

Alcoholism

Conference to focus on rural abuse

by **Ken Duff**

for the Tundra Times

As everyone knows, alcoholism is Alaska's Number One health problem, and drug abuse is on the rise.

The 13th Annual School on Addiction Studies, May 18-21, at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel, will address what rural Alaska communities can do to take a stand and begin to combat this major problem.

Phil Lane Jr. and Michael Bopp from the Four Worlds Development Project in Alberta, Canada, will be returning to Alaska to offer presentations at this statewide conference.

Four Worlds Development Project has worked with numerous Native American communities throughout Canada and the United States, most notably Alkali Lake, from which came the video, "The Honour of All." The project's focus is helping communities identify their own power to begin the work of battling alcohol and drugs.

The wisdom of the elders and the traditional celebrations of the culture through ceremony and language are at the core of the Four Worlds Project. Both Lane and Bopp will give ideas on working within cultures and how to empower communities.

The primary message will be the unity of all people and all cultures working together to overcome our most pressing social problems.

On Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. the day before the conference begins, the tone of the conference will be set by having a Gathering and Cultural Night at the Fairview Community Center.

Lane will lead participants on a spiritual journey of unity, using the medicine wheel and a staking ceremony, which will be followed by a potluck of traditional foods, drumming, dancing, a dress review and other cultural events.

Everyone is invited. There are no fees or registration for this Sunday event.

People are asked to bring traditional foods and some soil from their local communities. The soil is used as part of the staking ceremony.

The actual conference begins May 18 and runs until 5 p.m. May 21. All general sessions and workshops will be held at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel.

The registration fee for the entire conference is \$190. Those who want more information may contact me or Cheryl Mann at 786-1801.

In addition to the Four Worlds' presentations, there will be workshops on:

- Preventing suicides in the village.
- Detoxification from alcohol in a Bush community.
- Working with families.
- Relapse prevention.
- Working with youth.

The workshop will be specifically aimed at rural Alaska.

Anyone interested in helping to stop these major problems will profit by attending the 13th Annual School on Addiction Studies.

People from all over Alaska and Canada come together at this time to share ideas and give support.

Ken Duff is the training coordinator at the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies of the University of Alaska-Anchorage. The conference is sponsored in part by a grant from the State Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.