

Lucy Lippard

BLUE HILL Vs. Wolfden Resources Pembroke MINE 7/25/21

I'm not sure how I got roped into this, aside from admiring all the activists working against Wolfden's proposed Pembroke mine, like the Pine Tree Amendment group, ARTT, the Pembroke Clean Water Committee ... and of course the persuasive powers of Severine von Tscharner Fleming of Greenhorns and Smithereen Farm. Because while I've spent 85 summers in Maine, I'm from away, and my minimal expertise lies to the west. I've lived in rural New Mexico for almost 30 years and I have to admit I had no idea there were silver and lead veins in Maine, let alone the 40-60 mile vein this Canadian corporation is hoping to exploit. Others who know the down and dirty details far better will speak this afternoon, so I bow to the experts to analyze the impact of the Pembroke and Pickett Mountain mines.

I want to focus on the fact that the issues in both Maine and New Mexico are local and therefore dissimilar... but the global impact of these relatively small-scale extractions add up in these days of mounting climate chaos and mounting choices for the future. They shouldn't be happening behind our backs. Nor can we turn our backs on them.... as Eudora Welty once wrote, "One place understood helps us understand all other places better." Whether you're new to the area threatened by a mine or you have generations behind you there, we all need to take responsibility for the places we find ourselves for however long or short a time. The ecology and the social ecology, or social dynamics, affect all of us. It's also good to recall that two previous mines in Blue Hill and Brooksville went bankrupt and cleanup will cost taxpayers millions.

I keep in mind a favorite slogan. SAVE TOMORROW TODAY

In the West we say nature is politics and politics is nature. Not so different in Maine. Understanding and educating our communities is crucial. Events like these, and the models at

Standing Rock and Line 3 among many other national trigger points are important steps in the process of acquiring the power to say no to mines pipelines, dams, and so forth that affect our lives and our futures. Interestingly, one of our current battles in New Mexico is trying to fend off Avantgrid from merging with PNM, the Public Service Company of NM. Your congressman Seth Berry wrote an op ed in our local paper noting how Maine had suffered under Avantgrid/Iberdrola and was number one in outages in the nation...

The taming, or domination, or exploitation, of nature is a treasured part of our national myth but it's time to change that. The promised gifts of extraction rarely trickle down. Jobs are the bait held out by extractive corporations, but they're rarely harvested. As Laguna Pueblo resident Dorothy Purley, who died of lymphoma at age 60, said of the notorious open pit uranium mine operating near her New Mexico village for thirty years: QUOTE "It seemed like a dream come true. It gave so many of my people on the reservation a chance to find employment without having to venture away from home... It never occurred to us that our children and grandchildren's lives would be put at risk." END QU My partner and his younger brother were raised at White Sands National Monument (now National Park) downwind of the Trinity site in New Mexico where the atom bomb was first detonated. His brother died prematurely of a strange concatenation of cancers and my partner is now involved in the Tularosa Downwinders demands for recompense, frequent in Utah, but never offered to New Mexicans. Could it be that most of them were people of color?

Anyway, Mainers are lucky. You have a law against open pit mining and supposedly no mining is allowed to threaten water sources. I think there's a bill in the legislature that would ban all metallic mineral mining and it was tabled? I don't know Maine politics well enough to know if it has a chance. It wouldn't survive in New Mexico tho we are a Democrat state at the moment. Nick Bennett, staff scientist with the NRDC of Maine calls Wolfden's claim that they can treat

wastewater back to natural level “preposterous...There’s not a mine in the world that can meet the natural background levels of groundwater.”

And in the interest of full disclosure, I should note that New Mexico -- one of the poorest states in the union-- is hugely dependent on gas and oil, on mining, on the manufacture of plutonium pits and the nuclear economy at Los Alamos, as well as tourism. Many of the extraction battles in the west stem from the collision of two incompatible land uses: indigenous sacred sites and resource extraction. Indigenous history is less visible in Maine, buried more deeply in most areas than it is in the west with its thriving pueblos and other tribal communities. But it’s there, and we need to be aware of its depth and significance.

