



Nupuat

Serving the Native Peoples of the Chugach Region

Spring 2011
www.Chugachmiut.org

Restoring and recovering our health

By Jerry Luken, Editor

A new chapter opened in the Chugach Region. A varied representation of community members came together to discuss health issues the region has long faced. This meeting, however, focused on exploring the causes of the health issues, namely the childhood and historical traumas which result in continuing cycles of unhealthy choices.

The Restoration to Health Consult was held in Anchorage April 6-8. Community members from Tatitlek, Seward, Port Graham, Nanwalek, Cordova and Chenege Bay attended. Consult participants included Elders, parents, tribal leaders, youth and service providers.

One of the key points for exploration during the consult is the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, a collaboration between Vincent Fellitti, MD, of Kaiser Permanente, and Robert F. Anda, MD, MS, of the Centers for Disease Control. According to its website, the “ACE Study is perhaps the largest scientific research study of its kind, analyzing the relationship between multiple categories of childhood trauma and health and behavioral outcomes later in life (www.acestudy.org).”

Dr. Fellitti presented his findings on the first day of the consult. His experience with many patients suffering from a variety of health and behavioral issues (including substance abuse, smoking, obesity and violent behavior) is they experienced one or more traumatic conditions before the age of 18. Dr. Fellitti’s patients are adults who are smokers, alcoholics, drug abusers, obese or violent. All of them grew up in households where they experienced

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Above: Chugachmiut Board Chair Fran Norman. From left: Gabor Mate, MD, Patrick Anderson, Executive Director; Thelma Vlasoff, CHP from Tatitlek; Wannah Zacher, Chenege Bay Home School Liaison

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Community Health Aide Forum

By Cheri Hample, Health Services Division Director

The 2011 Community Health Aide (CHA) Forum was held in Anchorage April 18-22. The forum is an opportunity for CHAs from all over Alaska to update their skills, network and obtain continuing education credits.

Chugachmiut was well represented by: Sue Steward, CHAP Director, Thelma Vlasoff, CHP, Brandon Moonin, CHA II (Tatitlek); Andy McLaughlin, CHP, Betty Howard, CHP (Chenega Bay); Charlemagne McMullen, CHP, Elias Kvasnikoff, CHA III (Nanwalek); Darlene Anahonak, CHP, Aggie Miller, CHP (Port Graham); Karen Susie Hill, Itinerant CHP, and Cheri Hample, Director of Health Services. Patrick Anderson, Executive Director, was able to attend Wednesday’s presentation and awards luncheon, and Jerry Luken, Chugachmiut Communications Manager, attended part of



Standing, from left: Thelma Vlasoff, Betty Howard, Andy McLaughlin, Dr. David Zetterman, Brandon Moonin, Sue Miller, Sue Steward and Darlene Anahonak. Front row, from left: Cheri Hample, Elias Kvasnikoff, Aggie Miller, and Ephim Anahonak.

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NUPUAT is a quarterly publication of **CHUGACHMIUT**, the tribal not-for-profit organization serving the Alaska Native peoples of the Chugach Region. We welcome submissions from Tribal members, councils, and employees. Please share your comments and suggestions: **Jerry Luken**, Newsletter Editor, 1840 Bragaw Street, Suite 110 Anchorage, AK 99508-3463, (907) 562-4155, jerry@chugachmiut.org



Contact Numbers

Chugachmiut, Anchorage.....562-4155 1-800-478-4155	North Pacific Rim Housing Authority.....562-1444 1-888-274-1444
Health Services division.....224-3490 1-800-224-3076	Chugach Regional Resources Commission.....562-6647
Dental Clinic.....224-4925	Chugach Alaska Corporation.....563-8866 1-800-858-2768
Chugachmiut Homer Field Office.....235-0577	Chugach North Technical Services.....1-888-833-9288
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Chenega IRA Council.....573-5132	Qutekcak Native Tribe.....224-3118
Chenega Clinic.....573-5129	North Star Health Clinic.....224-3490
Native Village of Eyak.....424-7738	North Star Dental Clinic.....224-4925
Ilanka Health Clinic (Eyak).....424-3622	Tatitlek IRA Council.....325-2311
Cordova WIC Office.....424-5731	Tatitlek Clinic.....325-2250
Nanwalek IRA Council.....281-2274	Valdez Native Tribe.....835-4951
Nanwalek Clinic.....281-2250	Valdez WIC—call the Cordova WIC Office.....835-2173
Port Graham Village Council.....284-2227	
Port Graham Clinic.....284-2241	

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the forum.

