



T H E

B E A R T A L E

The Bear Mother

The old people say that mother bears are kind to lost or unhappy Indian children and this old Micmac tale tells about this. It also tells how summer was brought to the Micmacs.

Long ago in the land of the Micmacs there lived an Indian family in a village of twenty wigwams. In the family, besides the parents, there were five children: one girl, 3 big boys, and one very small boy. The parents did the things the other people of their village did in those times. The men hunted for beaver, deer, and moose; and the women cooked, made baskets, moccasins and cradleboards.

In the hills way above the Indian village was a village of bears. This turned out to be a lucky thing for that family. One sad day both the father and mother of the five children died. It happened so unexpectedly that the children were all very upset; especially the smallest boy, who couldn't be a peace about his parents' death. Even after their bodies had been smoked and wrapped in birch bark by the other villagers (for this was the old custom), the youngest boy continued to cry. Although his brothers and sister tried to comfort him they could not, for the little boy cried con-

in the ground, and then it will be summer!"

The three brothers did as they were told in everything; and so it came to pass that summer was brought to the Land of the Micmacs. At last the flowers bloomed, the sad little boy began to laugh out loud to see them. He was sad no more!

Seeing that the boy was happy again, the kind mother bear went home to her cubs in the hills. There she rocked her babies and sang to the, "Ba-ba-bo, Ba-ba-bo"; and summer was in the land!



It seems that some people (and some bears) will go to any length to make another person feel good again. With the new Alcohol & Drug Programs, we're going to see more of this happening---more of people helping each other in the Indian communities. The problem of alcohol dependency and drug dependency is community-wide, and the only real solution will be community-wide caring.

At an Indian Alcohol & Drug Conference in Albuquerque this July,

a young Indian woman of about 16 got up and said to the adults there, "It seems you older people in the Indian communities have forgotten how to help one another without getting paid for it!" She was right; and we should remember that. It's true there are jobs in the new programs that do receive pay---but there are also many small kindnesses we can all do for one another without pay. Such individuals efforts will have a big effect on the Alcohol and Drug Programs, because CARING is the strongest medicine.

Now some people say they don't understand why there aren't more changes going on yet with the new Alcohol & Drug Programs. There are some doubters, and some do-nothings, and some jealous people (jealous because they have no direct control over the new programs) who have begun to downgrade the very real progress being made. Use your own head, says Beaver Tale. Go to 93 Main Street in Orono and talk to the new Director, Mike Ranco, and his staff. See for yourself what a good founda-

tinually, "Where is our mother? Where is our father?" He was too young to understand such a hard fact as death.

At last the sister said to one of the big brothers, "Brother, go up to the hills where the bears live, and see if you can find a mother bear to comfort our poor baby brother." So the brother went; and before long he found a mother bear and her two cubs. He said to her, "Please come and comfort our baby brother. All he does is cry over our dead parents." The kind lady bear agreed to see the boy, and she left her own cubs in the camp.

Arriving at the village of Indians, she went to the crying boy. She cuddled him in her big, soft, strong arms, and sang to him,

"Ba-ba-bo, Ba-ba-bo"

over and over, rocking him gently all the while. Pretty soon the little boy felt better and fell asleep in the big mother bear's arms. But when he awoke, he began to cry again. His brothers made him a little bow and arrow to play with to cheer him up; but still the little

boy cried. All the time he cried he shivered, too, for it was winter and very cold. At last the little boy said to the mother bear, "If only it were warm like it is in your arms, then I would stop crying."

So now mother bear knew what to do. She told the three older brothers, Loon, Blue-jay and Otter, "Your little brother wants summer." So take these big hide-bags and travel westward until you find the summer air. Ask Sky to fill these bags with summer air and bring them back here to the Land of the Micmacs."

So the three brothers headed off towards the west with the three hide-bags until they found summer. There they asked Sky to give them some summer to take back to their land. A voice they could not see told the boys to close the bags quickly. "Now, go to my wigwam, and there take a pair of birds of every kind, and one of each kind of plant. When you return to your land, let the hot air out of the bags. When the snow is all gone, let loose the birds, put the plants

tion has been laid for the Alcohol & Drug Programs. Programs that will work, and, what's more, work for a long time to come because they have been well planned.

