

# 'Rely on selves to fight drug abuse'

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

Tundra Times

The self-sufficiency of sovereignty minus the abilities of sobriety equals suicide, a joint meeting of the Alaska Native Commission on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ANCADA) and the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) was told recently.

The ANCADA/AFN held a drug abuse conference in Tyonek recently to discuss the alcohol and drug problem and talk about ways to solve the problem of that abuse in the Native Alaska population.

The recurring message of the conference was that Natives should rely on the strengths of their cultures and their friends, family and villages to help

fight the problems that cause drug abuse.

Dennis Tiepelman of Kotzebue, who works with the Inupiat Ilitqusiat Spirit Program in the NANA Region, told the group about the Spirit Program and how it fights the problems that cause drug and alcohol abuse.

"From 1977 to 1980 our region had the highest rate of suicide of the regions at 90 suicides per 100,000."

He said regional corporate leaders went to area Elders to find out what was wrong and they were told 'you're trying to be something you're not. It'll never work. In our communities is strength. Be proud of who you are.'

"The Spirit Program was

told to us by our Elders. They said let's not let 10 years of money destroy 10,000 years of life."

By being proud of themselves for who they are and their accomplishments, can people fight the feelings that too often lead them to a bottle or drug abuse, said Tiepelman.

Pride in one's language abilities is important, said Tiepelman. "Be proud of your broken English because you've learned a foreign language. We should not apologize for knowing two languages," he said.

Tiepelman said that since the Spirit movement started, the suicide rate in the NANA region has dropped.

Daisy May Lamont, executive  
(Continued on Page 9)

# Alcohol fight requires family, friends' help

(Continued from Page One)

tive director of ANCADA, told the group that people cannot expect government to solve the problems that cause alcohol abuse or alcohol abuse itself.

"The state and federal governments in a way have brainwashed certain groups into thinking they could stop alcohol and drug abuse with money. That's not my philosophy. We have to do it . . . . It is we as Alaska Natives who must accept responsibility."

Chuna McIntyre of the Nunamta Yup'ik Eskimo Dancers, spoke of alternative methods of recreation such as dancing instead of drinking. He told the group to become reinvolved with "recreation of the real kind . . . . So many people consider drugs and alcohol as recreation. This is one of the things we can do to alleviate problems in the future."

Julie Kitka, the AFN human resources liaison, told the group they must become self-sufficient with the Native people and not lose hope. "Despair is more destructive than anything, even more destructive than outside force."

But that self-sufficiency must be a community thing. Self-sufficiency is a ring of individuals and communities," she said.

A self-sufficient person in a self-sufficient community is

more prepared to fight the many threats to that community and person posed by loss of land, loss of cultural base, loss of leadership, and from other sources, she said.

A person is able to battle the alcohol problem if he is realistic and never underestimates the problem and never underestimates his own ability to tackle the problem.

Another helper in fighting alcohol is involvement in the Indian Reorganization Act councils, village councils and corporations, said Kitka, a young Chugach shareholder.

She closed her talk by saying, "Share your visions with other people. The process of sharing your dreams will help to create them."

Personal testimony about their own drug problems came from several people. One woman said she overcame her alcohol problem with the help of "my faith and support from the village."

She observed that drinking and drug abuse seem to fall off during the summer when villagers are involved in subsistence fishing.

"One thing we can do is be together and share and not condemn people. Just let them know you care and have faith they can (overcome their problem)," she said.

Another said "Craziness is

not a good way of life. In 1942 alcohol was readily available in Bethel. But in those days, no crime, no problems, no drownings. By working together united we can counter alcohol and drug abuse . . . . My heart is heavy and I cry with them (when I hear of people in accidents related to alcohol and drugs.)"

This man supported a resolution of support for buying police dogs to find drugs in Juneau.

Another man said "Sometimes I never slept for five days. I had the DT's (delirium tremors) three times. I'm glad it happened to me and not someone else because I'm going to fight it."

Peter McKuliak, an alcohol and drug abuse counselor told the group that "teaching in a Native village is not done by words but by examples. Kids don't hear our words . . . they see what we do."

A person can help another who is abusing alcohol and drugs by doing many things. "In Native cultures, counseling is a normal thing between friends and relatives."

He told the group to provide a community model. "Look at individuals as part of something bigger. In Native history an individual cut off from the community will die.

"Tap the natural leaders . . .



Photo by Patty Ginzburg

Chuna McIntyre demonstrates constructive recreation at conference.

those who others go to. Get them involved (in fighting drug and alcohol abuse). They can move the community."

He also spoke of paternalism. "You don't do something

yourself. You ask for it. This is the opposite of people doing it themselves. Paternalism is broken when people learn to do things themselves. People working together don't need to go to the big boss."