Congratulations to Charlemagne McMullen, Community Health Aide Practitioner (CHAP) who received the “Rising Star Award.” She joins last year’s winner, Elias Kvasnikoff, CHA III. Her nomination summary stated: “She is a phenomenal Health Aide and in a very short period of time (2007-2011) she easily moved through 4 levels of certification to become a CHAP. Along with her CHAP certification she continues to pursue a college degree, married the love of her life and became a first time parent. She inspires others to set goals and work hard to achieve them. Her passion and compassion for caring for others is evident in the daily care she provides the beneficiaries in our region. She embraces progressive change and is champion for our new electronic health record...look for this ‘rising star’ to be shining for a very long time.”

Cheri Hample, Chugachmiut Health Director, presented a session “Hearts that Care, Hands that Share.” The session focused on self care and keeping one’s life in balance. CHAs were encouraged to develop a “tool box” of a variety of stress management techniques. Assertive communication was also part of the presentation and participants interacted through small group discussion.

At the end of the session all participants gathered in a circle and sang “HEARTS THAT CARE, HANDS

THAT SHARE” with lyrics by Cheri Hample. Cheri adapted the lyrics from “What a Wonderful World,” words and music by George David Weiss and Bob Thiele. This song was originally modified for the Brave Heart Volunteers of Sitka, AK, in 2004.

*We see hearts that care, hands that share,
We see the work, you do everywhere.
And we think to ourselves, how wonderful you are.
We see hands that hold, hearts of gold,
The compassion is there, this we’ve been told.
And we think to ourselves, how wonderful you are.*

*The work you do is difficult we know, we appreciate the
Dedication you show.
We see each of you working, so hard every day,
Giving your care in your own special way.
We see hearts that care, hands that share, we see the
good you do everywhere.*

*And we think to ourselves, how wonderful you are,
Yes, we think to ourselves, HOW WONDERFUL YOU
ARE,
Oh yeah!!*

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The healing power of Alaska’s plants

By Jerry Luken, Editor

There has been a movement in the last several years to utilize plants and herbs in health care. Pharmacy and supermarket aisles increasingly give space to “natural” and herbal medicines as an alternative to mass produced over-the-counter medicines.

This is actually a return to what many cultures, including the *Suqpiaq* of the Chugach Region, practiced for thousands of years before modern medicine. While the Alutiiq people were utilizing the abundant plant and animal life of the region for their diet, they were also using the area’s plants and

The critical element in this project,” says Helen Morris, “is the opportunity for regional Elders to teach and demonstrate the breadth of traditional and ecological knowledge.

herbs for medicinal purposes.

The Chugachmiut Heritage Preservation Program is close to completing its Healing Power of Alaska’s Plants Heritage Kit. These will teach students the medicinal value of the area’s plants and show them how to identify individual plants and what healing properties they contain.

This kit includes posters and display boards and fun activities including jigsaw puzzles and a computer game styled after “Jeopardy.”

Helen Morris, Heritage Preservation Program Coordinator, and Dr. Bernice Tetpon, Regional Education Coordinator, facilitated the development of these kits. Their team includes Helen Loescher, Program Assistant; Dominie Dew, Regional Education Coordinator from Seward; and Local Education Coordinators Nancy Yeaton of Nanwalek; Jessica Selig-Boyle, from Seward; and Barclay

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Prince William Sound Traveling Health Fair

By Skip Richards, Regional Public Safety Coordinator

The traveling health fair has become a major contributor to the provision of physical and behavioral health services for Prince William Sound. It provides many opportunities for community residents to become engaged with injury and illness prevention activities while also informing these residents as to what resources are available and how to access them.

Services were provided in Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Whittier and Cordova by more than a dozen providers, most of who stayed and traveled by boat.

This year's health fair theme was "Know your numbers" attendees were able to get their cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose, blood pressure, body mass index and other health related indicators measured. This was mainly accomplished with a portable blood analyzing machine that took a drop of blood and had the results ready in just a few minutes. This was followed up with a short session with the health care provider on what each indicator meant for the person and what they can do to improve those numbers.

Many other services were provided including vision screening, nutrition, food choices / portion size, first aid, exercise, yoga, growth/development, STD awareness, communicable vs. non communicable diseases, power



Lydia Robart (front) and Sydney Johnson.

and control, suicide, healthy choices, healthy habits, marine / boating safety, personal safety and other safety presentations.

The Women's Tea is a perennial favorite where women's issues are discussed along with crafts, massages, tea and door prizes being enjoyed by all. The Men's Breakfast features fatherhood and healthy relationship presentations.

There is a community dinner provided in both Tatitlek and Chenega Bay where the providers cook and serve a healthy dinner to the community members.

The traveling health fair exemplifies many of the Restoration to Health Initiative strategies. Residents are encouraged to be proactive and take control of their health. The mere presence of many of these providers and interactions with community members provide benefits that can't always be measured.

