

Mexican director Inarritu takes on meth abuse

April 1, 2008 9:54 a.m. EDT

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LOS ANGELES (Reuters) – Acclaimed Mexican film director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, whose works include "Babel" and "21 Grams," has created a series of TV ads aimed at discouraging methamphetamine use by U.S. teenagers, organizers said on Tuesday.

Three public-service spots Inarritu directed for a nonprofit anti-drug program called the Meth Project began airing on Monday night in Montana, a rural Western state where abuse of the addictive synthetic stimulant has reached alarming proportions.

At the time the Meth Project campaign was launched in 2005, Montana was ranked No. 5 in the nation for meth abuse, according to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. State officials said half of all incarcerations and half of all foster care admissions in Montana that year were meth-related.

But Meth Project organizers say their campaign is working. They cite a recent report by the Montana Attorney General's Office showing that teen meth use has dropped nearly 45 percent since 2005, while meth-related crime has plunged 62 percent.

The 30-second TV ads, built around the theme, "This isn't normal, but on meth it is," present a graphic depiction of aberrant behavior linked with methamphetamine addiction.

In one spot, two teenage girls are shown prostituting themselves for money to support their drug habit. Others portray addicts burglarizing a home and suffering from an overdose at the feet of uncaring friends smoking meth.

The ads will eventually be shown in several other states where methamphetamine abuse is considered to be acute, including Arizona, Idaho, Illinois and Wyoming.

A spokeswoman for the project said campaign organizers sought out Inarritu because of the gritty, unflinching visual style he brought to such films as "Amores Perros," "21 Grams," and "Babel," for which he earned an Oscar nomination.

She said Inarritu was sent copies of previous anti-meth ads created by the campaign, watched them with his children and called back days later agreeing to direct a new series of ads.

The last set of ads were directed by Darren Aronofsky, the filmmaker behind "Pi" and "Requiem for a Dream."