

# Mala explains how Soviets can aid U.S.

by Dr. Ted Mala  
for the Tundra Times

One of the best ways to get Alaska Native people excited is to start using the word "research." Some people will immediately say "no more."

They will remind you that they have been overstudied and have not seen much come out of it. One of my associates told me yesterday that she used to be a village school teacher and remembered that *every* year a group of researchers used to come to her school from the Lower 48 and draw blood from her first graders so that it could be frozen and stored for future studies.

These are the kind of war stories that send chills down our spines and help us imagine planeloads of researchers heading for our villages with uncapped needles and syringes in their hands. . . enough to frighten most normal people. So why even bother doing research?

The other day I was invited to speak at a luncheon to alcohol treatment researchers and providers. Now here is an area that has touched all of our lives in some way. All of us have someone close to us who has or had the problem. Yet we have spent literally millions and millions of dollars "researching" alcoholism without anything new really coming up.

We don't need to spend millions of dollars to find out that we have a drinking problem that we better do something about. . . So why are we spending so much money to tell us



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something that all of us already know?

This is where Siberia comes into the picture. Here we are studying ourselves to death, and yet we don't even bother to talk to the 30 million people next door to us with exactly the same problem!

Here we are next door to Siberia, only a few miles from Soviet Territory, and we spend all this money bringing in experts from thousands of miles away in the Lower 48 whom often we have to re-educate as to what our problems are and how we cannot use many of the models the rest of the Lower 48 uses.

The logic does not say much for the way we do business. Rather than re-invent the wheel, why don't we try talking to the millions of our fellow

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northerners who share the same climate, history and bloodlines as we do? Don't we breathe the same air they do, eat the same food, share the same planet?

Yet with the little we talk to them, we might as well all be on a different planet.

In October the first three medical Siberians will be here in Alaska. They remind me of three peace doves flying across the Bering Sea with olive branches held out in friendship. It will be up to all of us to welcome them and tell them that we really do care and that blood is thicker than politics and how the time has come to renew old ties and make new ones.

They need to go home with the message that Alaska cares and is com-

mitted to working side by side with our neighbors.

A lot of rhetoric goes on in Washington and Moscow that affects Alaska and Siberia to the point that we wonder sometimes just who lives in each land. Yet each time I take a group of Alaskans to Siberia, I see that unexplainable northern chemistry take over and all the political propaganda vanish before my eyes.

Alaska and Siberia can and should be the world models of how the two great superpowers can live and work side by side in harmony and for the benefit of one another.

The planet is too small and life too fragile to see it all go up in smoke. Come and join us in rebuilding our Siberian Bridge.