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Inuvik
Committee of Concern
on
Alcohol Problems
Box 1293
Inuvik, N.W.T.

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INUVIK DRUM - July 2, 1970:

ALANO CLUB'S FIRST SEASON A SUCCESS

Under the Chairmanship of Doug Bailey, the Inuvik Committee of Concern on Alcohol Problems, is already planning for the second season of one of its main projects - the Alano Club. Last Sunday was the final evening of operation until September. During the summer necessary improvements will be made to the old Ingamo building which the Committee utilizes.

The Alano Club was opened December 5, 1969 and remained open for 206 consecutive evenings from 7 o' clock until midnight. Members of the Committee of Concern have put in over 1,000 hours of volunteer time in helping to supervise the Club. During the past season close to 6,000 people dropped in to the centre - an informal meeting place where anyone could spend a social evening without encountering the presence of alcohol. Average attendance each night has been nearly 30.

The Committee feels that the project has met a real need in the community. Costs of operation have been covered by the profits from the small canteen in the Club. However, it is hoped that some donations will be forthcoming to assist in the renovation of the building and the purchase of needed equipment.

History

In June, 1969 concerned citizens of Inuvik met together to discuss the need for dealing with the problems of drinking and alcoholism in the area. One of the greatest needs apparent was a rehabilitation centre (half-way house) for those people whose lives had already been seriously impaired by alcohol and who needed a great deal of help in order to re-integrate into society.

In October a formal Committee was constituted and the decision was made to open a drop-in type centre (some of the elements of a friendship centre) in order for the Committee to make contact with those in need and to provide a social centre where alcohol could be avoided by those so wishing to do this. Permission was obtained from the old Ingamo Community Association to re-open their building which had been unused for a year and a half. Repairs were made; the community donated furniture, a pool table, book and magazine racks, movie screen, radio and record player, kitchen equipment, cards, cribbage boards, checker boards, etc. An initial 200 gallons of fuel was donated for heating purposes. A telephone was donated by another citizen. In early December the hall was opened. The success of the project is obvious from the above newspaper report.

In April the Committee sponsored an all-day seminar on Alcoholism and Drinking Problems. This was well attended by a representative group of Inuvik citizens.

During the summer of 1970 the Committee turned over its facilities to the Inuvik Playground Committee. Unfortunately just before the Committee took back the building a small fire put the furnace out of commission permanently and generally made a mess both of the hall and its furniture, equipment and fixtures.

As of February, 1971 this project still lies dormant. During the past few months the Committee has had time to rethink the situation and feels that such a worthwhile project merits government support.

Up to now the government has put nothing into the work of this committee in the way of money. It is obvious that the local community took the initiative, but it cannot resume the program on anything like the scale that is needed to meet critical social situations unless the government sees fit to support it through grants.

The NWT Alcohol Education Program is education alone and it is impossible to save everyone who is afflicted by drinking problems merely by handing him a pamphlet or showing him a movie. The Inuvik Committee has seen the need for some time for preventative and rehabilitation programs that can really come to grips with a situation that will inevitably destroy more lives unless the government awakens to its responsibilities quickly.

1% of the profits from Alcohol sales would provide a tremendous resource for local communities to develop their own programs and centres. Local communities such as Inuvik have concerned citizens who are willing to a lot of work but the problem is so great that it cannot be maintained on a strictly volunteer basis.

In Inuvik certain government buildings sit empty while a citizens' committee cries for help in order to provide an adequate social centre for the local residents. Sociologists have written reports for years on the problems of Inuvik society. When is Social Development and other departments going to tackle the problems realistically? The Community Hall has fostered the Drum Dance group, the Northern Games athletes and provided a place for community nurseries, kindergartens and playground programs in the past. NOW WE NEED HELP.

In the next few years Inuvik will become more and more a crossroads for the Western Arctic. Where the hell are all the people of the north going to find a place where a friendly welcome awaits, a cup of coffee, recreational facilities, information and social contact? If we open an average of one bar a year in the Town the answer is obvious.

If the government truly wants the northern peoples to play their rightful part in the development of their own land, support must be forthcoming IMMEDIATELY to assist the CONCERNED citizens of Inuvik and elsewhere in providing the facilities to meet the real social and other needs of the residents.

There are ways to give the people more opportunity for fellowship and the chance to work co-operatively together in promoting a healthier and more progressive community - but the FINANCIAL support of the Government of the N.W.T. is headed NOW. In ten years a dozen drug and alcohol treatment centres will be of no use. It will be TOO late.

The new North of tomorrow will only be a challenge to those who have self-respect and have not freaked out because of the lack of sensitivity of government to the real priorities of TODAY.

SOCK IT TO THEM TOM BUTTERS.