



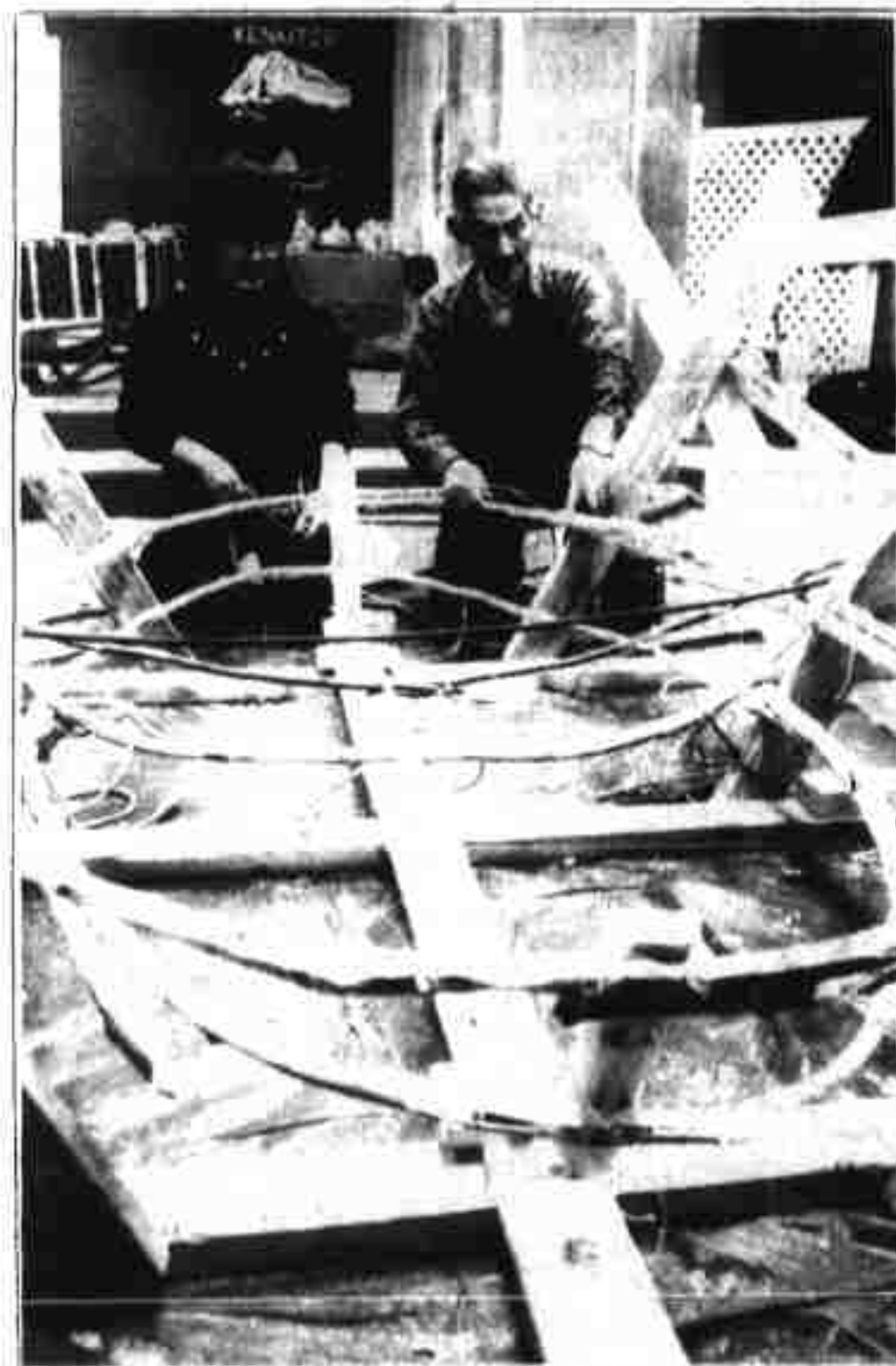
Members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe who worked on the canoe project included, from left, Victor Antone, Peter Kalifornsky, Elsie Starbuck, Clare Swan and Herman Lindgren.



Luba Lindgren gives her son, Herman, a hug for a job well done as the team nears completion of the project. The project represents the potential to expand into a broader and on-going program of Dena'ina cultural preservation and community education in the Kenai area.



Pulling the moosehide to fit the frame was a difficult part of the construction. Shown are Herman Lindgren, left, Keith Hallstead and John Brown, right.



Peter Kalifornsky shows Elsie Starbuck the layout of alder and willow branches which form the frame of an "emergency" boat. It will be covered with unslipped (hair left on) moosehides. Kalifornsky explains that the boat could carry two hunters and a kill of meat. The boat is 65 inches long and 45 inches wide.



The CIRI Foundation was a principal donor. Other donors include Carr-Gottstein Properties, the Kenai Mall, Southcentral Airlines, Kenai Natives Association Inc., Salamatof Natives Association Inc., the Alaska Council on the Arts, Arco Alaska Inc., Attorney C.R. Baldwin, Salamatof Seafoods and Kenaitze Indian Tribe, IRA.



The canoe frame is 16 and a half feet long, 4 feet wide at the top, 3 feet wide at the bottom and 20 inches deep.

## Kenaitze Indians build canoes

KENAI — Members of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe undertook a boat-building project recently, which helped make tribal members more "aware of who we are and why we are," according to Clare Swan, coordinator of the Dena'ina Cultural Project.

"It was a really good effort," Swan said, adding she was particularly pleased that Alaska Native young people expressed interest in it. No such canoe-building has been undertaken on the Kenai Peninsula for more than 50 years.

The work was conducted recently at the Kenai Mall as a traditional moosehide demonstration and construction workshop. The three-weekend project was a joint effort of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and The CIRI Foundation. The foundation, working with the tribe, organized the project and assisted in securing funding.

The three objectives included:

- Preserving and promoting the Dena'ina cultural heritage.
- Encouraging understanding and appreciation of the Dena'ina culture by the general public.
- Demonstrating goodwill and cooperation in the community of Kenai.

Plans called for the construction of three moosehide and alder-frame canoes, which are expected to become

permanent exhibits at the Kenai Museum and the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. The mastercraftsmen who conducted the sessions were Herman Lingren and Peter Kalifornsky, Kenaitze Tribe elders. Assistance also was provided by Victor Antone, a Kenaitze elder.

Informational exhibits on traditional Dena'ina transportation were prepared and displayed at the Kenai Mall in conjunction with the demonstration. These were provided by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Assisting in transporting the hides from Fort Richardson to Kenai were Laura and Mike Carpenter of Anchorage. The skin sewing was taught by Violet Mack, who owns Upik Furs in Kenai.

A community picnic and canoe-launching is tentatively scheduled for May 9 on the beach below Salt House in Kenai at low tide. Jake Ivanoff, who also has worked on the canoe project has volunteered to launch the skinboat.

Swan said she hopes similar projects can be undertaken soon. She said participants felt an "enormous sense of satisfaction" as a result of the canoe building.

The key point was that people got a sense of what it was like for early Dena'ina people.

"It makes you appreciate being resourceful," she said.



Rita Smagge, left, and Bernadine Atchison, both students in the project, scrape the moosehides. Eleven moosehides were donated to the project by hunters through the assistance of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.



The canoe keel (front and back) is made of spruce roots.

Photos by  
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