Orutsararmiut Native Council
2021 Donlin Gold Survey
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Introduction

In summer 2021, over 300 Alaskan residents of the Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Delta answered an 18 question survey administered by the Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) on the Donlin Gold Mine Project.

The survey asked for residents’ and ONC Tribal Members’ opinions on the safety and assurance of the Donlin Gold Project as well as local subsistence reliance on the Kuskokwim River.

A summary of the responses by these residents and tribal members is presented here.

*This image is one of the Facebook advertisements used for the survey.*
Survey Highlights from ONC’s Donlin Gold Mine Project Review

1. Over 300 participants took the survey, representing Alaskan residents, tribal members of the Orutsararmiut Native Council, and tribal members of at least 17 other native villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

2. 88% of participants indicated that they are Calista shareholders.

3. 98% of respondents care deeply about subsistence way of life and hold opinions on the Donlin Gold Mine Project.

4. 98% of participants indicated that they have a strong relationship with the environment and they place value in gathering a variety of subsistence foods year round.

5. 89.3% of respondents are aware that the Donlin Mine Project would affect their community in some way - including potential for mercury pollution, effects on land and river subsistence gathering, and local economic boost with increased job opportunities.

6. 70% of respondents have low confidence that the Donlin Gold Mine Project will protect the region’s air, water, and land resources.

7. 67% of respondents indicated that they feel strongly opposed to the mine project, while about 6% indicated that they feel strongly supportive toward the project.

8. 66% of respondents indicated that they are aware of the Donlin Gold Mine Project’s plan for transporting spill risk substances like mercury and cyanide, however only about 20% of the respondents have actually seen the plan.

9. 69% of respondents indicated they feel they have not had the chance to learn everything they want to know about the proposed Donlin Gold Mine Project.

10. Participants are generally supportive of ONC informing and communicating with the public about the Donlin Gold Mine Project.
Methodology

The survey consisted of 19 qualitative and quantitative questions. Surveys were administered online via Survey Monkey and through paper copies which were mailed to every ONC Tribal Members ages 18 years or older during May of 2021.

The survey was open May 13, 2021 through August 20, 2021.

Survey takers heard about the survey through a mailed newsletter from ONC’s Natural Resources Department, traditional news sources like KYUK Radio, and social media.

310 Alaskans of the YK Delta completed the survey. Of these, 226 of the respondents identified themselves as ONC Tribal Members. 43 of respondents are Alaska Native and affiliated with a tribal council other than ONC in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. 25 answered that they are not affiliated with a tribe, and 15 respondents left the question blank.

A total of 310 people completed the opinion sections of the survey, and 284 people continued all the way through the final questions to submit their contact information.

Surveys were mailed to 2,842 ONC Tribal Members. With 226 of the survey responses being from ONC Tribal Members, responses represent 7.95% of the total population of enrolled 18+ ONC tribal members. Statistically, 226 is a representative of the population with a 95% confidence interval and a margin of error between 6.3-6.4%.

Four Tribal Members who completed the survey were selected at random on August 23, 2021 to win prizes.
Survey Findings

Demographics

278 out of the 295 who answered for their tribal affiliation are members of a tribe. 220 of these identified themselves as ONC Tribal Members. Others wrote that they are affiliated with Native Village tribes along the YK Delta including Napaskiak, Napakiak, Akiachak, Nunapitchuk, Napaimute, Sleetmute, Kongiganak, Quinhagak, Newtok, Kipnuk, Tuntutuliak, Mekoryuk, and Kasigluk. Others included Asa'carsarmiut Tribe, Native Village of Marshall, Native Village of Scammon Bay, Pitka's Point, and BNC affiliation.

Out of all respondents, 88.37% (266) identified as Calista Shareholders.
Respondents were asked to indicate which community they are currently from. The question was open-ended, allowing participants to write in their community residence. The communities with the most respondents were Bethel, Kwethluk, Napaskiak, Kipnuk, Quinhagak, and Chevak. This word cloud is a visualization of the areas listed in Question 3 asking what community or village respondents were from with more frequently used words appearing more prominently.
Value of Environment

Respondents were asked to describe their connection or relationship to the environment and the value it has in their life. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents wide latitude in their answers. This word cloud is a visualization of the responses with more frequently used words appearing more prominently.

Responses were also tagged topically, with most answers receiving several tags.

