



VILLAGE OF TOKSOOK BAY — This is the setting of the pottery art that almost became extinct. A few years ago, the villagers made a

move to revive the art and this will become a reality with the help of David Tannard.

Toksook Bay Eskimos Revive Nearly Extinct Pottery Art

After four generations, the Toksook Bay Arts and Crafts Cooperative has revived the nearly extinct Eskimo craft of pottery making through a ceramics venture that was initiated by the arrival of their pottery consultant, Mr. David Stannard.

Mr. Stannard will be living and working with the Toksook Bay cooperative to develop their ceramics line and establish a stable market for these items. He will set up a ceramics workshop and serve as a reference for instruction for the villagers.

As Associate Professor of

Art at the University of Oregon, he has had much experience in the field of ceramics.

In addition to his B.A. in Chemistry for the University of Redlands in California and his M.A. in Soil Genesis from Oregon State University, he has worked in pottery shops in California, Mexico and England.

Stannard has done extensive research in kiln construction and burner design with emphasis on the use of local materials.

Because of his interest in the process of converting local materials into a finished ware

product, he was particularly interested in the potential

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applications of Arctic materials.

He stated that the glaciation and permafrost action has combined to make an unusually pliable clay that he would like to experiment with.

Having grown up in Ningpo, China and traveled extensively in Mexico and Europe, he was drawn to the project in the remote southwestern Alaska village.

Toksook Bay is located between the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers on Nelson Island. Cannery jobs during the summer months complement the subsistence economy of the village.

Only six people of the 270 villagers in Toksook Bay have permanent jobs. The average annual income is \$2,000.

Like most rural areas of Alaska, Toksook Bay must send its children out to boarding schools after the eighth grade for further education. Many do not return because of the lack of employment opportunities in the village.

The idea of a ceramics project is based on a project started by BIA teachers at Nighmute, a neighboring village from which the villagers in Toksook Bay moved in the early 1960's.

With the kiln and other supplies that the school provided, the villagers were able to derive a source of income from the ceramic figures and pottery utensils that they made and sold in the Anchorage area.

This project, although it showed surprisingly large profit, was discontinued when the teachers left.

The idea was reintroduced when the villagers were investigating ways to improve their standard of living.

The village council, headed by Mr. Paul John, reasoned that such a project would not only educate the young in the old ways but also provide more incentive for them to stay in the village.

In 1970, the village wrote to the Economic Development Administration and asked for assistance in establishing the ceramics venture.

Unable to assist the cooperative, the letter was referred to Community Enterprise Development Corporation of Alaska.

CEDC engaged the services of Mrs. Carol Kampert, a potter-weaver and graduate from the University of California in Berkeley, for initial investigations and recommendations.

From these findings, Mr. Skip Deegans, business manage-

ment consultant for CEDC, was assigned to help the villagers obtain the necessary financial and technical assistance required to undergo a ceramics project.

Because of refusal to specify the type of product that will be made (and thereby limit the creative possibilities of such a venture) by the cooperative and subsequent lack of qualified purchasing commitments, "conventional funding sources could not fund the project for its initial year of operations.

Through grants from the Methodist and Catholic Churches, CEDC, Whitney Fidalgo Corporation, Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation, Freedom From Hunger Foundation, and private donors, the project will be starting its first year of operations.

Because the cooperative will utilize local materials in the construction of their ceramic products, a bit of the traditional motif will be reintroduced.

The first year of operations will be a period of learning and experimenting for the Toksook Bay Arts and Crafts Cooperative.

Stannard will teach them the fundamentals of shaping pottery and will experiment in the use of indigenous materials such as bones and shells in glazes.

From these experiments, the Toksook Bay cooperative expects to develop their unique line of ceramic products and a stable market.

Eventually, the ceramics project will be a permanent cottage industry in the area that is wholly owned by the people in the area.

Mosley jumped in an airplane to see for himself. When he got over the fire, he could hardly believe his eyes. Looking down through the smoke, he could see the black line along the trenches. The fire had been contained.

Later that evening, Huntington showed Mosley a "job well done" on the ground and introduced him to the fire-fighters, both men and women who had worked without stopping to beat this fire.

"I have been in the fire-fighting game for over 25 years," said Huntington, "and I see nothing wrong with women fire-fighters, as long as they are willing to work on the same basis as the men."

There was a new look of respect for Native women fire-fighters with their blackened, smoke-smudged faces, standing side by side with men, to protect the land from fire.