



The RELAW Project

REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LAW
FOR LAND, AIR & WATER

COMMUNITY CALL-OUT

RELAW is a project of West Coast Environmental Law supported and advised by the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) at the University of Victoria, Faculty of Law. The RELAW project aims to deepen community-based capacity to engage in revitalization and application of Indigenous law to environmental decision-making and proactive land and water management.

In 2016, our first RELAW cohort, involving six Indigenous nations from around the province, began working on projects unique to their communities. For example, one nation is developing its own environmental assessment process, another is working on a marine use plan, and others are preparing water policies grounded in their own legal traditions.

We are now seeking expressions of interest from Indigenous nations to be part of our second RELAW cohort. This project will be of particular interest to nations who have previously undertaken Indigenous law research on land and resources using ILRU methodology¹ (or other similar methodologies) and who wish to explore approaches for applying this research to environmental decision-making and land and resource management in their territories. We also have a limited number of spaces for nations who may not yet have completed a research phase and wish to do so.

Through the RELAW project, these nations will have the opportunity to work with community researchers and project lawyers to develop a written summary of legal principles related to environmental governance and land and resources for use by the nation. By facilitating community dialogue and engaging with the stories and traditions of their nations, participants draw out legal principles that can be applied to the environmental problems they are facing today.

In addition to training opportunities, community-based researchers and facilitators from participating nations will have the opportunity to work together with a team of lawyers in an 'on-the-ground' practicum applying their laws to a particular environmental issue of concern. The practicum may involve the development of a contemporary Indigenous law instrument (like a written policy, standard or plan) to address the situation. The project will run for one year commencing in late June 2017.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO BE CONSIDERED?

Answer the questions in the "Expression of Interest" form to see if your nation fits the criteria, and then tell us, in your own words and in one page or less, about your nation's commitment to applying your laws to environmental decision-making and land and resource management, and why your nation should be involved in the RELAW project.

Forms are available online at www.wcel.org/relaw (after February 1, 2017).

Please email your application to Maxine_Matilpi@wcel.org before March 17, 2017.

1. The ILRU methodology is an approach to access principles of Indigenous law through analysis of traditional stories and other sources related to a research question. Using interviews and small group discussions with knowledge holders and community members, findings are synthesized into a summary of legal principles related to the research question.

BENEFITS TO YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Training and legal resources to assist your nation in the process of revitalizing and applying your laws to contemporary environmental decision-making and proactive land and resource management.
- Preparation of a written summary of legal principles related to environmental governance and land and resources for use by your nation (if you have not already done so).
- An opportunity to consider how your own laws and procedures should guide environmental decision-making in your territory today, learning from traditional narratives and cases studies.
- Development of plain language legal resources about your own Indigenous laws for land, air and water.
- Training and mentoring for a community-based facilitator to assist in the process of accessing, articulating and applying your laws. Community facilitators will lead the practicum portion of the work in the community, working with leaders, staff, Elders, knowledge holders and community members. Scholarships are available to offset the cost to the nation of the community facilitator's salary.
- Access to a year of pro-bono legal research and advice from lawyers experienced with environmental, Aboriginal and Indigenous law through the practicum component of the training.
- A place of pride, demonstrating the strengths and knowledge within your community, in an historic project.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR NATIONS WHO WISH TO UNDERTAKE INDIGENOUS LAW RESEARCH:

- Hands-on experience for starting and continuing your own community legal research based on your stories, oral histories and other resources.
- A community-based researcher will be hired and paid an hourly wage for their work on the project, including analyzing traditional narratives and assisting with the workshops and interviews within the community. Training and ongoing mentoring will be provided.
- Elders and knowledge keepers will be offered honorariums for their time.
- A written summary of legal principles related to environmental governance and land and resources will be prepared by community researchers and project lawyers for use by your nation.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Logistical support for community meetings related to the project (e.g., meeting space, catering, transportation for Elders, additional honoraria for meeting participation if required, billeting for people attending from outside the community);
- Identifying and hiring community researchers and facilitators and covering any salary costs beyond the RELAW contribution;
- Political, technical and logistical support for community facilitators and legal researchers (e.g., formal support from leadership for the project, office space, coordination with lands and resources/ policy staff);
- Identifying an environmental issue or an aspect of lands and resources management that your nation wishes to address through the practicum portion of the project, and an intention and commitment to engage in community decision-making processes to do so; and
- Willingness to engage in a deep and deliberative process that sometimes might be hard (but rewarding) work.



West Coast Environmental Law
200-2006 W. 10th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V6J 2B3
Coast Salish Territories
admin@wcel.org



Indigenous Law Research Unit
Faculty of Law, University of Victoria
PO Box 1700, STN CSC
Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2
ilru@uvic.ca