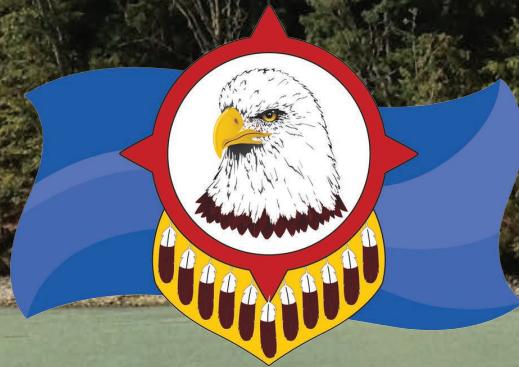




The **RELAW** Project
REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LAW
FOR LAND, AIR & WATER

Revitalizing St'át'imc Law for Land, Air and Water

Telling the RELAW Story

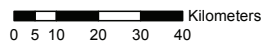
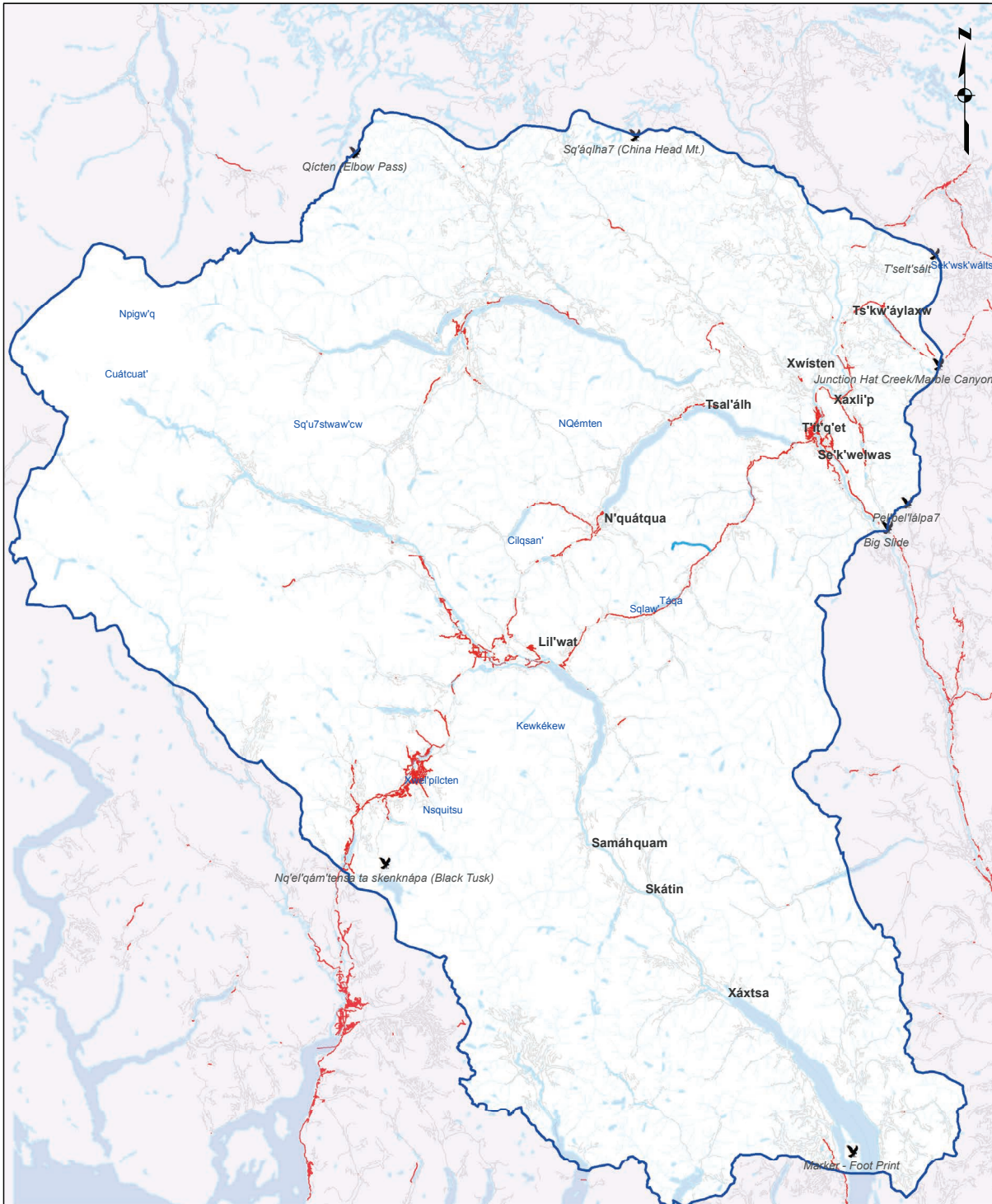


