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FOUR WORLDS TO SHARE DEVELOPMENT WORK IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

City-based organization receives \$7.7 million contract

By Caroline Boschman
Lethbridge Herald

Lethbridge-based Four Worlds and Four Directions International and its partners will soon start human rights development work in Southeast Asia thanks to a six-year, \$7.7-million contract from the Canadian International Development Agency.

They will address issues like sex-trade trafficking of women and children, the plight of landless, stateless migrant workers, and the social and economic isolation of the region's Indigenous people.

Phil Lane, Jr. International Coordinator for Four Worlds International Institute and president of Four Directions International, the economic development arm of Four Worlds, said a project team including Four Worlds will begin visiting the countries in February and be involved in all aspects of the project. The majority of money will flow to their working partners in the southeast Asian countries.

"What is so very exciting is this is part of the fulfillment of our ancient prophecies that Indigenous peoples will have a very positive impact in helping the entire human family develop on Mother Earth," Lane said. "We're very excited to work with our partners. Geospatial Salasan

and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development have done outstanding work around the world for many years."

Both organizations are based in Victoria, B.C. Salasan offers project management and consulting services to national and international clients. The International Institute, part of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria, promotes and monitors children's rights.

The funding is provided under the CIDA project called Southeast Asia Regional Cooperation in Human Development or SEARCH.

Through improving legal and institutional means, its purpose is to promote and protect the rights of children, ethnic minorities and migrant workers. The target area is comprised of seven southeast Asian countries - Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, People's Democratic Republic of Laos and East Timor.

To connect the project over the entire region, SEARCH will work with selected government and non-government institutions on two themes, the

rule of law and community well-being, to enhance their capacity to work across borders. Stakeholder groups will provide a base in each country.

"Four Worlds/Four Directions International will focus on the human and community well-being and capacity building dimensions of the project," Lane said. "Using the Four World's models developed, working with Canada's Indigenous peoples will soften the rights-based approach by focusing on development needs rather than a confrontational approach."

This development-based approach involves everyone concerned and invites their participation in creating change, rather than relying solely on a top-down approach. Equally important is respecting and being sensitive to other cultures and each nation's unique system of governance.

"This is just one of many initiatives that will eventually be launched by Indigenous peoples around the world for uplifting all members of the human family," Lane said.

Lane received The International Award for Freedom and Human Rights from the Swiss Foundation for Freedom and Human Rights in Bern, Switzerland in 2000.