

# Larry Matfay has lived in 2 different worlds

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Having reached his 74th birthday, Larry Matfay has seen it both ways. He's traveled by kayak, fished with home-made wooden halibut hooks and hunted with hand-made traps.

He also owns a large home on Kodiak Island and travels by airplane.

Matfay, an Aleut Indian, brought his reminders of the old days — traps, spear and hooks — to share with the crowds flocking to programs in the Anchorage School District's Native Emphasis Week. "Why do you do this? To teach us about the past?" queried one student who came to see his old hunting and fishing implements.

"That's the way we lived a long time ago," he answered. "It was the best way to live, a comfortable way with nature."

Matfay was born in Akhiok on Kodiak Island. He learned his skills from his father and grandfather, but his existence left little time for formal schooling, and he left Akhiok's Bureau of Indian Affairs school in the fourth grade. "In my days we didn't have much chance for education," he said during a break between student groups at the Anchorage Fine Arts Museum.

"My parents were always on the move. I don't know



Larry Matfay shows students his hand-made wooden halibut hook.

why, but at the time (I was in school) I liked to study history and geography, but was not much for arithmetic and spelling. I studied those real hard."

After leaving school, Matfay continued learning from his own family and from the world emerging around him. "I learned quite a bit from working with people, too,, and I didn't learn that

from the books," he said, moving his hands past models of traps, halibut hooks, and other equipment he used on Aleut kayak hunts. "I learned this from my grandpa and my dad."

Matfay speaks Aleut with his wife, Martha, at home, hoping that the daily exposure to his first language will encourage his grandchildren to speak it, also.

"I talk my own language with my wife so that our six grandchildren can pick it up. I don't want that to disappear," he said solemnly.

"I'm living half and half right now," he said. Half the native way and half with the white culture. In the older times we regulated the catch of the animals we take for food or clothing," he said, sadly recalling that some people don't have the same love for the land and its creatures.

He spoke of the outsiders and irresponsible youngsters who spent time shooting seals indiscriminately near his home. "They were shooting our animals for nothing but target practice. It's a waste of food and the animals' life. Our children don't do that," he said.