A number of agencies and people are involved with the coordination and provision of this event, too many to name here. However, special thanks go to the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and the Alaska Marine Lines for their more than generous financial and material support without which the traveling health fair would be impossible.

Eat right, stay fit and enjoy life.

Personal Care Attendant Training at Qutekcak

By Maggie Simmons, Elders Program Coordinator, Qutekcak Native Tribe

Are you ready for a satisfying new career? Do you have a caring nature and the willingness to help local elders and disabled residents? Then a career as a personal care attendant (PCA) just may be for you!

This is a rapidly growing profession in health care. PCAs help elderly and disabled clients with activities of daily living so that they can remain independent and live in their own homes. Duties may include assisting patients with cleaning their homes, cooking meals, helping them eat, and advising patients and families on nutrition, cleanliness and basic health care needs. Safety and emergency skills such as CPR and first aid will help you in a

career in personal care.

The Qutekcak Native Tribe Elders' Neighbor to Neighbor Program, sponsored by the Indian Health Service, will be holding PCA training June 13-18 at the QNT office. Training is open to tribal and community members. Home care agencies will hire students who are eligible to work. Scholarships are available for those who qualify. High school diploma or GED are required and a criminal background check will be conducted.

For more information, contact Maggie or Mariah at QNT for details: 224-3118 or email N2N@qutekcak.net.

VPSO academy: 'First Responders—Last Frontier'

By Jerry Luken, Editor



Far left: Reuben Norman of Port Graham receiving his award for Defense Tactics; James Lolley II (3rd from left) of Chenega Bay receiving his VPSO Certification from Joseph Masters, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Public Safety.

Reuben Norman of Port Graham and James Lolley, II, of Chenega Bay obtained their Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) certification on March 11. They completed 10 weeks of training in Sitka, starting on January 3 and culminating in the graduation ceremony in March. Bill Settle of Tatitlek, who was a certified police officer

when hired, only required a two-week Village Police Officer course and two weeks of fire training to receive program certification.

Twenty officers graduated this session, the largest graduating class in recent history, according to the Alaska State Troopers. Reuben Norman received special recogni-

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Kopchak from Cordova. Consultant Francy Bennett developed the display materials and activities and assisted with lesson plans. She especially enjoyed her time spent with the Elders of Nanwalek.

The kit will be used in schools with Elders as the primary teachers.

"The critical element in this project," says Helen Morris, "is the opportunity for regional Elders to teach and demonstrate the breadth of traditional and ecological knowledge. This is important knowledge that must be preserved for future generations."

Elders who shared their knowledge in completion of the project include Kathy Brewster of Nanwalek, and Feona Sawden of Port Graham. Christalina Jager of Port Graham provided illustrations. The kits will be in English



Heritage Preservation staff, from left: Jessica Selig-Boyle, Bernice Tetpon, Barclay Kopchak, Nancy Yeaton, Dominique Dew, Helen Loescher, and graphic designer David Taylor.

and *Sugt'stun*, the Native language of the region. Derynty Tabios, originally of Port Graham, is providing translation. Project staff also thanks noted Alaska botanist Verna Pratt for providing photos and slides used in the kit.

Heritage Preservation is one of eighteen projects directed by Susan LaBelle, Community and Family Services Division Director. She supports kit development through her knowledge of the region's Elders and their interests.

The Alaska's Plants kit is one of six being developed by the Heritage Preservation Project through a U.S. Department of Education, Alaska Native Education Grant. For more information contact Helen Morris at 334-0149, 800-478-4155, or HelenM@chugachmiut.org.

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physical, emotional or sexual abuse; alcohol or drug use; missing parent or parents; violence or neglect; depression.

Adults who make unhealthy choices are doing so because they are either coping with such traumas, or simply following learned behavior. It has long been believed that unhealthy choices and addictions are a result of genetics. Dr. Fellitti disagrees. He used the example: if a child grows up in a household where everyone speaks English, he will speak English. If a child grows up in a household of Spanish speakers, he will speak Spanish. In the same way, if a child grows up in a home of smokers, he will most likely grow up and smoke. Like language, it is a learned behavior, not a trait genetically passed on.

These findings are supported by Gabor Maté, MD, who also spoke on the first day of the consult. Dr. Maté is a physician, public speaker and best-selling author of several books, including *"In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts."* He is staff physician at the Portland Hotel, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside clinic where his patients are people with drug addictions, HIV and related problems. In his experience, compulsive and unhealthy behaviors in people are self-medication. They are trying to fill voids

The key to the terms "recovery" and "restoration" is the people of the region getting back what they once had: healthy lifestyles built on subsistence, sharing, family and spirituality.

left in their lives by traumatic upbringings like the ones Dr. Fellitti identifies.