The top ranking description was “subsistence gathering”, with 39.8% (121) of respondents listing subsistence as a large part of their relationship to the environment. The second and third highest ranking relationship descriptions were “fishing and hunting” and “food source”.

Notably, answers to this question were often long and detailed, indicating that respondents feel strongly about their relationship to the environment.
Description of Subsistence Importance

Native Alaskans gather many kinds of subsistence foods from the land. Respondents were asked to select all foods from the choices below that represent what native foods they gather all year round. Over 90% selected berries and fish, and over 75% selected big game.

Several respondents selected “other” and specified the following: “medicinal plants” and “water”.

Which of the following subsistence foods do you gather all year round? (select all that apply)

Answered: 294   Skipped: 11

- Berries: 93.20%
- Fish: 91.82%
- Edible Plants: 57.14%
- Big Game: 78.91%
- Birds: 67.69%
- Marine Life: 49.32%
- Small Game: 59.82%
- Eggs: 40.14%
- Other (please specify): 4.76%
Respondents were asked to describe how and why their subsistence lifestyle is important to them. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents wide latitude in their answers. The word cloud is a visualization of the responses with more prominent words appearing larger. 300 respondents answered the question and this cloud shows 100 words. The top one to ten words that appeared in answers were “food”, “healthy”, “important”, “family”, “eat”, “gather”, “way of life”, “subsistence”, “life”, and “live”, respectively.

Q6 Describe how and why your subsistence lifestyle is important to you?

children year around kids keeps us sustain native culture store bought food grandchildren
grew eating always Yupik hunting love well native food main n Depending natural
freezer good feed family live land part culture keep gives us fish born people
able subsistence lifestyle feed store organic culture traditional us
time land subsist life connection way life taught eat catch
family give healthy food expensive food tradition
important native gather much subsistence winter
live diet grew nature S harvest Way season lifestyle learning
subsistence food parents provides heritage raised hunt fish survive
feeds family without food source generations hungry need since helps enjoy
passed soul everything survival year wife go family members year round respect land
ancestors cost living makes land waters part provides food
Confidence in Donlin Gold Project Safety

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (Not Confident) to 5 (Very Confident) how confident they felt that the Donlin Gold Project would protect their air, water, and lands.

Over 70% of survey participants felt 1- not confident that the Donlin Gold Project would protect their air, water, and lands.

About 11%, or 34 participants, marked that they are undecided or have no opinion on the Donlin Gold Project Safety.

Q7 On the scale of 1-5 (1=Not Confident and 5=Very Confident), how confident are you that Donlin will protect our air, water, and lands?
Support for Donlin Gold Project

Respondents were asked to rate their support for the Donlin Gold Project on a scale of 1 (Strongly Opposed) to 5 (Strongly Support).

67% of respondents marked that they were strongly opposed to the Donlin Gold Project. 13% marked that they were undecided or had no opinion. 5.9% marked they feel strongly supportive of the project.

Q8 On a scale of 1-5 (1=Strongly Opposed and 5=Strongly Support), how do you feel about the Donlin Gold Mine Project?
Community Effect of Donlin Gold Project

Question 9 asked respondents how the Donlin Mine would affect their communities. 299 participants responded to the question. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents wide latitude in their answers. The word cloud below is a visualization of the responses with more prominent words appearing larger. The cloud includes 100 individual words and seeks to encapsulate individual sentiments.

The top one to eleven words that occurred in the word cloud respectively were “will”, “fish”, “land”, “mine”, “river”, “water”, “people”, “jobs”, “affect”, “food”, and “community”.

Q9 How do you think the Donlin Gold Mine would affect your community?

bad future generations provide jobs directly happen eventually destroy tundra effect really going devastate ruin family area chemicals ruin land protected need increased will destroy much
many everything sure employment good help negatively say will affect Donlin Gold Mine land water will bring pollution depends Subsistence contaminate think risk food one people water disaster mine already fish us will year land around river take jobs plants affect care Community Might environment well animals kuskokwim river way life damage n Badly Way Yes polluted work money first region spill may provides know resources created losing living cause come give kuskokwim life maybe use become disrupt believe bring jobs kill fish will kill impact poison
Responses were also tagged for topic and sentiment. The top tag was “jobs” at 18.39% and the second top tag was “pollute” at 17.73%. The top sentiment was “negative” towards Donlin’s effect on the community at 72.24%. The second highest sentiment was “positive” at 8.70%.

