

Native Village opens at Alaskaland

FAIRBANKS — An impressive sign with the words "Native Village" on it towers over the far corner of the Alaskaland Park. Within view is the Chena River, and wild irises are sprouting along the fence by the bike path.

A narrow stream meanders through the center of the Native Village, dividing a small, natural stage from the new 115-seat amphitheater. Now weeks of preparation are paying off as the Native Village at Alaskaland opens for another season of activities.

Bernice Joseph, 26, is the manager of the Native Village. She and her staff, as well as some volunteers, have spent the last few months making the necessary preparations to welcome

another season of visitors.

The Native Village offers visitors an overview of Alaska Native culture, with emphasis on Athabascan culture of the Interior. There are samples of different Native architecture, including an Eskimo and an Athabascan kashim.

The museum at the Native village is part of the guided tour and has gone through changes under Joseph's management. Items are arranged by the seasons of subsistence and are a combination of older and newer artifacts.

Beginning in July, performances of the play "The Athabascan Experience" will take place daily from Tuesday through Sunday. The play was written especially for the Native

village and tells the Athabascan story of creation and traditional life.

Athabascan elders were highly involved during the writing of the play and in deciding what beliefs and stories to portray.

"We want the audience to leave with a sense of the respect that Athabascans have for the land, the resources and their culture," said Joseph.

The Bethel "Spirit in all Things" theater is scheduled to appear from July 15-24, when an hour-long drama

will be performed. There are also plans to schedule Native dancers from the Soviet Union in late July.

Besides the plays, Joseph also has arranged for a variety of artist demonstrations on weekends throughout the season. These include spruce root basket making and ivory and baleen carving July 7-8, birch bark basket making July 14-15 and bead-working and mask carving later in the summer.