

Spotlight: Ain Dah Yung (Our Home) Shelter **by Catherine Whipple**

Ain Dah Yung is one Native community organization that has been getting the word out about the use and abuse of tobacco in the Native community. Created in 1983 as an emergency shelter for runaway and homeless American Indian youth, the organization has created a 23-minute video called “Be True to Yourself” that focuses on the traditional uses of tobacco and the contemporary issues around tobacco abuse in the Native community. The video is shown at conferences, community feasts, drum groups, and anywhere they are requested to show it.

Kelly Milam (LCO Ojibwe), Youth Prevention Coordinator for Ain Dah Yung, says teaching youth about tobacco is part of the cultural teachings at the shelter. “After kids are placed in the community, we bring them back into the cultural stuff in the community... the drum, sweats, language. And the traditional use of tobacco is an integral part of that. It’s part of a larger cultural thing that’s going on,” he said.

Last year Ain Dah Yung held a Tobacco Camp at Eden Woods Center in Eden Prairie. The 3-day event had 30 youth in attendance and brought in positive Native role models to educate the youth on the traditional uses of tobacco.

This fall the organization will hold a day-long workshop for youth and adults to address issues around smoking. Elders will be brought in to talk about the traditional uses of tobacco, and the unhealthy smoking rates in the community.

And at this year’s Ain Dah Yung Powwow, held each April, the organization collaborated with the American Indian Community Tobacco Project to hold an honoring song for Native non-smokers. People were invited to speak about how many years they had been smoke-free, and dance during an honor song for them.

Milam says the whole Ain Dah Yung powwow had a heavy anti-smoking message about it. He says the powwow is very visible in the community and the organization wanted to have strong anti-smoking message associated with it.

For more information on the video or other information on Ain Dah Yung, call 651-227-4184, or see their website at: www.aindahyung.com