

# Village artisans gather for marketing

**K**odiak Island artisans living in five villages have the best chance to market their arts, crafts and gift items in a central location in their own villages, according to the findings of a year-long marketing project undertaken by the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference.

Heidi Bohi, who headed up the project funded by a grant from the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, said she worked with Port Lions, Ouzinkie, Old Harbor, Akhiok and Larsen Bay and met with artisans to determine the best method of marketing their works. Bohi said she coordinated her efforts with the Kodiak Area Native Association, which is helping artists set up a cooperative in Kodiak (see related story.)

The key finding of the Kodiak Island Connection Project was that a market exists within each village, but that a central location – such as the village IRA office – is needed so that visitors in the villages can purchase items.

An added benefit of the project turned out to be drawing together people within

the village, many of whom had never thought about coordinating their efforts for a cooperative project. Bohi said one of her recommendations will be that artisans in each village get together weekly to work on their artwork. The meetings would encourage production as well as give people a chance to share ideas.

"Historically the cash flow has always gone from the villages to Kodiak," Bohi said. "We found out that people who were producing works were doing it as a hobby, and they don't want to set up storefronts. They are doing what they love to do whether they make money or not."

Bohi also said she will recommend that fishing lodges showcase local artists' work, perhaps inviting in some of the artists to meet with their clients and discuss their arts and crafts.

**Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference** may be contacted for further information on either purchasing craft items or on the artists' marketing efforts. Call **Heidi Bohi** at 562-7380 or write to 3300 Arctic Blvd., Suite 203, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

