

# Performance displays Inupiaq values

by Maria Williams  
for the Tundra Times

The Taheta Point Hope Dancers performed at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art recently as part of the 1990 Alaska Native Performance Series.

The Taheta Point Hope Dancers live in Anchorage and are under the directorship of Olivia St. Germaine. Their style of dancing is called the Tiquak style. *Tiquak* is the Inupiat name for Point Hope and means, "the point."

The dance group consists of St. Germaine; her sons, Steven, Charles and Buddy Palmer; their wives and children; and Jim Richards, owner/operator of the Taheta Arts and Cultural Cooperative.

St. Germaine discussed her reasons for continuing the Inupiat cultural traditions in a recent interview.

"I like to dance because it makes people feel good. It makes people forget their worries," she said.

She added that her children kept asking her to teach them the dances, and after receiving encouragement from her family, she began to teach them the dances and songs she learned as a child. The youngest dancers of the group are Molly, 2, and Gene Gary, 3. St. Germaine encourages their participation because that's how she learned these dances.

St. Germaine learned many dances from her uncle, Jimmy Kiligvuk, a Point Hope whaling captain.

"I was born in 1923 in Point Hope. I was the youngest of eight children. My mother's name was Molly Ookpick. That's my son Steve's Eskimo name, too, Ookpick. I was raised around the Point Hope area. We had fun growing up in Point Hope."

St. Germaine was a young woman when she helped her uncles with whaling and participated in her first whale hunt in 1961.

"When whaling feast is coming up,



*Dance group members include, back row, from left, Chuck Palmer, Robert Palmer, Jim Richards, Howard Palmer; second row, Charles Joseph Anderson, Steven Palmer, Sandy Palmer, Olivia St. Germaine; third row, Jeremy Palmer, Jason Palmer, Louis Palmer, Douglas Lee Anderson. Children in front are Gene Gary Palmer Jr. and Molly Palmer.*

everybody's getting ready, making new mukluks and new parkas. Sometimes other villages, like Kivalina, Noatak, Kotzebue and sometimes from Deering and Point Lay and sometimes Barrow people come down and participate in the catch.

"It's very special, because we're hunting something that's a very special and respected animal. And when you get it you have to share it."

St. Germaine also has been sewing for most of her life, continuing the

skills she learned from her mother and older sisters. She has been working out of the Taheta Cultural Center for the past two years. She works with many types of fur and other traditional materials, making slippers and mukluks and other Inupiat-style clothing.

The Taheta Point Hope dancers represent basic Inupiaq values — commitment to family, community and culture. After organizing about a year and a half ago, the group has been performing quite actively.

They have performed at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in 1989 and for the 1990 Spirit Days, in addition to benefit performances for nonprofit institutions and correctional facilities in the Anchorage area.

St. Germaine and the Taheta Dancers are a very committed and sincere group.

"We want to carry on our traditions and pass these on to our children," said Steve Palmer, spokesperson for the Taheta Point Hope Dancers.