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Contact:

Beverly Hoffman, Calista Indigenous Women Against Donlin, (907) 545-4499, bev@kuskofish.com

Tun'aqi Blanchett, Student and Native Movement Advisor, (907) 370-0756, sandtuns@gmail.com

Robin Samuelson, Bristol Bay Leader and Fisherman, (907) 843-1642, sockeye1@nushtel.net

*Undercover [recordings](#) reveal talk of a massive mining district connecting Pebble and Donlin
Yukon-Kuskokwim residents react with shock and dismay after hearing that the mine they have been
fighting for decades may be the key in creating a massive southwest Alaska mining district planned by
the people behind the Pebble Mine*

Bethel, AK - Mining company CEO's Tom Collier and Ron Thiessen have just pulled back the curtain on the dishonesty and corruption in the large-mine permitting process. In a series of recorded conversations published by the Washington DC based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) on Monday EIA investigators and executives from the company behind the contested Pebble Mine project in Bristol Bay, Alaska exposed a shocking look at how lobbyists and electeds work together behind the scenes to ensure their projects receive government approval. One of the tapes, entitled "[Donlin](#)," includes discussions about tying together transportation and power infrastructure for the Donlin and Pebble Mine projects and creating a massive mining district spanning the Bristol Bay and Yukon-Kuskokwim drainages.

"The cost of the royalties and the cost of the capital that has to be invested in [Donlin] makes it a project that's really difficult to go forward with at the current time. One of the things that I'm sure Ron [Thiessen] mentioned to you is that we think it's possible that we can combine some infrastructure . . . which means that this is another reason that the State's interested in Pebble. Because if you flip the Pebble switch on it's likely that you may also be flipping on the Donlin switch." said Tom Collier, now former Pebble Limited Partnership CEO who has resigned since the recordings were released.

While less well-known than the infamous Pebble project, Donlin would be the world's largest gold mine and poses immense threats to the lands, waters and traditional culture of the region's residents. In recent years, as the level of awareness of the mine's impacts to water and fish has grown, so has opposition to the mine.

Since the summer of 2018 seventeen Tribal Governments in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta have formally adopted resolutions of opposition to the Donlin Gold project. [Alaska Village Council Presidents\(see pgs. 26-27\)](#), the [Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation\(see pg 3\)](#) and the [National Congress of American Indians](#) have all adopted positions of opposition to Donlin.

Gloria Simeon, a delegate to the National Congress of American Indians 2019 Fall convening on behalf of her Tribe, Orutsarmiut Native Council, helped carry a resolution of opposition to

the proposed Pebble Mine that included language opposing the Donlin Gold project. “I knew I was standing not only for my Tribe but the entire region,” said Simeon.

Beverly Hoffman, an esteemed elder and cultural activist in the region led an effort to deliver a letter to the regional Calista Corporation CEO that was signed by 135 women shareholders who oppose the mine. “As a Calista shareholder living in the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta on the Kuskokwim River, these tapes prove that we have been lied to since the beginning of Pebble and I fear the same is true about Donlin. I’ve always suspected that they were in this together. The reality of 180 years of the Pebble mine has corporate greed all over it. The tapes prove that. They don’t give a damn about those of us living in the YK Delta or in the Bristol Bay region. It makes me sick to my stomach.”

“The tapes reveal the dishonesty among mining corporations and government officials in Alaska. These mining operations would cause devastating harm to the health of the people of the Kuskokwim and Bristol Bay watersheds for generations to come,” said Pamela Miller, Executive Director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics. “We know that the Donlin mine would be a significant source of mercury in the Kuskokwim River. Mercury is a neurotoxic chemical that bioaccumulates and can be transferred from mother to child. It causes life-long and irreversible harm to the developing brains of our children at extremely low exposure levels. What greater injustice can there be than intergenerational harm to our children and their ability to learn?”

Mary C. Herrera-Matthias, who is raising her family in Bethel, echoes these words in her traditional values and concerns for access to uncontaminated foods from the land. “The social and environmental impacts [of the mine] could be devastating to our subsistence region and traditional Yup’ik way of life where we have less opportunity for cash income but lots of subsistence foods from the land to keep our communities and families healthy. This land and what it provides is what belongs to us and we belong to it. As it has been for millenia, passed down from generation to generation by our ancestors. I cannot see living any other kind of lifestyle because it is so important.”

Tun’aqi Blanchett is a young Yup’ik, Greenlandic Inuit and Black woman with ties to Nunapitchuk who is studying Anthropology in Anchorage and serves in an advisory capacity to Native Movement and says, “I am tired of explaining the fear that lives in my body every day. The fear of knowing that my peoples’ existence isn’t worth protecting because it’s uncomfortable to some. I come from strong bloodlines and cultures that are continuously being erased by the American dream. What a funny dream. To destroy sacred lands for comfort and to exploit the most vulnerable for legacy. When I think of legacy I think of clean waters and lands that nourish the generations to come. I think of our Yup’ik ways of knowing, rooted in the respect and care for all living beings, being alive and well. These lands and waters are sacred and need to be protected from industrial-scale extraction and false solutions that will leave us more vulnerable than we are now.”

Legal experts noted that the information connecting Donlin to Pebble would also require a Supplemental Environmental Impact statement and other new analysis. Tom Waldo, Senior Counsel for Earthjustice who represents Tribes fighting the Donlin mine said, "If Donlin is going to use Pebble infrastructure, that's a different project with different impacts to different communities. It will require new permitting by the Army Corps and State of Alaska agencies."

From Bristol Bay Dillingham fisherman and tribal leader Robin Samuelson stated, "When outside money and outside interests make bigger than life promises you know it's gotta be more crooked than a dog's hind leg. Whether it is the headwaters of Bristol Bay or the Kuskokwim we will never give up. Our people, our lands and future generations come first."

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