

Maniilaq program offers alternative to prison

Concluding the Tundra Times' coverage of the AFN Bush Justice Conference is a look at a new program to be started in the NANA region, the Maniilaq Association's Social Rehabilitation Program. The program will be watched closely for signs of success, for many concerned individuals in various regions around the state see the Maniilaq program as a possible model for their own region to provide an alternative Native-operated correctional facility.

Program Philosophy

The lack of culture and the values associated with that culture are known to be devastating for individuals who have grown up without this type of background. This lack of identity and loss of culture are often the roots for a displaced person struggling between a society that does not accept him as a member because he is physically recognized as a member of a different culture and society. Psychologically, he feels inadequate among his own people because he does not "know" their ways and often is an outcast of both societies. More often than not, this displaced person has been involved with alcohol and has been incarcerated for minor offenses because of his/her drinking. It is clear that this type of behavior will lead to more serious problems and he/she will end up in jail with a long sentence. When this person returns to society, little has been done to eliminate the basic deficiencies of this cultural lack. In fact, the individual will be much worse off than when he left, because now he has become 'institutionalized' and has absorbed numerous 'bad' ways from other inmates.

The Elders and representatives of the Maniilaq Association believe there is an alternative to this process and they wish to be involved with the disposition of their own people. The Elders believe that the correctional process of their own people could best be served by implementing an intervention program in order that first-time felons and certain misdemeanor offenders who meet program entry requirements be diverted to the Social Rehabilitation Center rather than go to prison.

The program emphasis will be designed to incorporate traditional Inupiaq values in a re-learning process geared to help the offender regain his culture. If the loss of culture can be corrected, the person may be able to become a productive member of his own society. The basic belief of the Elders is that a person must have an intimate knowledge and understanding of his culture in order to become a productive member of his community.

The idea of a culturally-oriented rehabilitation program is not new. The idea originated in Canada with the Baffan Correctional Center (1974), and a similar program, the Swiftbird Project, was initiated in South Dakota in 1978.

Program Goals

The goals of the Maniilaq Social Rehabilitation Center are as follows:

The Center should provide the residents with a sound personal philosophy based on Inupiaq values, concepts and practices and to provide the residents with the basic social skills that will insure their families and communities well being and continuance.

The Center should provide a viable alternative to prison for Inupiaq offenders who meet the admission criteria.

The Center should provide residents an opportunity to build self-esteem,

motivation, and the ability to remain crime-free and self-supporting after their release.

The Center should offer services and a rehabilitation setting which currently does not exist in state correctional facilities.

The Center should prove that it can successfully treat Inupiaq offenders utilizing Inupiaq values and culture.

The Center should encourage villages and communities to accept the residents when they return and give them a chance to show they have rehabilitated themselves.

The Center should provide job opportunities for the Inupiaq.

The Center should provide the court and correctional system with a viable resource for alternative sentencing.

The Center should develop and implement an alcohol treatment program.

The Center should become stable within one year, and be a resource for years to come.

to assimilate any parts of another culture. For these reasons, Maniilaq and the Elders believe that it is necessary to formulate the programming of the Center around these values.

Inupiaq Values

Knowledge of Language; Respect for Others; Respect for Elders; Love for Children; Knowledge of Family Tree; Spirituality; Family Roles; Domestic Skills; Sharing; Cooperation; Hard Work; Avoid Conflict; Respect for Nature; Humor; Hunter Success; and Humility.

Life Skills Development

This component of the center is designed to help prepare residents for a successful readjustment to their home communities once they are released from the center. Each skill involves other skills and the complete mastery of all skills should not be expected by all residents. The Life Skill

program. Counselors will serve as role models for the residents and should not have a caseload of more than eight residents.

Legal Assistance

The residents of the Center will be offered a workshop on the criminal justice system, corrections and the courts as a part of their rehabilitation program. The workshop will be offered on a quarterly basis utilizing current Maniilaq staff, representatives from the legal services offices, and parole and probation officers in the area. Many offenders are ignorant of the law and their responsibilities as a citizen; this ignorance leads to violations and repeated criminal activity. It is anticipated that with the proper introduction of the law, both civil and criminal aspects, there will be reduced criminal activity among the residents of the Center.

Educational/Vocational Training

The size and location of the facility limit the educational and vocational program offerings for the residents. Efforts for vocational training will be a priority for residents that are released and seeking a vocational skill. Individualized educational programming will be available for those who wish to seek their GED. Again this will not be a priority for programming as it may interfere with values and skills development programming. Residents will have access to such programming if it is desired.

Substance Abuse Treatment

Many, if not all of the residents of the Center will have been involved with drugs and/or alcohol upon entering the Social Rehabilitation Center. The Center will therefore provide as part of the program a substance abuse treatment program.

"Inupiat values guided the Elders in the past; today they keep us on the right track so we can face the challenges of the future."

—Col. John Schaeffer

the Center and Its Organizational Relationships

The Social Rehabilitation Center is being developed by the Maniilaq Association with a grant from the State Legislature, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services in coordination with the Department of Corrections. The Center, when opened, will house approximately 16 residents.

Facilities

The facility is located on the northern part of the Kobuk River Delta, where the Ugriuk River meets the Melvin Channel approximately 30 air miles east of Kotzebue. The site was chosen for the high elevation (above the flood plain) and other resources such as wood for construction and heating. Water is available from the streams and the area is isolated enough to minimize the possibility of walk-aways or escape. It is not encumbered by an existing Native allotment and will be utilized by the Inupiat Iltusiat Program during the summer.

The buildings on the permanent site include the main building, which features two large rooms connected by a hallway. A portion of the main building will be used for administrative purposes and for a staff dormitory while the other part of the building is used for kitchen and mess hall. There are six log cabins complete with bunk beds, cots, woodstoves, gaslamps and other items. The facility does not have running water or modern waste disposal capabilities.

Responsibility to Tribe

It is intimate knowledge and understanding of these values that make a person accepted and successful in the Inupiaq way. These values form the foundation of life for everyone. Research has shown that you must know your own culture and language, and be comfortable with that culture and language before you can attempt

development will enable the resident to acquire and strengthen the skills and abilities necessary to cope with various problems and situations which they may encounter in their daily lives. Many lack these important skills which contribute to their criminal activity and conviction.

A counselor and a group of Elders will meet with each resident after they have been selected to participate in the program. They will review each of the values and explain the importance and significance of the values to the resident.

Counseling Component

The counseling component of the Center is designed to give each resident a person that he can interact with to develop the necessary survival skills, cultural understanding and value acceptance needed to be a productive member of society upon his release. Each counselor, in addition to being an advisor, will be called on to demonstrate and teach individuals survival skills needed to complete the pro-

