

# Tyonek offers village tours

by **Bernadine F. Shade**  
for the **Tundra Times**

**TYONEK** — Tourism is growing fast in Alaska, even in some of the state's smallest villages.

The Athabascan Indians of Tyonek, with a population of almost 400, are

inviting tourists to visit their homeland and experience their past as well as their present.

The beginning of the locally owned and operated visitor industry in Tyonek is under leadership of Tyonek Village Tours, owned by Tyonek

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Native Corp. Representatives of Indian Creek Enterprises, a subsidiary of Tyonek Native Corp., held a meeting and selected board members, and a corporate decision was made to hire Alaska Village Tours to maintain the management and training operations of the new Tyonek Village Tourism industry.

The one-day sightseeing tour will allow visitors to experience the many different aspects of the lifestyles of this village.

Tyonek Native Corp. hired three local residents to fill the positions as tour guides and a dance coordinator. Jim Murphy, director of Rural Development with Alaska Village Tours, held a four-hour training course for the new staff in Anchorage.

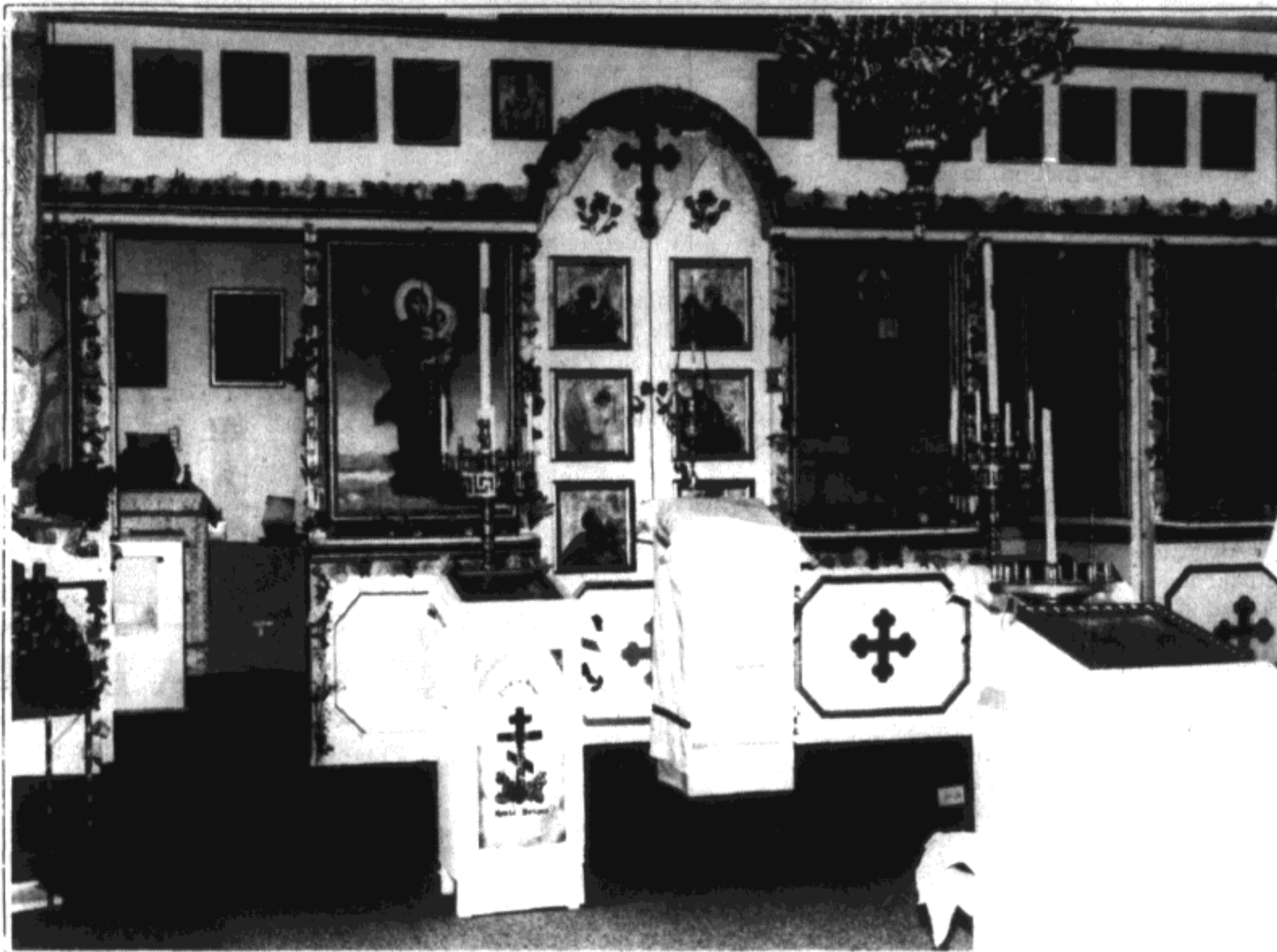
"With Alaska Village Tours, we work with the people in the villages to get them going," Murphy says. However, he says that the tourism industry may take at least a couple of years to become successful.

"It will improve the village, in hopes we can sell arts and crafts. It will benefit both the village and its people," said Leonard Allowan, a tour guide in Tyonek.

Freida McCord, assistant tour guide, says she thinks it will liven up the village, since most of the villagers are at fish camps this time of year. The staff of Tyonek Village Tours are very excited about being a part of Alaska Village Tours and acting as tour guides.

Visitors have the opportunity to learn the history of the village and how people adapt to a modern world while maintaining their cultural heritage.

The tour van will make many stops



throughout the village. Fish smoking and drying and subsistence fishing and other examples of subsistence lifestyles may be seen throughout the tour. Visitors also will tour the Russian Orthodox church and other historical sites.

The highlight of the trip will be the Tyonek Singers and Dancers, performing traditional songs and dances.

"This is something new and dif-

ferent, and it will be a success if you want it to," said Dance Coordinator Caroline Constantine. "Not many people have seen dances such as ours."

All dancers wear traditional costumes made by Mary Deck, a village resident.

Tours began June 15 and will run through Sept. 15. People who are interested may contact Grayline of Alaska at 277-5581.



photos by Barbara Crane

**The one-day sightseeing tour will allow visitors to experience the many different aspects of the lifestyles of this village.**

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Tyonek, top photo, contains many icons. The church is also shown at right. Youth are involved in the Tyonek Singers and Dancers, and Elizabeth Standifer, center right photo, performs for visitors. Standing in front of Big Lake, center left photo, from left, are Jim Murphy of Alaska Village Tours, and Freida McCord and Leonard Allowan, tour guides.