ST'ÁT'IMC CHIEFS COUNCIL



WEST COAST
Environmental Law

St'át'imc Territory



- Legend**
- Pinmmap
 - StatimcTerritory_REV_15
 - boundary-markers
 - paved
 - rough
 - loose

1:1,050,000



Prepared by: Nora Billy, GIS Technician
 Produced: April 24, 2018
 Projection: BC Albers Equal Area, NAD 83

ST'ÁT'IMC
 GOVERNMENT SERVICES



The St'át'imc Nation

We are St'át'imc. We speak St'át'imcets (also referred to as Ucwalmícwts or the language of the people). Created by the Transformers, our home is situated at an intersection of deep gorges in the lee of the Northwest Coast Mountains, now referred to as British Columbia. We have been placed here by the Creator to live and be stewards of this land. Our responsibility is to live in mutual accord with all, to care for, protect and honour all living beings here. To us, this is "NxeKmenlhkálha" (our ways/our laws).

We have occupied and governed our territory since time immemorial. There are currently 11 main St'át'imc communities where our people live. Six communities are in our northern region and five in the south, but all communities share a common language, culture and laws.



Our Legal Tradition

Before contact, the St'át'imc had a system of governance that was unwritten. Its foundation was based on our relationships with one another, our culture and our intrinsic connection to nature and Mother Earth. Our history and laws are written on the land and have been shared through oral tradition for generations.

Our stories are significant because they remind us where we came from and anchor us to the land, our culture, and to one another. They remind us of our spiritual and cultural connection to this territory. They embody our laws.

For example, the Transformer stories tell of the time when the Transformers came through our territory to set things right and give the knowledge of how to live in the St'át'imc way. In this ancient time, the land and water were shaped by the Transformers to make them habitable for the St'át'imc. Other stories tell of our ancestors surviving a great flood on a raft lashed to Nsteks Mountain, and how they brought the animals and birds back to the land and water after the flood. These and other stories contain important legal principles that can assist the St'át'imc in responding to contemporary environmental challenges.

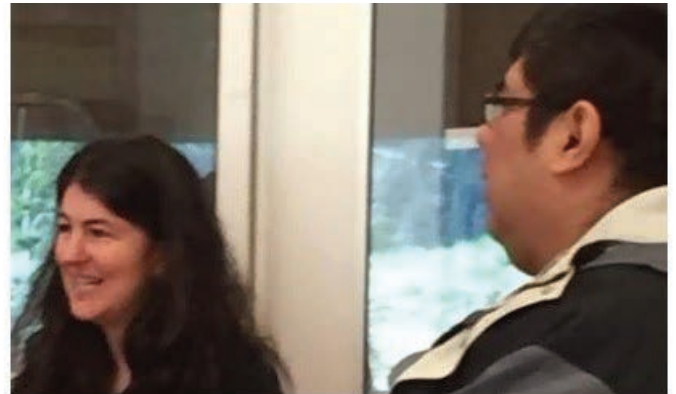
The *Declaration of the Lillooet Tribe* is also an important and symbolic document in the history of relations between the St'át'imc and the governments of Canada and British Columbia. The *Declaration* was signed at a gathering in Spences Bridge on May 10, 1911 by seventeen St'át'imc chiefs on behalf of all St'át'imc people.

Today the St'át'imc Chiefs Council (SCC) is entrusted to collectively ensure that the title and rights of the St'át'imc are never extinguished, and that territorial and cultural integrity are honoured, respected and protected as stated in the *Declaration*. Political mandates and directives are given by each St'át'imc community for their chief to work with other St'át'imc chiefs on collective political issues.

The RELAW Team

The St'át'imc RELAW project was carried out under the authority of the SCC, through a Learning Partnership Agreement with the West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation (WCEL). The St'át'imc RELAW project aims to deepen community-based capacity to engage in articulation, revitalization, and application of Indigenous law to environmental decision-making and proactive land and water management.

Our St'át'imc RELAW team members were (left to right): Lindsay Borrows (WCEL), Helen Copeland (SCC), Jessica Clogg (WCEL), Dean Billy (SCC).



Nt'ákmen I Qú7a – Water Ways

The St'át'imc RELAW team received direction from the SCC to focus on water. Water is necessary to maintain life as we know it and a great many St'át'imc stories relate and describe how powerful water is and how necessary it is for gaining and utilizing spiritual power. Water connects us as a people, and to all other beings in the territory.

