THE RELAW PROGRAM
REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LAW
FOR
LAND, AIR AND WATER

RELAW 2022-23 Co-learning Program

About RELAW Retreats

At West Coast Environmental Law, the Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air and Water (RELAW) Program facilitates an annual Co-learning Program consisting of three retreats. The first and third retreat will be in-person (subject to public health orders on COVID-19) for 3-4 days in length at retreat centres (TBD) in BC with access to land-based learning opportunities, while the second retreat will be online. There will be approximately 20-30 participants in this year's RELAW "cohort".

Participants will learn about approaches to researching, applying and enforcing Indigenous law, including a story-based approach. How do we come together / bring community together as trauma-informed facilitators, in a good way to talk about hard topics, make decisions about them, and work together to heal and strengthen relationships within the community, the territory and with all beings? Participants will have the opportunity to:

- engage with their nation's own laws and processes through stories (either published, or if they know stories),
- explore how these can shape community decision-making processes, and
- learn about approaches to Indigenous law enforcement.

Participants will be brought together with guest speakers and story-tellers, with the opportunity to build a supportive network with one another. We will learn of journeys from past and present RELAW partners who are working in various areas of Indigenous law-making and law enforcement. Current RELAW partnerships include work on Indigenous protected and conserved areas, fisheries governance, watershed management, environmental assessment and various other spheres of Indigenous law and community engagement work.

In-person Retreats

Join us in
RELAW (Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air & Water) Program's
3 Retreats

Each RELAW retreat will bring together co-learning participants, including representatives of Indigenous nations, RELAWyers and other knowledge holders at a retreat centre with access to the land and water.

Retreat 1: Indigenous Law in Story

November 2022

In-person location TBD

Hosted by West Coast and past & present RELAW partner(s)

A support network is a significant asset in working with Indigenous laws. The first retreat is focused on establishing safe space and relationships. It is also about grounding our co-learning program in the RELAW approach, with time for participants to share, if they wish, their current work/projects (at whatever stage they're in). The RELAW focus is on story-telling and deliberation (talking together to make a choice about how to act). The retreat will bring in story-tellers from different Indigenous legal traditions. We will explore the role of stories in communicating the unique legal traditions of Indigenous peoples. There are many ways and methodologies in working with Indigenous laws. We introduce an approach developed by the Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria for engaging with the teachings found in the stories. Since this retreat will be in person, there will be optional collective beading and walking, trauma-informed yoga, and other activities.

Retreat 2: Decision-making Processes & Roles

Apr 4 - 7, 2023

Location: online

Hosted by West Coast and past & present RELAW partner(s)

At the second retreat, we build on Retreat 1: Indigenous Law in Story to discuss what stories teach us about processes and procedures for decision-making, and who needs to be involved. RELAW partners will share stories and best practices of real-life examples of dialogue, deliberation and engagement in their community. Dialogue with elders, knowledge holders and community members is an essential part of the "work" of Indigenous law, but a legacy of personal and community trauma can impact this work. At the second retreat we will learn about ways to host healthy dialogue in community from a trauma-informed approach, with learnings from past & present RELAW community guides. We will guide participants through planning and designing process for community engagement with facilitator training.

Retreat 3: Indigenous Law in Action

June 25 - 29, 2023

In-person location TBD

Hosted by West Coast and past & present RELAW partner(s)

On the land, in the courts, and in the boardroom, Indigenous nations are implementing and enforcing their laws. Learn from the experiences of other nations and share your own, including co-learning opportunities about programs such as Indigenous guardians. We will also bring in RELAW partners to learn from their strategies in enforcing their laws while exploring the concepts of: Power Together, Power Over, Power Analysis, Leverage, Strategy, Tactics, Nested Goals, with activities looking to land-use decision-makers. To conclude our year together, we want to have time out on the land (i.e., guided walk, place-name tour, etc.).

Additional co-learning / coaching sessions can be arranged based on capacity and participant's interests (e.g., Indigenous protected and conserved areas or skills-based activities such as trauma-informed facilitation, additional practice with Indigenous law research unit methodology, etc.).