

Lane: Alaska has taken new steps to fight alcoholism

by Steve Pilkington

for the Tundra Times

The last year has seen a dramatic change for the better in the way Alaska is facing alcohol, Phil Lane Jr., coordinator of the Four Worlds Development Project from Alberta, Canada, said last week.

Lane represented Four Worlds at the Statewide Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Symposium last week, where he held sessions along with other anti-alcohol leagues to help Alaskans deal with problem drinking and drug abuse.

"To see in one year's time the tremendous unity of thinking here in Alaska, I really sense a very dramatic change from when I was here last year," Lane said.

Lane, a 43-year old Yankton Sioux and Chickasaw Indian, has been working on helping others fight alcohol and drug addictions since 1968.

He has worked with Four Worlds since 1982, when the group filmed the

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story of Alkali Lake, a village which went from almost 100 percent alcoholism to almost complete sobriety.

Lane spoke to groups of Alaskans about the need to heal individually before the community can begin to heal.

"People have to have a vision of what we can become. The healing of individuals must go hand-in-hand with the whole community," he said.

Four Worlds has rallied around Alkali Lake and has tried to use their example to prove to other villages that prevention of alcohol and drug abuse is possible — something that state funded programs have had the most trouble with.

"The real vision of possibilities was presented by the healing of Alkali Lake," said Lane, who calls the turnaround an evolutionary process rather than revolutionary.

Throughout the three-day symposium, lecturers from Outside and in Alaska stressed the need for educating children about everything from AIDS to substance abuse.

The event was sponsored by the Alaska Council on the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Inc.



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