections officers have been trying to solve the problem of insufficient counseling for young people on parole.

"By law, a kid on probation is supposed to have proper counseling," said Ted Sutton—Department of Corrections coordinator for a volunteer program begun last summer.

"However, the probation officer caseload is high—as many as 50 or 60 kids. One kid might wait for an hour in an office for his 15 minutes counseling in a month."

To solve this problem, the department instituted a Volunteers in Probation program. The volunteer probation officer agrees to work with the person on probation one time per week for an hour or more. Volunteers work through Sutton and the Department of Corrections, which runs a thorough check on the person and conducts in depth interviews.

"We've had cases where the kid runs away and the first person he turns to is the volun-

teer," Sutton said.

The volunteer becomes a friend, not a cop, he said. For a young person from a poor family, or a broken home, he or she can become a trusted adult—someone to turn to for help and advice.

One urgent need in the volunteer program is for native volunteers. At present, there are 12 native volunteers.

"A child from a village is very shy. If he's gotten in trouble and placed on probation he rarely opens up to caucasions. I have kids come into my office saying I can't talk to her and not knowing why."

The native volunteers the program has found, Sutton said, have been excellent. One volunteer went out searching for jobs

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I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SO-CALLED DEVIANT—Ted Sutton, coordinator of the Volunteers in Probation program in Fairbanks is seeking native volunteers to work with native young people on probation. Sutton

himself is a Tlingit Indian from Seattle and Vancouver who says he grew up as a "kid who got into trouble"—a background which he feels helps him in his work.

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for a kid still in prison and due to be released. Others give extensively of their time and personal attention—all of which give the kid in trouble the feeling that somebody cares.

"Some of our volunteers are exconvicts—they make some of the best," Sutton said.

Ted Sutton, a Tlingit Indian-Filipino from Seattle who came to Alaska from Canada, has a great deal of experience on the other side of the law. For four years, he was in and out of reform schools—classified as "mentally deficient" till a routine intelligence test showed an above average mind—typed as a kid who continuously got in fights and in trouble.

As such, he fights against type casting youngsters as "juvenile delinquent" or "retarded" or "bad".

"Once a kid has a label, he goes out to try and live up to it," Sutton said. "He gives up trying."

In his early 20s, Sutton is presently working towards a degree in sociology, from the University of Alaska. He came to Alaska last year after finding out that he was a Tlingit-Haida Indian enrolled in the Central Council of that tribe. Till then, through a series of foster homes and later adoption, Sutton believed he was a full blooded Filipino.

On a morning after a night without sleep spent writing an end of term paper, Ted Sutton—leader of the Tahetan Youth Confederation at the University of Alaska and founder of the native youth movement talked about his childhood and youth as a member of a minority in U.S. and Canadian cities.

"Actually, I was brought up in a series of foster homes," Ted says about his childhood. "I was taken from my parents at about two years old because of child cruelty—beating up kids. I was a battered child. In Seattle, I spent my childhood years in the Negro district or ghetto area of Seattle."

Through the years of his childhood, Ted Sutton was a "Filipino" child who was passed through a number of foster homes—lower class families who took in children for the money provided by the Catholic Children's Aide Society. Families in the ghetto often didn't know where their next meal or rent money would come from. Children grew up in the streets.

"In this area, I learned how to hit people—how to fight," he says.

Later, adopted by the Sutton family, he moved into the white middle class mainstream—but not completely. In Vancouver, he went to high school—changing images to fit the white idea of an Indian.

"I found that there were lots of people like me. There were kids brought up in environments that were so sickening. There was a couple of kids next door who woke up with their ears and toes chewed off by rats."

"I used to feel sorry for

myself," he reports. As a teenager, Ted Sutton became an educated minority. In high school in Canada he sought the roads to success open to blacks and minorities—fighting, physical superiority, medals for track and boxing. He spent time in reform schools, met other people from worse background who hadn't given up.

Later, he was determined to go back to school and become a social worker.

"I feel a good social worker is a person who has eaten the dirt of the lower class people—who knows what it is to be obsessed.

Before coming to Alaska, Ted Sutton tried one time to work as a community developer for the Canadian Bureau of Indian Affairs. Before that he had worked on the Canadian Stock Exchange—left it to escape the obsession of money.

"I didn't know they didn't hire natives," he said about the Bureau. At the employment office, he reported, everyone was white. The only "darkies" were in the waiting rooms.

"Me and this negro fellow were walking around Vancouver one night and I began talking to this rubbie (Canadian term for a native alcoholic). A rubbie is the lowest of the low. I was talking to this guy and found out this rubbie was a college graduate. What happened?

He said in this bureaucratic system I have to be white—which I never can be."

Soon after that, Ted Sutton went with two friends—one Jamaican and one Japanese—to do volunteer work with Indian children on the Musquim Indian reserve. For eight months, he worked with kids—traveled to reserves in Dawson Creek, Alberta and other places. There, he saw the society's method of pushing natives out of sight—out of mind.

On one of the reserves, he met a man who asked about his parentage. Shortly after, he received notification from the Tlingit Haidas and came up to Alaska to see what Alaskan Indians were all about.

Unlike many youths with his background, Sutton believes that he has not been radicalized by his experiences.

"There was a time when I was very bitter but I had to suppress it because I was living in a white culture," he said. "My job entails me to work with all sorts of people. I'm not a radical."

What he does believe, is that his background gives him a better understanding of what goes on in a so-called "social deviant's" mind.

"A kid doesn't commit a crime without a reason," Ted explained. "Sometimes, he will steal for money to eat. Another kid will steal a car—because he's never known what it could be like to drive a car, let alone to own one."

"You know, money isn't the root of all evil, hate is."