

Native Women Revitalize Crafts

(From RURAL OPPORTUNITIES)

Alaska's native women residing in several areas across the state are trying to revitalize the crafts and heritage of their people while stimulating a new economy at the same time.

Thirteen women are participating in the skinsewing project at the Rural Alaska Community Action Program's Norton Sound Regional Community Center in Nome. Mrs. Emma (Mike) Willoya was hired by RurALCAP to teach the course.

The women are making mukluks, after-ski boots, slippers, seal skin and fur hats, parkas, Eskimo fur dolls and beadwork. All the work is original and meticulous.

To date they have been kept busy filling orders through the "snowball" method—the completed product attracts the attention of others and they order too.

The Center Director, Mrs. Verna Mickelson, said the sewing class was originally started in September because there was an interest in the dying craft and industry.

Then, there was a desire to have a place to market their handicraft at a fair cash price.

"From the beginning the course has turned into a self-sustaining one—proving that the people are willing and want to help themselves," said Mrs. Mickelson.