The response tagged “positive, then negative” represents those respondents that commented that the Donlin mine will bring jobs and economic boost in the short term and destruction in the long term.
Environmental Effect of Donlin Gold Project

Respondents were asked to comment on how they think the Donlin Gold Project will impact the food sources on the Kuskokwim River and the Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Delta. 302 participants responded to the question. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents wide latitude in their answers. The word cloud is a visualization of the responses with more prominent words appearing larger.

The top one to ten words that occurred in the word cloud respectively were “will”, “river”, “fish”, “water”, “impact”, “land”, “animals”, “food sources”, “mine”, and “kill”.

Q10 How do you think the Donlin Gold Mine will impact the food sources in the Kuskokwim River and the YK Delta?
Responses were also tagged for sentiment. When sorted into positive and negative overall sentiments, 84.44% were negative toward the mine, 2.65% were positive toward the mine, 2.65% believed there would be little impact to food sources on the Kuskokwim, and 5.30% were unsure on how they felt.

Notably, answers to this question were often long and detailed, indicating that respondents feel strongly about native foods along the Kuskokwim River and Donlin Gold’s potential effects on these food sources.
Knowledge of Donlin Gold Project Details

Respondents were asked if they are aware that Donlin Gold will be transporting spill risk substances like Mercury and Cyanide either over land or by barge. 66.45% claimed they were previously aware of this plan.

Q11 Are you aware that Donlin Gold will be transporting spill risk substances like Mercury and Cyanide either over land or by barge?

- Yes, I am aware of this: 66.45%
- No, I was not aware of this: 33.55%
Respondents were then asked if they had seen Donlin’s plan for transporting spill risk substances like Mercury or Cyanide. 80% of participants said they haven’t seen the plan, and about 20% said that they have seen the plan.

Q12 Have you seen Donlin Gold's plan for transporting spill risk substances like Mercury and Cyanide?
Comfortability with Donlin Gold Project Details

Respondents were asked if they are comfortable with Donlin Gold transporting spill risk substances like Mercury or Cyanide over land or by barge.

303 participants responded to the question. 7.9% (24) answered that they felt comfortable with the transportation of spill risk substances. 88.4% (268) answered that they did not feel comfortable with the transportation of spill risk substances. 3.6% (11) answered that they were undecided or unsure of their opinion.
Trust in Donlin Gold Project Safety

Participants were asked if they trust that the Donlin Gold Project will keep the region safe. 88.5% answered “No” and 11.5% answered “Yes”.

Q14 Do you trust that Donlin Gold will keep the region safe?

![Bar chart showing 88.45% No and 11.55% Yes]
Opportunity to Speak on Donlin Gold Project

Respondents were asked if they feel like they have had the opportunity to learn everything they want to know about the proposed Donlin Gold project. 305 participants answered the question. 30.82% answered yes, they have had the opportunity to learn everything they want to know about the proposed mine. 69.18% answered no, they have not.

Q15 Do you feel like you've had the opportunity to learn everything you want to know about the proposed Donlin Gold project?
Comments and Communication Requests

Respondents were then asked if they have any comments or concerns they wanted to share with ONC regarding the Donlin Gold mine. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents wide latitude in their answers. Most similar answers were summarized with tags for general response and sentiment. Notably, answers to this question were often long and detailed, indicating that respondents feel strongly about their comments on the Donlin mine.

The most common tags are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Back Economy</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s too late</td>
<td>0.74%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Donlin Gold</td>
<td>59.48%</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent Future Mines</td>
<td>0.37%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Subsistence</td>
<td>5.58%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Precautions</td>
<td>0.74%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save our People</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to learn more</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes Donlin Gold</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many responses were unable to be summarized with tags. These are shared below:

“We need our wildlife in order to survive. Gold and rich mining won't benefit the people of the land.”

“I wish they (Calista) didn't go through with Donlin, we have other opportunities in the region. Please keep fighting against the mine, thank you for sticking up for us.”

“Build the economy back. Fishing is gone as we've all seen, time to save our people, it's getting bad.”

“Calista claims that “maintaining our traditional way of life and providing economic opportunities for shareholders are Calista’s top priorities”, but I don’t think they can safely open a gold mine without causing harm to the environment.”