Dr. Maté encourages compassion and understanding for those with addictive behaviors. He says every one of his patients with serious addictions were victims of some form of childhood trauma. Our society, unfortunately, focuses on punishment. The "War on Drugs," in effect, sends society's victims to prison.

Harold Napoleon, author of *"Yuuyaraq: Way of the Human Being,"* was also a featured speaker. Harold addressed the generational trauma experienced by Alaska Natives since European, Russian and American traders and missionaries arrived. Prior to this, Alaska Natives knew who they were and were in touch with their spirits. Outsiders forced Natives to give up their traditional ways and languages in order to assimilate to Western society. Harold said "if a caribou becomes

What are the childhood traumas identified by the ACE study?

Children exposed to one or more of the following are likely to develop health and/or behavioral issues as adults:

1. Recurrent physical abuse
2. Recurrent emotional abuse
3. Contact sexual abuse
4. An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
5. An incarcerated household member
6. Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
7. Mother is treated violently
8. One or both parents absent
9. Emotional or physical neglect

confused and acts like a whale, it will die." Likewise, Natives must return to who they really are in order to survive.

Eduardo Duran, PhD, is a clinical psychologist who specializes in historical trauma and the resulting psychological effects. Dr. Duran believes that "wounding of the spirit" has occurred in most parts of the world and has been perpetrated upon people of all ethnicities and nationalities. The key to recovery is acknowledgement of trauma and forgiveness of the perpetrator, otherwise the cycle will continue indefinitely.

As a clinical child psychologist at the University of Oklahoma, Delores Subia BigFoot, PhD, has seen the results of trauma on Native children. She advocates for leadership and citizens to recognize a need for change. We all must be willing to change to break the cycle, to intervene when necessary, and work together to guide our

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Nancy Radtke of Nanwalek



From left: Jace Evans of Nanwalek, Karen Swearingen of Seward, and Mary Malchoff of Port Graham.

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children and ensure that they feel safe, protected and valued.

On the final day of the consult, Diane Benson, a name familiar to most Alaska Natives, shared her own memories of trauma. Her story of survival and success despite numerous abuses throughout her life proved to be painful to hear. Nevertheless, the strength she displayed captured the attention of everyone in the room. The hope and optimism Diane inspired was a highlight. She filled the room with her confidence and defiance of the those who seek to oppress.

Each day attendants broke off into work groups and discussed how the information presented can benefit the region. Utilizing World Café tools, the groups brainstormed on topics such as values, happiness, wellness and spirituality.

Participants at the Restoration to Health Consult were very eager to bring back what they learned to their communities. Community members are ready to take a “no shame, no blame” approach to confronting the traumas

that lie beneath the health issues throughout the region. They want to get better and they know they can get better.

Many expressed a wish to return to simpler times, when people shared what they had and spent time together. A time when family and community relationships were important, when children were taught and lead by example. A time before alcohol and chemically processed Western foods began to encroach on their good health; when salmon, berries, moose, seal and halibut were the primary diet.

Also evident is the belief they can take control of the situation — they are responsible for restoring and recovering health. Members of each village vocalized a willingness to take responsibility and assist in the journey toward restoration.

The key to the terms “recovery” and “restoration” is the Alaska Native peoples of the region are getting back what they once had: healthy lifestyles built on subsistence, sharing, family and spirituality. The Restoration to Health Consult is a big first step in a journey many are ready to take.

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Chugachmiut is a recognized leader in the Community Health Aide program and throughout the state. Sue Steward serves as Chair of the CHA Directors Group. Cyndy Langmade, PA, serves on two committees, Dr. David Zetterman provides medical direction / support and Cheri Hample serves on the E-cham committee and has presented at the forum the last three years.

The CHA program is the foundation of rural health in Alaska. Please acknowledge and give a huge “thank you” to the Chugachmiut CHAs in your community for their commitment and care.

Cheri Hample congratulates Charlemagne McMullen (right), who was awarded the “Shining Star Award” at the 2011 CHA Forum in April.





CHUGACHMIUT

1840 Bragaw Street, Suite 110
Anchorage, AK 99508-3463

www.chugachmiut.org

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tion for achieving top score on personal defense tactics.

The VPSO Program began in the late 1970s as a means of providing rural Alaskan communities with needed first-responder public safety services at the local level. These include search and rescue, fire protection, emergency medical assistance, crime prevention and basic law enforcement.

For more information on the Chugachmiut VPSO program, contact Skip Richards, Regional Public Safety Coordinator, at 235-0577 or skip@chugachmiut.org.

Chugachmiut is the tribal consortium created to promote self-determination to the seven Native communities of the Chugach Region. We provide health and social services, education and training, and technical assistance to the Chugach Native people in a way which is acceptable to Native cultural values and tradition in order to enhance the well-being of our people by continuing to strengthen the tribes and increase self-determination opportunities for community operated tribal programs.

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