

Choom-lla-schtoon — New beginnings

By Mike Røstad

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The debut performance of the local Native dance troupe, "Choom-lla-schtoon," was the

highlight of the Kodiak Area Native Association/Koniag potlatch last Saturday. The Aleut name means "new beginnings to the ancient days," and according to remarks made after the performance, the title could very well be prophetic.

Chickie Wegdahl, one of the dancers, said, "The old-timers were really pleased." Diedre Bailey, KANA education director, said, "I think this is a beginning . . . it's real exciting. I heard favorable comments from the young people," she said, noting that the elders, who are more familiar with the old Native ways, are being placed in a position of honor. Several youngsters are in the group and others have inquired about getting involved, says Bailey.

There's a possibility that the group will participate in the

Native Arts Festival in Fairbanks this spring, pending on funding, and one spokesman told Kodiak Times that "Choom-lla-schtoon" may be asked to perform at the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1986.

Although "Choom-lla Schtoon" has been mainly involved with dancing, it is a

cultural heritage group which is also interested in arts, crafts and the preservation of the Aleut language.

The group was motivated after attending a dance workshop led by Y'upik Eskimo dancer, Chuna McIntyre, shortly after Thanksgiving. Many of the participants were from the villages and were weathered in

town. The people got together to practice dancing. Afterwards they shared stories and sang songs in Aleut. Enthusiasm was being generated.

The dancers were dressed in "Katunaks," made by Christian Ignatin, Martha Kahutak and Martha Matfay. Bailey and Dolores Padilla also helped in preparing the costumes.