Native sacred sites are often embedded in or embodied by nature herself. Ignorant white people dismiss indigenous claims to apparently undistinguished natural features, migration paths, almost invisible shrines and rock art panels, and places where medicinal plants and materials are gathered, or where legendary events took place. Sadly, we colonials are hard put to understand the sanctity of “unimproved” pieces of earth and the intricate connections between mountains, springs, lakes and the sea. We would do well to emulate indigenous values, or at the very least acknowledge them.

My basic field of course is the visual arts. And The Artists Rapid Response Team has demonstrated today its contributions. I’ve never claimed that art can change the world, especially at this moment when it appears that nothing can. But artists can be worthy allies to those challenging power with unconventional solutions. Artists are good at provoking questions, slipping between the institutional walls to expose the layers of emotional and esthetic resonance in our relationships to place, to history, and to the land we live on.

Although I've written extensively about land art or earthworks in the west, initially as an effective tool for escaping the indoor commercial art world, since living in the west I've become far more interested in land use. Land is a place, a collaboration between people and nature. For instance, Pembroke, initially called Pennamaquan by the Passamaquoddy, was colonized in 1774, and later named after a town in Wales. Its fine harbor led to a flourishing shipbuilding industry and in 1832 the Pembroke Iron Company was founded, the town's prime industry, along with agriculture.

And we can never forget water, *Agua es vida* as they say in the southwest. Water is life. Predictions are that by 2030 only 60% of the world's water needs will be met. Maine looks so incredibly green after New Mexico's exceptional drought which shows no signs of ending, but I know that drought even after all these showers, drought threatens here too. Mining not only gulps down huge amounts of water but it can so easily destroy local drinking water sources. Witness the Gold King mine spill in Colorado in 2015, which dealt an almost lethal blow to Navajo agriculture on the Animas and San Juan rivers downstream. Witness the Deepwater Horizon spill in the gulf of Mexico and the literally thousands of lesser known spills and other sources of industrial pollution, especially in lower income areas, the result of ongoing environmental racism. If we had slides I could show you some horrific graphs of statistics. Do we *need* oil and gas, or silver and lead, more than *food* and *water*?

The struggles continue. We should not have to sacrifice people's jobs and livelihoods in exchange for a sustainable planet. I'm always ranting about the fact that in the US, long term thinking is in short supply. Of course the real problem is capitalism, based on endless growth now impossible to sustain. As someone said, it's easier to conceive of the end of the *world* than the end of *capitalism*. And we have to wonder with writer Charles Bowden, why can't we imagine a future where we have

less but are more? And another crucial question from Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding*

Sweetgrass: "What good is knowing, unless it is coupled with caring?"

So I repeat: SAVE TOMORROW TODAY. And while we're at it, how about a Green New Deal?

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Called *Pennamaquan* by the [Passamaquoddy Indians](#), the area was settled about 1774 as part of [Dennysville](#).^[6] It was set off and incorporated on February 4, 1832 by the [legislature](#), which named it after [Pembroke](#) in [Wales](#), a community with a history of wooden [shipbuilding](#) stretching back to the [Middle Ages](#). With one of the finest harbors in Maine, Pembroke too became a shipbuilding center. Vessels were constructed here as early as 1825. By 1859, when the population was 1,712, there were seven [shipyards](#) operating. Most [schooners](#) constructed here were used either by the [coasting](#) trade or [fisheries](#).^[6]

Pembroke also had a [stone factory](#), three [sawmills](#), one [gristmill](#), four [shingle](#) mills and four [lath](#) machines. Near the [head of tide](#) stood the Pembroke Iron Company, established in 1832 and by 1856 producing almost 5,000 tons of [iron](#) spikes, [rivets](#) and [nails](#) a year. Another occupation was [agriculture](#).^[6] In 1880, the town's population was 2,324.^[7]