



Akutan Elder Bill Tcheripanoff sings and tells stories to a group of village residents attending an open house in their school to demonstrate the new Aleut Culture Kit developed to teach children about their heritage. For more pictures see page three.

Culture kit helps teach heritage to Aleut students

Children watch intently as an Elder demonstrates the use of a wooden fox trap. Later, he explains how he makes the redwood and whalebone spear without the use of a ruler — a spear such as he used as a young man when hunting sea otter.

These are two of the items contained in the Aleut Culture Kit introduced recently to teach younger generations in the Aleutian Islands about



Sherry Spitler, Community Education Associate for the Aleutian Region School District, coordinated the 18-month effort to complete the Aleut Culture Kit — phase one.

their past — about a culture and heritage that can strengthen them for the future.

The Aleut Culture Kit which premiered in the Aleutian villages of Akutan and Nikolski was funded by a grant from Sohio Alaska Petroleum Company.

Sherry Spitler, Community Education Associate for the Aleutian Region School District says that the title of the kit may be misleading. "Our goal is not to teach culture, but to use the culture to teach."

The kit is a process for teaching in many academic areas. It is designed to be integrated into social science, language arts, arts and crafts, math, as well as the many areas of natural science, i.e., marine, environmental, zoology, etc.

How the Aleut people adapted to their environment, which includes both a cold and wet climate, during the 9,000 years that they have lived along the Aleutian Chain is an aim of the Aleut Culture Kit.

Each school in the Aleutian Region District will have the kit for approximately nine weeks so that the teaching staff can integrate it into the regular program. The kit is not designed to be a separate project outside of the regular curricu-



Nikolski students William Dushkin and Phillip Philemonoff wait their turn while Paul Merculief tests the temper of the deerskin drum.

lum, but an integral part of the educational program. "Someday these students will be the Elders," Spitler says, "who will be teaching our next generation these important bonds with the past."



Youngsters in Akutan watch intently as Bill Tcheripanoff, 81, demonstrates how he measures, without a ruler, the proper lengths for a redwood and whalebone spear. Tcheripanoff built two of the items contained in the Aleut Culture Kit.



In Nikolski, residents gather round as a student learns how to use a boat pump.

Photos Courtesy of Sohio Petroleum Company