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**Jones Soda founder to speak
Pop guru to add some sparkle**

The Alberta Home Builders Association has announced the keynote speaker for the opening breakfast at this year's Our Home, Our Heritage conference, scheduled for Sept. 22 to 25 in Jasper.

Peter van Stolk, president and CEO of Jones Soda, will address the 600 AHBA members expected to attend the conference, says Grant Ainsley, AHBA executive director.

"This announcement means both keynote speakers have Alberta ties in our centennial year," says Ainsley.

"Alvin Law, who speaks on Saturday (Sept. 24), is from Calgary, and van Stolk spent time living in Edmonton, attending Grant MacEwan Community College."

Van Stolk has served as founder, president, CEO and a director of Jones

by **Myke Thomas**
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Soda since 1987.

He began his career in the beverage industry in 1987 when he founded Urban Hand Ltd., a predecessor to Urban Juice & Soda Company Ltd.

The company operated until 1995 as a distributor of alternative beverages in Western Canada.

In 1995, van Stolk initiated the creation and launch of the company's own brands, WAZU Natural Spring Water and Jones Soda Co.

The company launched Jones Soda in early 1996 and has since focused the majority of its efforts on building distribution and sales of Jones Soda Co.

Van Stolk has been recognized for his unique branding approach by such publications as Advertising Age, Inc.

Magazine, the New York Times, CNN, and People Magazine.

The company is perhaps best known for allowing everyday people to send in photos that end up on the labels of the bottles.

According to Ainsley, van Stolk is a marketing maverick.

“He has a unique and interactive approach to grounding his products, an intense connection to his consumers and an uncanny ability to predict trends,” he says.

“He entered the highly competitive beverage industry, learned the rules and then promptly rejected them.

“Van Stolk has been able to attract attention by setting his products apart from the rest and developing an emotional bond with his customers.

“While he's been in the beverage industry for close to two decades, his messages about marketing and customer service should hit home with Alberta's home-building industry.”

Ainsley reminds AHBA members this year's conference will be limited to 600 registrants, with only 50 registrations still available and that the entry deadline for the Awards of Excellence is 4:30 p.m., Friday June 24.

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