



*Arco Alaska is drilling a well in West Camden Bay, about 60 miles east of Prudhoe Bay and three miles offshore.*

# Arco, Natives work together

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**CAMDEN BAY** — Just to see whether anyone could come quickly to their rescue offshore in the Beaufort Sea — should the need arise if helicopters were knocked out of the picture for some reason — employees on the world's only concrete island drilling structure staged an exercise with the Native village of Kaktovik.

The drill, held in January, coincided with an Arctic storm system that meant villagers had to get to Stinson Well

No. 1 35 miles west of Kaktovik in sub-zero temperatures in what at times became near whiteout conditions.

But Don McKelvey, new venture drilling superintendent for Arco Alaska, said the weather did not prevent villagers from coming to the "rescue" of the people on the rig. It also didn't prevent them from going home, almost as if nothing had happened.

"It was pretty nice to know those people could get here in four to five hours," he said.

McKelvey said that despite the difficult conditions, the villagers rested briefly on the "island," then returned to Kaktovik without much concern other than that they wanted to go home.

That sort of partnership is only one of the ways Arco is working with Alaska Natives in its offshore exploratory well in Camden Bay. The well is expected to take several months

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to drill. Phillips Petroleum Co. is Arco's partner in the well with a 50 percent interest.

The drill rig is owned by a joint venture of Parker Drilling Co. and two Alaska Native regional corporations, Arctic Slope Regional Corp. and Cook Inlet Region Inc.

It's hard to imagine the huge rig as a vessel. It includes more than 79,000 square feet of deck space — about two football fields — 95 feet above the base.

But it was actually towed to Arctic Alaska waters from Japan in 1984.

Susan Andrews, Arco spokeswoman, said an effort is being made to hire Alaska Natives for the crew, especially people from Barrow, Kaktovik and Nuiqsut.

McKelvey said more than 20 percent of the workforce on the rig is Native, including 12 to 15 members of the 65 to 75 people onsite. He added, however, that such an effort has been going on for some time on the North Slope.

"The days when Native hire was new to the business are over," he said. "Very few of the people out here have never worked before."

The movable island, the *Glomar Beaufort Sea I*, was built in Japan in less than a year for about \$71 million. It is designed to be used in water depths ranging from 35 to 55 feet.

The five-story quarters structure on the rig can accommodate up to 92 people.

One of the Alaska Natives working on the rig is Steve Stewart, 29, a CIRI shareholder originally from Angoon who lives in Eagle River. Stewart works for Parker as a floor hand in a four-weeks-on, two-weeks-off schedule. He's been assigned to the rig since May.

Stewart said he felt the companies involved are making a good effort at Native hire.

Besides being available in an emergency for crew members, as the Kaktovik drill showed, Alaska Natives also have been involved in training for response to an oil spill.

Residents of Kaktovik and Nuiqsut, in a mutual effort with Arco and the North Slope Borough, have received training in emergency oil spill response and are included in the overall oil spill contingency plan, according to Arco.