

# Indigenous leaders from Alaska, Canada tackle mutual concerns

By [Margaret Bauman](#) - March 16, 2018



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Indigenous leaders representing thousands of Alaska Native and First Nations people have committed to work together to combat industrial activity that threatens the sustainability of transboundary ecosystems.

“We have to stand for water,” said Frederick Olsen Jr., tribal president of the Organized Village of Kasaan, and chairman of the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission, a consortium of 15 sovereign tribal nations in Southeast Alaska. “This is it.

Some three dozen indigenous leaders met March 12-13 at the Tulalip Indian Reservation to discuss their mutual interests in the adverse impact and potential harm of extractive industries they feel are incompatible with sustainable development in the transboundary ecosystems of Alaska and Canada. The gathering was organized by SEITC ([www.seitc.org](http://www.seitc.org)).

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“We are looking for solutions,” Olsen said. “We were here thousands of years ago. We are here now and we want to be here thousands of years in the future. We are about prevention of these problems. It’s not asking too much,” he said.

Their discussions, the group said, uphold the importance of traditional ecological knowledge necessary to effectively develop environmental plans and programs that promote stewardship and protect lands and waters that sustain life.

They agreed to work together in the future on their common interests incorporating free, prior and informed consent principles under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Participants included Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Chilkat Indian Village, Douglas Indian Association, First Nations Summit, First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining, Ketchikan Indian Community, Nisga'a Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Metlakatla Indian Community, Nimiipuu Protecting The Environment, Organized Village of Kate, Organized Village of Kasaan, Organized Village of Saxman, Petersburg Indian Association, Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, United Tribes off Bristol Bay, Wrangell Cooperative Association, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council.

More information about SEITC is online at [www.seitc.org](http://www.seitc.org)

### **Margaret Bauman**

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