



## Threats to our survival as a People

By Gloria Simeon | August 17, 2018 [*Gloria Simeon is a resident of Bethel, with lifelong ties to this land, air and water and People who go back to the first of our ancestors that came here and claimed this land as our home.*]

As fall approaches, I am filled with gratitude that once again, we were able to harvest from our land and rivers and reap the blessings we have been granted. At the same time I have great fear, an uncertainty, a feeling of dis-ease as I hear of the great threats to our survival as a strong Native People, with our culture and traditions intact.

Although I try, every day to focus on the here and now, doing what I can from where I am, those outside forces are very real and threaten to doom us if we don't act now. It is time to use our voices and collective power to fight against these powers. We MUST cast our votes in this upcoming election.

We must put our support and our votes behind Proposition 1, Stand for Salmon. Our salmon, the food of our People for millennia, are threatened at all levels. The Stand for Salmon Alliance seeks to change and update laws currently on the books. These laws are at least 60 years old and must be brought up to date to reflect the current environment and state of our salmon stocks and habitat to ensure that they will survive in these times of food insecurity and uncertainty of what the future holds. Those archaic regulations were made when salmon stocks were abundant and returns were strong.

The opposition to this, Stand for Alaska, is attempting to confuse the issue and is well funded by the enemies of our People, who have a history of destroying of our land, air and water. Donlin Gold has donated a million dollars to this campaign to allow corporations and development to continue to ravage our State as they have. This all to the detriment of the environment and our ability to trust any food from the land where they have left their toxic waste.

Stand for Alaska has millions, contributed by corporations, Native and non-native Alaskan companies, such as the Alaska Outdoor Council wanting to hunt and guide, drill, dig at a time when our environment is so fragile and unpredictable.

Any one single failure of this plan of Donlin's will doom our river, our wetlands and our People along with our culture and traditions. Where will we go? We have nowhere else to go. This is our land, our river, our salmon, our very survival, that we must vote to protect.

Our congressional delegation is at a pivotal point to make decisions that could also impact our survival. Brett Kavanaugh must never be appointed to the Supreme Court. His background shows that this man would not be a friend to our People. Upcoming Supreme Court decisions, such as the Sturgeon vs. Frost, have the potential to undo the protections we have under Title 8 of the Alaska Native Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) which protects our aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. Tribes have come to the attention of the White House. This chills me to the bone.

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Senator Sullivan, our senator from somewhere else, pushed upon us by Senator Murkowski as a partner in a dream team that had the potential to do much good for our State, has failed in his mission as far as I am concerned.

How many times have they canceled out Alaska's votes because Senator Murkowski was forced to stand for her constituency while Sullivan stood for whoever has bought and paid for his service and loyalty? His proposal to break apart the Ninth Circuit Court speaks of cronyism and manipulation at the highest levels to create a vehicle to further strip us of our voices and power.

With the current situation in Washington D.C., from the White House, oozing and seeping onto Congress and the Supreme Court, our government is being poisoned in sneaky and insidious ways. Should a new circuit court be established, I fear the judges appointed would favor decisions that go against our Constitutional Rights and protections. The Supreme Court is at a critical balance right now. A tilt in the direction of Kavanaugh's leanings would certainly affect the outcome of such cases as the Sturgeon vs. Frost case, and other cases that have the potential to negatively impact our lives, which will be coming up for appeal and review.

Our congressional delegation will be arriving in the next weeks to bestow their presence upon us. Probably bringing their rich, influential political partners and campaign contributors' along. They will be feted by people wherever they go. There will be village visits, meets and greets, fishing trips, etc.

If you have the opportunity, please, please let these elected officials hear your views and know your concerns. Hold their feet to the fire and demand they do the job they were elected to do. Remember they serve us!

I have great fear for the future of our country. In the past 20 months, it seems that the three branches executive, legislative and judicial are failing to protect us. Daily, there is something to be concerned about, happening in the background of all this noise of corruption, investigation, mixed with hateful, inciteful messages coming from the White House. Women and minorities in particular are losing their rights and dignity daily. Our voices and rights to accurate information are also in danger.

There are two lights at the end of the tunnel if we are successful in an effort to pull together, to stand strong and voice our opposition to Donlin and make a difference in the very short time window we have been blessed with. We have been granted a month longer to comment on Donlin's remediation and mitigation plan. (We owe a great debt of gratitude to Danielle Craven and the Salmon Alliance group. And a huge quyana to all who signed the petition to get this initiative on the ballot.)

Please write your letters, Tribal Councils, get your resolutions passed, everyone, make phone calls. Copy everyone, from Governor Walker, senator and representative, commissioners, Army Corp of Engineers, etc.

Villages, muster up your citizenship and make sure every registered voter votes on election day. Vote in support of Proposition 1, Save the Salmon. This is a vote for our survival and could be the most powerful weapon we have to win the fight against the looming prospect of Donlin. I know we can do this by using the power of our collective voices and our votes.

Now, more than ever we have to exercise our right to vote. Time is growing shorter and the matter of urgency is much, much more critical and dire than ever before on Donlin. I believe, we can turn the tide and be done with this.

I care and fear desperately because I live here.