

# Unearthing new energy

## Gas hydrates could surpass conventional reserves

by **Stephanie McDonald**  
Northern News Services

**Tuktoyaktuk**

An experimental drilling program in the Mackenzie Delta is hoping to unearth the secret of extracting natural gas from frozen crystals abundant in the area.

This winter marked the third time wells on Richard Island, about 40km west of Tuktoyaktuk, have been re-entered for the Mallik Gas Hydrate Research and Development Program. Work had previously been done in 1998 and 2002.

"The earlier projects focused on locating and characterizing the deposits," said Andrew Applejohn, director of the Aurora Research Institute, the organization responsible for all on site operations.

The second program focused on sampling the deposits and looking at their chemical and physical properties.

This winter, from January to early April, the research has been concerned with learning how to bring the hydrates to the surface.

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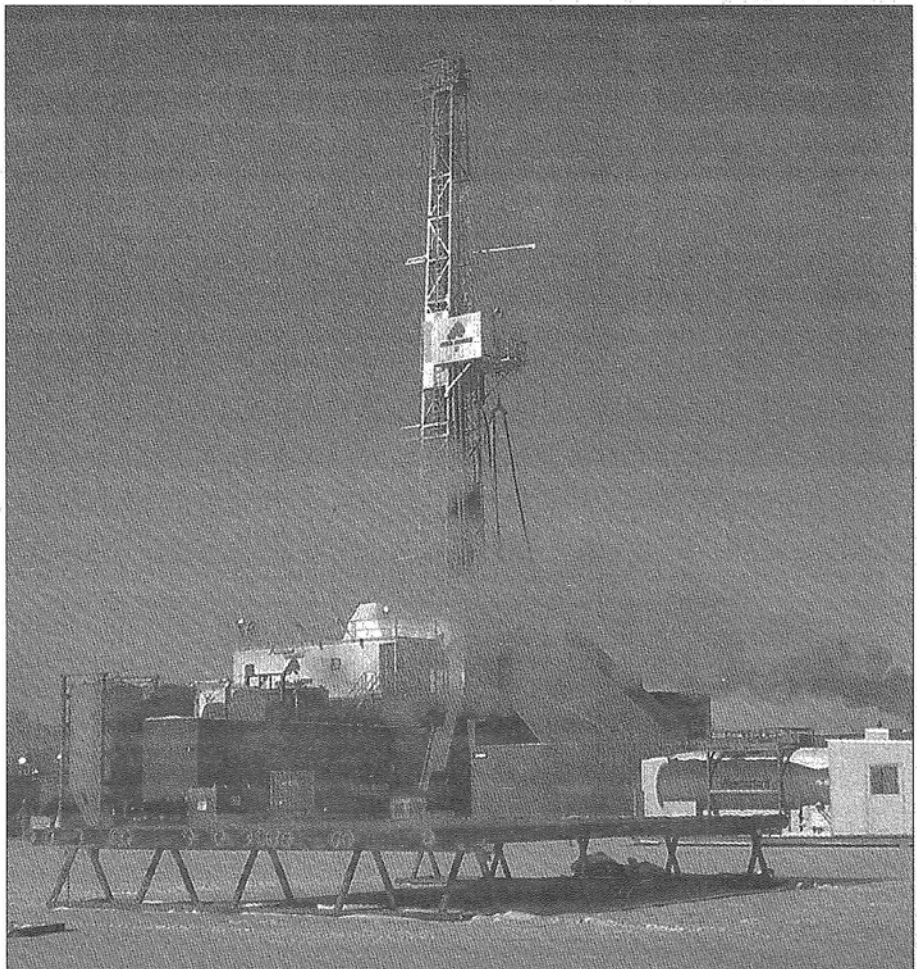
### Tlicho, Deline form company

*Sahtu*

A delegation from the Tlicho First Nation, including Grand Chief George Mackenzie, was in Deline last week, signing an agreement to form a new company.

Its first project will be the clean up of the old Port Radium mine on Great Bear Lake.

Clean-up of the site will begin in June and is expected to be completed by mid-September. Larry Andro, president of



This drill rig is part of the Mallik project on Richard's Island, about 40 km west of Tuktoyaktuk, where research is being conducted on how to extract natural gas from frozen crystals.

# 'Great promise of development'

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Next winter longer-term production tests will be conducted.

Hydrates are a form of natural gas where the gas molecule is trapped in a frozen water crystal. The ultimate goal is to bring the solid hydrate into a situation where the water and gas separate underground and the gas

comes to the surface. When this method is achieved, commercial production of the hydrates could occur.

The methane from gas hydrates is considered one of the cleanest-burning fossil fuels, he said adding one litre of gas hydrates yields 164 litres of natural gas.

"Hydrates show great promise of developing into a viable energy source," Apple-

john said.

"Finding new energy, particularly cleaner sources of energy, is important for the international community," said Charles Dent, NWT minister of Education, Culture, and Employment.

In 2002 the U.S., India, Germany and Japan were also pursuing research on gas hydrates.

**"The NWT would benefit."**

The federal government, through Natural Resources Canada, and the government of Japan jointly own the Mallik project.

Japan has deposits of hydrates deep under the ocean and is looking at the possibility of commercial extraction.

"The site on Mallik Bay is arguably the best described and best characterized deposits in the world," Applejohn said.

It makes sense for Japan to do its research in Canada rather than one and a half miles under the ocean, he said.

Just more than 100 people have been working at the camp since January.

"It has provided a significant amount of employment and economic opportunity in the region," Applejohn said.

"The NWT would benefit as estimates suggest the volume of gas hydrates in the Mackenzie Delta may equal, or exceed, that of conventional gas resources," Dent added.