“I appreciate all those who are diligently working to ensure our environment is protected and our cultural practices are preserved. The future generations can appreciate, enjoy and know where we come from. Please ask yourself: am I making an emotional decision? what is our impact on the environment before Donlin Gold? What damage have we already done? What are we currently doing to mitigate, protect and serve? Can Donlin contribute towards safer disposal of hazardous waste? Are we fairly listening to and considering answers without bias?”

“What purpose or purposes other than financial gain is there to open this mine?”

“Keep fighting against it for our people, you are our voice.”

“How else (as a region) are we going to make enough money to become self-sustaining? 99% of the money in the region is from [the] government. We need to be independent and sovereign, yet we really don't have an economy. Hell, with commercial fishing gone, there really isn't even a subsistence cash economy any more.”

“Quyana to ONC for holding such strong opposition against Donlin Gold. If you can, bring more attention to it at AFN and the ICC to bring more awareness & support against the mine. There are other ways to safely generate revenue to our region, extracting non-renewable resources is not the answer.”

“All information should be explained in our Yupik language through tribal consultation.”

“ONC has the opportunity to show the world that mining (which is crucial to the lifestyle of all Alaskans can be done safely when it is managed responsibly by people who deeply love and appreciate the land and are motivated to ensure minimal harm to the environment.”
“I think that ONC is doing such a great job keeping the communities aware of what is going on with the mine. I wish more of the community and tribes around Southwest Alaska would be more vocal and participate in putting a stop to the mine operation.”

“Thank you ONC for standing up for our environment and our future resources.”

“Want [Donlin] to be an equal opportunity employer and give ONC members preference to job offers.”

“Quyana for advocating for our people. Calista does not represent us!”

“Barges will erode river banks, alter channels, swamp boats, chemicals leached into [the] river, creeks, [and] fresh water sources.”

“There needs to be a class action lawsuit against Calista by the tribes to stop the Donlin project.”

“Thank you for being an active voice to oppose this mine. Please continue efforts to unite people in keeping our river and land clean and safe from large scale mining.”

“No amount of money can restore, revitalize, an area that had a spill, big or small, it will never be the same- our people depend on a clean and healthy environment- Our future children will pay the price.”

“Erosion of our river banks along the kuskokwim is a concern with the barges traveling up and down the river for development and to run the mine. Even a possible chance of contamination of our river would cause thousands and thousands of people to suffer from our subsistence gatherings. I’m worried for the younger generation of what we’re all teaching them today.”

“Organize the regional Tribes into one joint venture entity much like the United Tribes of Bristol Bay! Need to be the leaders for any chance at stopping this mine.”

“Yes, where are they planning on keeping the barges in the winter or when they are not in use?”

“Yes, our tribes ONC and others should be working more closely with our other Yupik relatives and friends in the Bristol Bay region. The ANCSA border is a false divide that has kept Yupik people from working together to protect our way of life. They have been successful in making their fight a statewide, nationwide and worldwide effort to stop the Pebble Mine. We are also in the ONC region fighting a large mine, with less visibility and support. We can be alleys and work together to save our way of life. It will go a long way to work cooperatively region to region, tribes with tribes, and see how much farther we can get to protect clean lands and waters.”
“You are our Tribal leaders; you are us. You have a responsibility that has been given to you through the teachings of those that came before. You are the voice of us. You carry our voice, courage, and the strength of the people behind you. We too carry the weight you feel. You are not alone in making the right decision to reject the Donlin Gold; we support you.”

“ONC and YKHC should not be in a primary position to oppose something that is actually on private lands owned by Calista and it would be different if it was on state lands or even a sole owner's lands. Anyone who understands ANCSA and land provisions should know this already.”

“[Donlin] need[s] to be responsible for all actions on those lands.”

“Please consider the positive social benefit from real jobs for young people in the region. The substance abuse and crime associated with welfare dependency is hurting people.”

“Please continue to fight to protect our food source. Donlin would be the largest open pit mine in the world if allowed to develop. Does not fit the values of the Kuskokwim people.”
Respondents were asked if they would like to receive further information from ONC and partners about the Donlin Gold Project. 31.34% of the participants indicated that they would like to receive more information about the project. 68.66% indicated that they do not wish to receive more information about the project.

Q18 Do you want to receive further information from ONC and partners about the Donlin Gold project?