

Heath Cox, (left), Branch Manager of the NBA Bethel Branch, at the Donlin Camp setting up a direct deposit account with Harry Morgan.

Donlin Creek Mine Looks To Long-Term Profits



One of the more sizable projects in bush Alaska is taking shape in the middle Kuskokwim area northeast of Aniak near the village of Crooked Creek. Named the Donlin Creek Project, it is a gold mineral exploration project operated by Placer Dome U. S., Inc., on lands leased from the Calista Corporation and The Kuskokwim Corporation. The Donlin Creek Project Camp is a remote camp over 15 miles inland from the Kuskokwim River. It consists of more than 50 portable steel and canvas buildings and includes a 5,500 foot runway. During peak exploration season the camp employed more than 100 workers, over 50% of whom were Calista

shareholders from nearby villages.

What makes the Donlin Project so impressive is its size. There are already five diamond drill core cutting rigs on site and Placer Dome has pumped millions of dollars into the project. This is good news for both Calista and The Kuskokwim Corporation because the larger the operation becomes, the greater the potential to affect economic development in the region including increased shareholder employment opportunity on the project. Although only in the exploration state at this time, should an adequate ore body be found, the project has the potential to hire as many as 600 people during the 2-3 year construction and development stage, and 200-400 people on a full-time

basis after the mine comes on line.

Costs to construct and develop a mine are expected to be in the range of \$200 million to \$400 million.

At the present time, rock samples are being drilled and split at the Donlin Project and then air freighted into Anchorage to the Placer Dome Technical Service Lab where they are dried, crushed, split and shipped to the assay lab in Vancouver, British Columbia.

To date, the technicians in Anchorage have prepared and archived more than 16,000 samples from the project, which amounts to almost 150 tons of rock.

According to Sue Gamache, Vice President of Corporate Affairs at Calista

Corporation, Placer Dome has committed to continue exploration in 1997 at approximately the same level or slightly larger than in 1996. During the summer of 1996, the National Bank of Alaska Branch Manager from Bethel, Heath Cox, was invited to the Donlin Creek camp. He traveled to Donlin Creek to open accounts for shareholders and provide direct deposit of the payroll for Calista Corporation. After visiting the mine site, Cox said, "I appreciated the opportunity to help the shareholders and was able to see first hand how the operation was progressing. With our NBA Branch in Bethel we look forward to the opportunity to service the ongoing needs of the Donlin Creek Mining project." ■

Across Alaska, there are a growing number of small business assistance organizations springing to life.

These small business assistance organizations are specifically geared toward assisting cottage industry businesses. Recognizing that a strong economy for the village is based on healthy businesses in the village, the focus of this effort is to encourage economic development to occur from the grass roots up.

For the Native seeking assistance in starting a small business there is the **Tlingit Haida Central Council's Business and Economic Development Department**. It can provide assistance in the writing of business plans or, for more established businesses, the department can assist with financial forecasting. Even though the Tlingit Haida Central Council is located in Southeast Alaska, it has clients throughout Alaska. For information, contact Catherine Edwards, Program Manager (463-7121).

The Council has also established a "lending circle" called the **Tinaá Program**, which provides both technical and moral support. A group of up to a half-dozen businesses are organized; five seminars are presented on such subjects as bookkeeping, marketing and other business essentials. All of these classes are offered as preliminary steps to receiving a loan from the Council. Applications are taken for business loans of up to \$1,500. The loan must be approved by the lending circle before it

is presented to the board of directors of the Council. Loans are processed one at a time to ensure each business gets needed assistance, and to be sure repayment is made.

Catherine Edwards, Tinaá Program manager said, "National Bank of Alaska has been very supportive of the lending process. NBA granted the capital to start the organization and the bank opened the line of credit for the lending program."

Goldbelt Inc. has a Shareholder Business Development Program for larger businesses, providing up to \$2,000 in business consulting expenses. Judy Mason

(790-4990) is the Business Development Program Manager. Entrepreneurs with ideas can receive assistance to develop loan applications. The loan application is then reviewed by the Goldbelt board of directors. Once a loan is approved, the corporation will act as the loan guarantor and submit the package to a bank for funding.

Another Native organization that is making headway in opening doors of

opportunity for its members is the **Cook Inlet Tribal Council** with its new **Tribal Employment and Business Development Service Office**. Full-time staff have been assigned to advise

members on such business issues as employment, and contracting and subcontracting under Indian Preference laws. Further, to help its members capitalize on opportunities, the Service Office publishes an annual **ALASKA NATIVE AND AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS DIRECTORY** which provides such information as company contacts, bonding capacities, and expertise of Alaskan firms.

The **Alaska Minority Business Development Center** opened to assist aspiring minority entrepreneurs who want technical assistance in getting their business ventures off the ground. Karen Dieringer, Director of the Alaska Minority Business Development Center, is assisted by Counselors Audrey Ranstead and Deb Travnick. The AMBDC is dedicated to assisting minority businesses operating in Alaska. Services include but are not limited to developing

business plans, preparing loan proposals, establishing general accounting procedures and assistance in performing market research. The center's policy is to work one-on-one with clients guiding them through the process of reaching their business goals. Minority firms and individuals from all over the state are encouraged to utilize the Alaska Minority Business Development Center. For more information, please call 452-8251 in Fairbanks, or 800-478-6822, extensions 3275, 3276 or 3277 statewide.

Depending on your project, there are also many grant-giving foundations that are always looking for credible businesses. One of these is **First Nations Development Institute**, (540-371-5615), a non-profit organization dedicated to help Native American communities gain economic self-sufficiency. The Institute provides grants and technical assistance to Native controlled groups which "harness the spirit of entrepreneurship and Native culture." Recently First Nations gave a \$30,000 grant to the Interior River Arts and Crafts Cooperative in Aniak. The goal of the grant is to provide a market outlet for artists in six remote villages in the Yukon and Kuskokwim river regions. Other non-profits can be identified by visiting your local library or calling the Foundation Center in Washington D. C. ■

WHERE
CAN
I GO
FOR
HELP
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