

Alkali Lake movie to be shown Oct. 14

by **Barbara Page**

for the Tundra Times

Phyliss Chelsea's 7-year-old daughter left home one day in 1971 and would not come back.

She wouldn't return because her parents got drunk. Everyday.

Everyone, everyday in Alkali Lake, British Columbia, abused alcohol. Fifteen years ago, the alcoholism rate in this community reached 100 percent.

The children went to school unfed, underclothed, uncared for. No one was sober enough to worry about them.

The women, alone in their kitchens, drank. The men nursed bottles hidden in their trucks as they worked. The Natives of Alkali were killing themselves with alcohol. They were hospitalized continuously, and they were in despair. They no longer had

any power over this destruction in their lives.

It was easy to maintain this lifestyle — there were frequent deliveries of alcohol by private businesses, as well as bootlegging. A resident could just "... call a cab, anytime. If you're got the money, you've got the booze."

It is not surprising the community was referred to as "Alcohol Lake."

The "Honour of All" is a movie of the Natives, by the Natives of Alkali Lake. Yet, you do not have to be Native or an alcoholic to feel the hurt or see the private hell these people have endured and chosen to share with us.

They have chosen to share their story because as Andy Chelsea told the deliveryman one day, his delivery nothing but alcohol, "It's your living;

it's our death."

Freddy, another resident, recalling the physical pain and abuse he had caused his own father, states: "It's (alcohol) still killing them."

Overcome with emotion, he continues, "I didn't know it was the alcohol doing this to me; I still feel the hurt. . . I caused."

Perhaps the shame alcohol abuse has caused so many people of Alaska's rural villages is what will bring about the needed awareness of how alcohol is destroying traditional culture. Where in the white world people are governed by laws — rewards and punishment — to the Native community, laws are followed by the principle of honor and shame. "Honour of All" is appropriately named.

This movie was produced in Canada

and is in three parts. The framework of Canadian laws and regulations differ from that of the United States. Therefore, the procedures taken by the Natives of Alkali Lake to help themselves through government and law enforcement agencies are portrayed here to show results, not action steps.

The "Honour of All" is factual, and it will move you.

The movie will be shown at the Youth and Elders Conference at the Alaska Federation of Natives Conference in Anchorage. It will be shown Oct. 14 at 2 and 4:30 p.m.

Barbara Page will write an article in the next issue of the newspaper discussing programs for alcoholism offered by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program.