

Christian religion blends with Native life



A young woman from Minto releases what she feels inside for a song which was televised throughout the Interior.

Christianity.

Without a doubt it has been used as a battering ram against Native American cultures since the first Europeans began to colonize the western hemisphere. In Alaska, the near-death of several languages can be traced directly to the influence of early missionaries determined to "civilize" the Natives.

Yet for all this, many Native Alaskans have adopted Christianity enthusiastically, and many of these people are also active in keeping the songs, dances, stories and traditions of their people alive.

"I'm a real Indian," Andrew Isaacs, traditional chief of the Athabaskan Nation, recently told a crowd of his fellow believers gathered to worship in a small Minto chapel. He told of his conversion, many years ago when he was still a youth. He had been hunting, when he passed into unconsciousness. He awoke to find his friend panicked. "I shot you!" his friend told him.

"What for?" he answered. It was an accident. During the many months of his doctorless recovery, Isaacs became converted. "I hear about J Jesus," he remembered. "And I try real hard to say what little English I know into a prayer. Now I know I can pray in my own language."

Photos by Bill Hess



Berman Silas, preacher at the Episcopal Church in Minto, listens earnestly as a young member of his congregation claims a miraculous Christian healing from the cancer which has threatened his life.



Mrs. Charlie Titus testifies of her faith as her husband and others await their turn to do likewise.



An emotional moment in a Minto service.



As David Salmon gives a young parishioner a blessing, another member of the congregation testifies of her belief.