

# *UICC: An expert in Arctic conditions*

by **Jennifer Gordon**

**Tundra Times reporter**

Not many things can survive in the cold Arctic winter, but UIC Construction, a subsidiary of Ukpeavik Inupiat Corp., has survived for 10 years by using the cold to its advantage.

"The knowledge of the people is essential," said Robert Hall, administrative manager for UICC. He said that by hiring local people, especially local Natives, the company has learned a great deal about the land and how Arctic construction should be done. Hall said more than 60 percent of the people hired are Native.

Dennis Arlt, general manager of UICC, said in a press release the company has found local hire to be an asset.

"When we have a contract for a project in a remote community, we meet with the village council prior to commencing the project. We review the project and outline the job opportunities available.

"We rely on the council to let us know who is capable of performing what service."

Because many of the construction jobs UICC bids on are in the Arctic,

Hall said, the company has learned to take advantage of the winter to put in pilings, foundations or other work that requires digging.

During construction of Barrow's utilidor, a tunnel that houses utility pipes, the company used a rocksaw to cut through the frozen ground, blasted the ice between the cuts and used a backhoe to remove the frozen ground. The rocksaw, owned by the North Slope Borough, is a 50-foot chainsaw on a D-9 chassis. Hall said it cuts only a few feet an hour and there are only five in the world.

Hall said the hardest part about Arctic construction is the unpredictable and incredibly harsh weather conditions. He said that often it will get too cold to work for long periods of time and sometimes the planes carrying supplies are kept away by inclement weather.

"The Arctic ice is unforgiving," he said.

Hall said that UICC is one of the few Native construction companies that has survived in what he described as a risky industry. Many companies were victims of poor management and insufficient capital, he said. The con-

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## **Ukpeavik Inupiat Corporation**



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struction business is risky even with good management he added. UICC lost money in its first two years, but Hall said that it is now making money and has a core of more than 50 employees.

Ukpeavik Inupiat Corp. the village corporation for Barrow, has more than 2,000 shareholders. Gross revenues for the fiscal year ending June 1987 were \$25.6 million and net income for the corporation and its subsidiaries in FY '87 was \$3.5 million.

Hall said that a majority of Ukpeavik Inupiat Corp.'s revenue comes from UICC, which has assets of as much as \$10 million.