THE GAZETTE · SEPTEMBER 12, 1991 · 9



U of T funds terrible telescope

TORONTO (CUP) - The University of Toronto may help build an observatory in Arizona that native Americans say violates their religious rights and environmental law.

The University of Arizona has said. invited U of T to help fund the world's biggest telescope, said Ernie Seaguist, head of the U of T's astronomy department.

Costing \$80 million, it would be one of three telescopes in the project, which is also funded by the University of Ohio, Germany's Max Planck Institute, and the Vatican

U of T has not yet accepted, but is interested and is looking for a talk about the Apache use of the donor to foot the bill, Seaquist mountains. They have that in their said.

But some Canadian natives and environmentalists are asking U of supervisor for the area and a de-T to join the project, saying Mt. Graham - where the telescopes will be located - is sacred Apache ground and an environmentally sensitive area. On Aug. 19, 20 people gathered outside of U of T's astronomy department to protest the university's potential involvement in the project.

"This project is a desecration of the Apache people who use that mountain," said Mohawk Nation member Danny Deaton. "What if people came here to Toronto and started raping graveyards? This is what these people are facing."

U of T has not yet assessed the ethical and environmental aspects of the project, Seaquist said.

"It's far too early for us to have thought about that."

The project recently made headlines in the United States when two Arizona Apache elders filed a lawsuit to stop construction, which began last April. The suit names Arizona's Forest Service as the defendant, claiming it violated several environmental laws and the Apaches' freedom of religion by giving U of A permission to begin construction

Apache elders regularly use the mountain for healing purposes such as gathering water and herbs.

Patricia Cummings, one of the Apaches' lawyers, said the Forest Service didn't make a serious effort to contact the tribes before starting the project. U of A and the Forest Service sent letters to 19 tribes, but many tribes say they didn't get the letter or got it too late.

U of A spokesperson Steve Eremine said the university can't be held responsible.

"In each case they (the tribes)

ATTENTION: In reference to our Student Aid guide of Aug. 29. The guide was not paid advertising and, for obvious reasons, we could not include all eligible businesses in the city of Halifax.

were asked for comment and in each case they refused."

But the Forest Service ignored existing research material that explains the religious and cultural uses of the mountain, Cummings

Whatever disturbances are going to happen have already happened

"They have the papers which archives."

James Abbott, Forest Service fendant in the lawsuit, said he could not comment on the case.

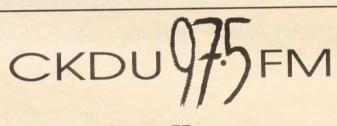
The plaintiffs also claim the Forest Service's studies of the observatory's environmental impact didn't meet environmental law standards

Steve Warshal, a U of A biologist who participated in many of the studies, agreed. He said the Forest Service ignored evidence the project will endanger at least six new species of insect and one species of squirrel found only on Mt. Graham.

However U of A astronomer Michael Cusanovich said U of A has already won preliminary trial for previous lawsuits launched by environmental groups.

The court will also have to consider that construction has already begun on two of the telescopes, he said

"Whatever (environmental) disturbances are going to happen have already happened."



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