

Where to Find Unusual Materials—

For a Beautiful Aleut Raincoat

By LAEL MORGAN

CORDOVA — Mrs. Donia Kompkoff, of Cordova via Chenega and Tatitlek, wants to sew a traditional Aleut raincoat, but she's stumped for materials.

What's needed is a black bear intestine and the sinew from a porpoise tail. For the last year

she's been asking friends if they can help out on the project but black bears and porpoises aren't that easy to come by.

Still she hasn't given up hope because a traditional Aleut raincoat is a beautiful thing and very few people still know how to make them.

The seams must be so tight that a man can turn his kyak right over in the water and come up dry. And, also, the coat must be beautiful for no self-respecting Aleut hunter likes to look scruffy.

Mrs. Kompkoff was raised in Tatitlek near the Ellamar mine and she recalls the people there

had forgotten many traditional skills. However when she married a Chenega man and moved to his village, she found the old ways preserved.

The old women of Chenega taught her how to sew seal skins over boat frames with a wonderful waterproof seam and she learned to make raincoats by quietly watching them work. She sewed two for her husband in his hunting days.

Now widowed, Mrs. Kompkoff has no hunter to sew for, but she would like to make one last raincoat so her children and grandchildren can see how it's done. Her eyesight has been bothering her and, although she's planning to have an operation that may help, there's no telling how much time she has to work on the project.

For that reason she's impatient to find the necessary materials. She doesn't need the whole bear, she notes. Just the intestines which could be stripped out and packed in a coffee can.

Anyone who can help with this project should contact Mrs. Kompkoff in Cordova or the Chenega Corporation office there.