There is, first of all, a bookkeeping system which has been set up to deal with three programs (Training, Medical & Alcohol Services) in six communities. (That's eighteen birdies to watch at once!) Then there is a grant being submitted for a food program for all the community shelters and the Half-way House. Arrangements for the Half-way House subleasing and meeting licensing requirements are being made. Board by-laws have been worked out, and working committees formed, including a hiring committee. The staff has been nearly all recruited on the Services Program, and much of it has been for the medical part of the system. Agreements of cooperation between the Indian Alcohol & Drug Programs and the hospitals, doctors and treatment facilities are being reached---a very hard task to accomplish, requiring lots of strategy, travel and meeting-

going. Most program office equipment and supplies have been purchased. Two national Indian meetings on Alcohol & Drugs have been attended and learned from.

There has also been a visit to Maine recently by Al Pooley of the American Indian Commission of Alcohol & Drug Abuse to help in refining the staff's training program. Negotiations have gone on since last winter about training with the University of Maine. Recently the training site was changed from Farmington to the University of Maine at Bangor.

The Wabanaki Board of Directors meet several times a month, ever since funding began, to work out program problems. And although the Central Maine Indian Association was not formed when the alcohol grant was written, they have been neatly worked into the program. Everyone concerned with the program is thinking up ways to keep the program funded, after the 3-year grant is up. Some clients have already benefited from the medical care offered in the program, easing the already strained budget of Indian

Affairs. Many people are being counseled by the program counselors.

These counselors are the same people you knew about before, who were hired mostly through Indian Affairs. These positions have all been turned over to the new programs. Besides these, there are new counselors, including counselors for young people. This Beaver Tale Newsletter is now being put out by the program Interim Training Director and will remain a part of the program.

A good Alcohol & Drug Program, wherever it is, has to be built on a solid foundation. It has to be out of the political circus, and able to survive changes at the federal and state government level. It has to be strong enough to resist pressures from all sides, and eventually it should be self-supporting because people's lives are at stake, as well as the happiness of nearly every Maine Indian family. These programs have to start off with solid groundwork.

A baby, after all, takes 9 months to be born and 18 years to reach the

age of legal good sense. No one expects the baby to go out and earn a living when he's 1 day old. So it is with these new Alcohol & Drug Programs. It takes time, patience, luck, work and support to get them started.

To those who say "nothing has been done", we say: Take a better look. Meet the staff. See the new offices and records systems. Go to some of those Wabanaki Board meetings. Come up with some ideas yourself.

If we think of that story of Mother Bear again, we can see that the critics of the program would do well instead to offer their warmth and help in an unselfish way. We might compare the basic planning and negotiations with making the hide-bags to catch summer. The bags are now made; now it's time for the people to breath the warmth of life into the programs and let loose the birds of hope, the flowers of joy. To those already giving this warmth and support, we say thanks from everyone. To those criticizing from the sidelines we say, "DON'T BE PART OF THE PROBLEM. BE PART OF

THE ANSWER."



Alcoholics Anonymous - What is it, what does it do, who is it for, what is it like?

In every Indian community in Maine, there is a small "A.A." group. Indian Islands is perhaps the oldest. Many people don't really know what A.A. is, what it does, or why it works. Some may even feel threatened by the A.A. meetings in their communities because they don't understand. The Beaver Tale will expand more on A.A. in later issues. For now we will just cover the bases.

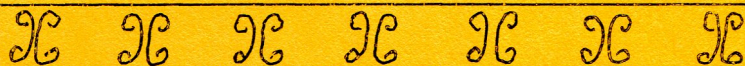
- 1.) A.A. is voluntary, made up of non-paid, non-paying members. Donations are accepted, but money is no obstacle to joining. Everyone who is sober at the time of the meeting is welcome.
- 2.) A.A. members, when they accept the A.A. program, eventually admit they are powerless over alcohol; that "one drink is too many and a thousand not enough." It takes courage to see and admit this. No one is forced, it comes from inside.
- 3.) A.A. members don't pro-

mise never to drink again. They say instead, "The problem is to say sober now." To do this, the A.A. member says, "Today I will not drink." Thus their slogan, "One day at a time." This way a person only has to go through one day without drinking. Then another, and another. If he feels a "slip" coming on, he contacts another experienced A.A. member, who helps him over the rough spot. This approach to alcohol addiction is referred to in A.A. as the "24-hour Program."

