

ATHABASCAN

word of the week

Allakaket students learn about treating animals with respect



Photo courtesy of Susan Paskvan

Setseye David David teaches Cashious Bergman and Brian Henry how to skin a beaver. He patiently pointed out the body parts and how to intricately cut out each part. Sixty years of talent made it look smooth and easy.

I spent the beginning of this week in Allakaket. The first day the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service led the junior and senior high students in activities about the refuge which surrounds their village. Students explored the outdoors around their school and village as part of a Schoolyard Habitat program.

The next two days I visited the four classrooms and played games and sang songs. In an evening afterschool class, we had a great time playing Denaakk'e games with little kids, teens, adults and grandmas.

Elementary teacher Jessie David's husband caught a large beaver (noye'e).

She took her class to setseye David and setseye Kitty's house to watch them skin and butcher it. As setseye David skinned it, both him and his wife shared stories with the students about treating the beaver with respect. If you treat it with respect you will keep your luck in catching them. Certain parts of animals are reserved or restricted:

Belo' (the hands) are given to kids so they'll be good workers.

Bekkaa' (the feet) are given to elders.

The benene' (back bone) and pelvic bone are not given to girls because it causes difficult birth.



Photo courtesy of Susan Paskvan

Setsoo Kitty David beads glove tops. She is getting ready to put on a potlatch for her beden'aa' (child) Eva gheelaa' (late) this coming June. She has the most beautiful sewing place, with a view overlooking Allakaket.

The Athabascan Word of the Week appears every Saturday on page A3 of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. The words are provided by Susan "K'etsoo" Paskvan of Yukon-Koyukuk School District. She is originally from the village of Koyukuk on the Yukon River in Interior Alaska. She is Tleeyegge Hut'aane, which is Koyukon Athabascan. She seeks stories and phrases from both Denaakk'e (Koyukon Athabascan) and Denak'a (Lower Tanana Athabascan), which are languages spoken in the Yukon-Koyukuk School District region. Yukon-Koyukuk School District serves the villages of Allakaket, Hughes, Huslia, Koyukuk, Nulato, Kaltag, Ruby, Manley Hot Springs and Minto. The Board of Education places a priority on teaching the Native languages within the district.