



Allen Edzerza, a Tahltan Nation Elder and Advisor to the British Columbia First Nations Energy and Mining Council, Yukon River, British Columbia

## A golden opportunity

Gold is an important conductive metal used in very small quantities in Apple products. As we continue to increase our use of recycled materials, including gold, and work to end our reliance on mining altogether, we continue to seek out innovative ways to source gold and other minerals responsibly. The Salmon Gold partnership between Apple; RESOLVE, a leading sustainability NGO; local small-scale mining operators; and indigenous peoples kicked off in 2017 to introduce an innovative approach to sourcing gold responsibly, while also helping to restore native fish habitats.

In the remote regions of Alaska and the Yukon, hundreds of placer mining operations, some dating back to the Klondike gold rush of

the 1890s, were already actively producing gold. Placer mines are typically situated along creeks and streams, where miners look for gold left from the original operations. These mines often leave streams cloudy with sediment, making it difficult for native fish species, including salmon and grayling, to thrive, threatening the traditions of indigenous communities.

“Salmon, to our people, is absolutely the most important aspect of the whole environment,” said Allen Edzerza, a Tahltan Nation elder and advisor to the British Columbia First Nations Energy and Mining Council. “In the pursuit of the metals, you see big scars on the landscape.”

RESOLVE worked with miners and local indigenous groups to develop a new way to source gold without use of processing chemicals while simultaneously restoring the streams where the mining is taking place. Repairs to these stream beds and banks are restoring the biodiversity of the region, enabling salmon to navigate the waters and spawn once again.

“There’s been a lot of tension between mining and salmon, and Salmon Gold is like a peace treaty,” said Stephen D’Esposito, president and CEO of RESOLVE. “It’s a place where we can work together: the restoration community, First Nations, and the mining industry.”

Peter Wright, Edzerza’s nephew, has been mining in the area since he was 18. “When I first started in the industry, there wasn’t a lot of environmental awareness. We’re trying to reclaim the land and help nature reintroduce itself. Everything that we do with our reclamation is to help the Earth recover. Not only from our mining activities, but from a hundred years before.”

For Apple, the innovation in Salmon Gold does not end with the mining process. It is challenging to trace gold between

mines — the source of the gold — and the companies that purchase the refined gold. The Salmon Gold that enters Apple’s supply chain is tracked using blockchain technology, enabling the gold to be traced from the mine all the way to the refiner, providing precise knowledge of the people and places involved in sourcing and processing it. The knowledge gained from this effort will have broader applications to other minerals’ supply chains.

The Salmon Gold project is growing quickly and has already gained recognition, with mining partners Dean and Chris Race receiving a Sustainable Development Award from the United States Bureau of Land Management. “We have a sacred responsibility to stewardship of the environment that we call our ancestral land,” says Edzerza, “so that future generations can experience it the way our ancestors did.”



Chris and Dean Race, father and son owners of a placer mining operation Jack Wade Creek, Alaska

