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Fred Tiedeman of Tatitlek makes his living fishing in the waters that are now covered with oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez.

## Spill stench permeates Aleut village

By JEAN LAMMING  
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TATITLEK — Residents of this tiny Aleut fishing village faced a unique problem in the settlement located closest to North America's largest oil spill.

Monday, Tatitlek fishermen trapped in Port Valdez by vicious winds complained about the stench of diesel fuel that permeated their houses over the weekend and expressed concern that if the winds had turned, smoke from oil slick burns would have wafted into their village.

"You could smell it inside the homes," said Tatitlek Village Council President Gary Kompkoff. "My first thought was our generator was leaking fuel."

Kompkoff heard about the massive oil spill in his neighborhood 25 miles southeast of Valdez on ABC's TV news program "Good Morning America" Friday morning. Based on that report, he thought the slick was forming in the Valdez Narrows.

Instead, it was spreading less than five

miles from the village of 95, on the far side of an island where villagers catch silver salmon and hunt deer.

"The village of Tatitlek is affected more than anyone in the world," Kompkoff said. "We're right in the middle of it."

Villagers grew more concerned when they found out cleanup crews were burning the fuel. No one had bothered to tell the residents of Tatitlek or advise them of the likelihood of danger from the smoke if it came their way, Kompkoff said.

"Our concern is they didn't keep us informed of what they were doing and the effects," Kompkoff said. "After the burn we found out it could be harmful to pregnant and older people." Tatitlek fisherman Herman Geffe, 21, said he flew his wife out of the village Saturday because she is expecting their child in a month and he was afraid for her health. She is staying in Cordova, Geffe said.

Department of Environmental Conser-

vation officials said one other resident had left the village for Cordova to wait out the spill cleanup. The DEC promised to advise the villagers of any other burning, but by Monday the wind had chased the slick away from the village and with it went the possibility of fumes and smoke lingering there.

But fishermen such as Steve Totemoff and his cousin, Calvin, worry that their subsistence fishing and hunting grounds will be tainted and possibly decimated by the oil that spilled in and around them.

Sunday they were working under contract laying booms along the intricate shoreline where they travel in skiffs to catch silver salmon running in stream there.

They hunt deer, duck, seal and sea lion on an island located less than two miles from the stricken tanker Exxon Valdez.

"Most people here rely on subsistence. Some don't even buy town meat," Kompkoff said.