- 4.) A.A. members do not use last names, just initials, when announcing meetings, sobriety celebrations, etc. (The Beaver Tale announced a sobriety party a couple of issues back and mentioned the A.A. member's last name. This was a mistake, and should not have been done. Sorry.) Despite the rule of staying anonymous, or unnamed, some famous people, such as Senator Harold Hughes, Wilbur Mills and Dick Van Dyke, and others have successfully used A.A. in their recovery and publicly state that A.A. was their salvation.
- 5.) Can A.A. members ever drink again? It's up to the individual; but a person who is alcohol-addicted can never safely drink again. Alcohol dependency is something like an allergy. Some people simply can not handle alcohol without becoming addicted. It is much harder to give up alcohol than, for example, smoking or over-eating. People with the guts to try need praise and support, not dumb remarks from ignorant bystanders. Do all you can to help the A.A. member stay sober. His life depends on it.

- 6.) A.A. is not a religious organization, but it is approved of by all churches. Each member puts his life in the hands of a "higher power" as the person sees this power. (The Catholic Church runs A.A. retreats in Augusta on occasion.)
- 7.) There are men and women of all ages in A.A., from 16-96. The usual social barriers disappear in face of a common enemy.
- 8.) People describe their drinking experiences at the meetings on a voluntary basis; when they feel ready. This helps the other members feel they are not alone with their problem, and that sobriety and solutions can be reached. These shared experiences also help the new A.A. member to realize many of his troubles do go back to alcohol abuse.
- 9.) Is A.A. all serious stuff? No. A.A. members share many interests and friendships. There are frequent parties for celebrating sobriety anniversaries, local picnics, and state and national meetings. (19,000 A.A. members attended the national meeting this year---proof that the program works for people.) Most A.A. members are charming and happy people who have found a new meaning in life.
- 10.) How do I join A.A.? Ask your counselor, minister, priest, or A.A. friend when and where meetings will be held. Then just go, and you will be welcome. Another way is check the "Personal" ads in the daily paper, and also the telephone yellow pages. Local hospitals, social workers, doctors and nurses may also be able to direct you to meetings. A.A. members visit each other's meetings in other towns, so if

you want to start going to A.A. meetings somewhere besides your home community, you can.



NOTICE: All Native American youths in the Central Maine Area:

If you have an interest in developing educational, cultural or social activities for youth in your community, and need support or assistance, please write or call:

Miss Natalie Mitchell, Youth Counselor, 93 Main Street, Orono, Maine, 04473. Tel. 866-5577.



LATEST POSITIONS FILLED IN THE MAINE INDIAN ALCOHOL SERVICES PROGRAM:

Orono Central Office

Mike Ranco was unanimously approved by Wabanaki Board members as the permanent Program Director. Congratulations!

Central Maine Indian Association

Correction: The Youth Worker for C.M.I.A. is Natalie Mitchell (not Madeline Mitchell as we said in the last issue.)

Indian Island

Ruth Davis, Community Nurse; Merlene Couturier, Youth Worker.

The Sacred Pipe

Father, Creator of us all,

Hear my prayer through this sacred  
pipe:

Help my peoples to walk the good  
road of life,

May they forget their differences

And remember their likenesses,

May they dwell in peace and harmony

With all the living creatures You  
have made,

May goodness and happiness follow  
them

Until the coming of those sacred  
red and blue days,

In a holy manner, may it be so.

(Painting and Poem by Wayne Eagleboy)

Till next time, watch out for Kchi-Kwa-Beet and be good to one another.

Your Friend,

Wul-a-ma-wo-gun

(The Truth)