Yet the waterways of St'át'imc territory have been dramatically altered – including by dams, clear cut logging, water removals and contamination – fundamentally affecting our way of life and contrary to St'át'imc law.

The St'át'imc RELAW project sought to provide opportunities for St'át'imc citizens to be involved in determining how legal principles embedded in our stories can and should be used to make decisions about land and resources, so that we can overcome internal differences and work together better to look after the water.

Revitalizing Our Law

The St'át'imc RELAW team came together in June 2016. There are more than 100 publicly available St'át'imc stories and four declarations that were assigned to the research team. The team applied the methodology created by Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland, Indigenous Law Research Unit, University of Victoria Faculty of Law to St'át'imc stories in order to create a synthesis of St'át'imc legal principles related to land, resources and environmental governance.

During this process the team travelled throughout the St'át'imc Nation and met with members from all 11 communities. We began in July 2016 with our first meeting in Mission, BC with members of the Xáx'tsa Elders Council. From there we met with individual elders within their homes and we met with elders and others at special community meetings to introduce ourselves and explain what we were doing with this project. We then conducted many focus groups with small groups of elders throughout the territory to discuss the stories and what they teach us.

We learned many things, including how the work of the Transformers and our ancestors created and maintained ecological conditions in the territory that allowed all beings to thrive. Because of their work, the territory sustains the root people, the winged people, the finned people, the four-legged people and the two legged-people. By following the legal principles in our stories we can better care for the territory and our people today.



The above photo was taken at Tsal'álh Elders Complex on August 18, 2017.

Back row left to right: Helen Copeland (SCC), Chief Ida Mary Peter, Reena John, Dean Billy (SCC), Elder Margaret Bell, Councilor Tim Peter, Randy James, Elder Norm Tom, Language Authority Janice McGillis, and Rose Joseph.

Front row: Jessica Clogg (WCEL) and William Alexander.



This photo was taken at Mission Friendship Centre on January 20, 2017.
Left to right: Michael Smith Sr., Laura Purcell, and Clarke Smith.

Applying Our Law

Beginning in early 2017 we held six regional working group meetings, one meeting with the St'át'imc Language Authority, and a nation-wide meeting focused on applying the legal principles we learned from the stories to developing a draft St'át'imc Water Accord.

By considering roles, vantage points and language contributions as encapsulated in our stories, St'át'imc members talked about reciprocity and how important it is to accept responsibility on behalf of others and how shared values and goals contribute to our survival and well-being.

In all, 271 St'át'imc and 7 non-St'át'imc for a total of 278 people attended focus groups and regional working group sessions over the course of the project. There were 90 elders, 111 community members, 37 youth, 22 leaders and 11 technicians in attendance at 27 meetings between July 2016 and April 2017.

The outcomes from the St'át'imc RELAW research and the draft Water Accord were presented at the St'át'imc Gathering on May 10, 2017.



Benefits from the St'át'imc RELAW Project

Through the St'át'imc RELAW project SCC staff deepened their capacity regarding Indigenous law research and community facilitation through three St'át'imc RELAW Learning Sessions. A lawyer and articling student from WCEL provided a year of free legal services to assist with research into St'át'imc law, and with applying these principles to develop a draft Water Accord.

Through the St'át'imc RELAW project many St'át'imc citizens had the opportunity to read and discuss St'át'imc stories and the legal principles they hold. We learned from the elders and worked together to apply these principles, both in the St'át'imc RELAW process itself and in the draft Water Accord. The St'át'imc RELAW project provided an important foundation for greater unified action by the St'át'imc to protect water, according to St'át'imc ways.



Wa7 lháxwcal tí qú7a.

Our Dream – Next Steps

What we seek through implementation and evaluation of this project is an ecosystem that functions fully as a whole to sustain all beings and to ensure water quality, quantity and timing of flow; that all species have their habitat needs met so that healthy St'át'imc foods, medicines and waters are available from the territory; and that the St'át'imc can drink water from the land safely and salmon have the right amount of water, at the right temperature, at the right time, in the right places throughout their life cycle.

We wish to see waterways continue to flow without obstruction, and that there are quiet undisturbed areas available in the mountains for spiritual training. It is imperative that there will always be clean water that is accessible for spiritual uses, ensuring that our cultural heritage is protected.

We hope that the outcomes of the St'át'imc RELAW project will continue to help St'át'imc achieve and maintain this vision, for the St'át'imc of today, our children, and our grandchildren.



The water heals.



ST'ÁT'IMC CHIEFS COUNCIL



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