

# North Slope students learn survival in school

*The following is one in a series of articles about Barrow, "the farthest north city" written by the Students of Barrow High School in cooperation with the City Office and the People of Barrow.*

For students of the North Slope, Arctic Survival is a required course at the high school level. Students of Arctic Survival at Barrow High School are in the process of building an umiapiak under the direction of James Nageak.

An umiapiak is a boat that the Inupiaq use for whaling. It has a wooden frame and is covered with ugruk skins.

The construction of the umiapiak started in the spring of 1981. This year three classes are working on the

project.

The tools being used are a router, an electric drill, a screw driver, screws, and an adz. Nageak and Gaylen Searles made the adz in the spring of 1981. The reason for making the adz was to familiarize students with tools used before the influx of modern technology.

Building the boat has brought up discussions of why whaling is conducted among the Inupiaq. Nageak uses these discussions to teach Inupiaq culture and tradition to Inupiaq and Tanik teenagers.

"The building of the umiak is a symbol of a lot of things happening — not just going out and paddling. It involves tradition that is the way of the Eskimo."

Practical experience qualifies Nageak to teach Arctic Survival. His experiences as a boy, as a whaler, and as someone who has been lost at sea and made it back, enable him to teach not only the practical ways of the Inupiaq, but also the emotional aspects involved in sur-

vival on the Slope.

He teaches in the oral tradition of the Inupiaq. "That's something that I feel has been lost. We didn't have to teach how to read or write in Inupiaq so our listening ability was good. I'm pretty good at remembering what other people tell me without

having to use a tape recorder. I can repeat in the classroom things I have heard from the old people without having to refer to notes."

Students and teachers alike look forward to the day that the umiapiak is finished and can be used during whaling season.