

## June Nelson Scholarship Essay

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### Pebble Mine

My story that I feel is worthy of sharing with you is my fighting against something that threatens the very backyard I adore, the proposed Pebble Mine. I have worked in multiple capacities to help educate people on the dangers it could bring to my community and the sockeye salmon fishery we all depend upon. I have been involved on my own and with several grassroots organizations to help raise awareness by sharing updated information and distributing pamphlets along with answering questions for visitors, commercial fishermen, and local residents. I have traveled to Juneau and as far as Washington D.C. to help raise awareness and educate our legislative bodies.

I feel the threat that Pebble Mine would bring to my home could be so detrimental to the future of the environment and would change the face of my backyard, creating something I would not even recognize. Writing letters to higher powers in the state and federal governments and spending countless hours of volunteer time has made me realize how much of an impact a young, persistent voice can have. I spoke with individuals who were unsure or some that were even in favor of the pebble project prior to speaking with me. After discussing and debating the long term threats that pebble posed versus the short term benefits offered, I was able to change some minds and develop new advocates for the fight against pebble. I helped to produce videos and compiled hundreds of testimonies that were sent to our elected representatives in Juneau and D.C.

Getting the opportunity to speak to our elected officials in our state and nations capitals, on behalf of protection for Bristol Bay, opened my eyes to the realization that one voice, no matter how small, young, or remote, can impact a large number of people and be heard farther than I could have imagined. The actions I have taken and the response I have received has led me to believe that it is important for you to stand up for what you think is right. Find something you are passionate about and fight for it, it is not a waste of time.

When individuals let other people make decisions for them, the world only benefits those who can buy their way through issues with money. If you chose to have a voice and take a deep breath to gain the courage to use it, you can fight those with money and the people they influence and you can be effective. The beauty and culture of Bristol Bay is something worth fighting for. The wild salmon run is the largest sockeye run in the world and jeopardizing that is not worth any amount of money or temporary jobs it might provide. This fight has helped shape me into a focused and self-assured woman. It has taught me how important it is to stick up for what you think and know is right, you can make a difference.

Promoting 404C clean water act and educating people on the dangers of the mine helped me grow and taught me valuable lessons that will benefit me in the future. I can approach individuals on their level and discuss issues without fear or reluctance. It has taught me how to research issues and how to move through government agencies and speak boldly with elected officials. I feel much more prepared to be a part of society and have a no fear of involving myself in future issues as I turn eighteen.

Even as I prepare to leave the state to further my education, I plan on returning to Bristol Bay someday, raising my children here. I want them to be able to enjoy the wild fisheries and pristine beauty where I grew, learned and flourished. I will also be very proud to hopefully one day say "I helped protect one of the most valuable and beautiful places on earth, when I was just a teen." No matter the outcome, I will always be able to encourage others to take action and persist in voicing their opinion, knowing it will make a difference.