

# State youth find working together uplifting

By Yukio Kaneshiro  
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Over 150 youth and 500 participants attended the 12th Annual Statewide Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Symposium at the Egan Convention Center Nov. 15 to 18.

The symposium began with a performance from the Northern Lights Inter-Tribal Drummers. The drummers came from different tribes and backgrounds, but made wonderful music. Later that evening, Dr. Lonise Bias lectured about many of the problems that face today's youth. She began speaking to, and about youth after she lost two of her sons to drugs and violence. Her son, college star, Len, the number one draft pick for the National Basketball Assoc., died of a cocaine overdose in 1986. One of her other sons, Jay, was violently gunned down in a parking lot in 1990.

Throughout the symposium, speakers covered a wide range of topics, from how alcohol advertisers target youth, to the HIV/AIDS viruses. There were many unique groups there, like the students from Alaskans for Drug-

Free Youth. These Ketchikan students had a session called "Motivating Kids to Motivate Kids". Their session taught techniques kids could use to keep other kids from abusing drugs and alcohol.

There was another workshop I found interesting called "Increasing Self-Esteem Through Cultural Pride". It was taught by Janice

Jones Schroeder, M.Ed. This workshop focused on the richness and strength of Native cultures. It examined how Native people can utilize these strengths to overcome the negative obstacles in life, move on to the healing process, and enjoy the positive things that life has to offer. Some other sessions dealt with suicide, adult and youth com-

munication, role models, peer to peer support groups, and helping children with fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects.

The closing ceremony was very uplifting. The Northern Lights Inter-Tribal Drummers sent out a message of hope for the future. They performed a few powerful songs, organized a round-

dance where people shook hands and introduced each other, and closed in prayer.

This symposium was a good experience for me. It was very encouraging to see a lot of people from around the State show up and work together. The mood throughout the symposium was

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Northern Lights Inter-Tribal Drummers' Round Dance at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage.

(Photo by Yukio Kaneshiro)

# • Standing up for what they believe in

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an optimistic one. It seemed everyone attending was standing up for what they believed in, and were ready to make a change. I learned a lot more about drug and alcohol abuse, and communicating with adults. The purpose of

this convention was in its title: Energy and Experience, Youth and Adults in Partnership.

*(Editor's Note: The author is a Dimond High School graduate and University of Alaska student of Yupik/Japanese heritage.)*