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Posted September 23, 2017 05:53 pm - Updated September 23, 2017 07:00 pm

By Juneau Empire (/juneau-empire-0)

Actor Leonardo DiCaprio donates \$80,000 to Southeast group

You might call it a titanic contribution.

The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, founded in 1998 by the eponymous screen actor, announced an \$80,000 grant to the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission (SEITC) on Tuesday. The money will help the group in its efforts to protect Southeast waters from Canadian mining projects they believe are threatening their indigenous way of life.

The donation was made as part of a \$20 million philanthropic effort, according to Hollywood Reporter. DiCaprio announced the portfolio of grants at a climate change conference at Yale University.

SEITC is comprised of 16 federally-recognized tribes and is based out of Kasaan, Alaska. In a Friday phone conversation, Chairman Frederick Otilius Olsen, Jr. said the money will help the group protect the environment from industrialization rapidly occurring across the border from Southeast Alaska.

SEE ALSO

Group of 29 tribes oppose Pebble Mine, B.C.'s 'transboundary' projects
(<http://juneauempire.com/local/news/state/2017-10-20/group-29-tribes-oppose-pebble-mine-bc-s-transboundary-projects>)

Monthly poetry slam combines forces with student group
(<http://juneauempire.com/local/news/2017-11-17/monthly-poetry-slam-combines-forces-student-group>)

"The grant will enable us to continue our efforts to work with unifying the indigenous voice on this transboundary issue on our side of the border with first nations and other indigenous groups," Olsen Jr. said.

The \$20 million in grants distributed by DiCaprio's foundation will go to more than 100 organizations working in the areas of climate change research, indigenous rights, landscape and marine conservation.

"These grantees are active on the ground, protecting our oceans, forests and endangered species for future generations — and tackling the urgent, existential challenges of climate change," DiCaprio said at the Yale conference.

SEITC, formerly known as the United Tribal Transboundary Mining Work Group, will use the money to seek a cooperative agreement with British Columbia, Olsen Jr. said. SEITC wants to communicate directly with B.C. on protecting salmon habitat from proposed open-pit mining projects and other issues surrounding mines on shared waters. The state of Alaska currently works with the B.C. through the **Transboundary Working Group** (<https://ltgov.alaska.gov/services/transboundary-relations/>), headed by Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott.

SEITC is also seeking federal intervention in transboundary mines through the Border Waters Treaty, a move backed by Alaska's congressional delegation but not Lt. Gov. Mallott.

Several Southeast cities have passed resolutions calling for the U.S. government to work with Canada to strengthen mining protections. A recent push for a Juneau resolution **stalled this week** (<http://juneauempire.com/local/news/2017-09-19/urged-greens-creek->

executive-assembly-stalls-mine-resolution).

SEITC hired its first full-time employee (<http://juneauempire.com/local/news/2017-08-07/tribes-hire-coordinator-battle-bc-mines>) earlier this year. Olsen Jr. said they plan to use the grant money to expand operations and travel to conferences with other tribes, mining officials and conservationists.

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