

Title and Rights Alliance – Backgrounder

In 2002-2003 the provincial government unilaterally make sweeping amendments to the *Forest Act* and the legal framework for forest practices, land use planning and land designations without meaningful consultation and accommodation of indigenous peoples. These changes, which give resource companies greater rights over First Nations' territories, give rise to infringements of Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

The "Title and Rights Alliance" is a collective initiative among treaty, non-treaty and non-aligned bands and Tribal Nations from across British Columbia to:

- Prevent infringements of Aboriginal Title and Rights, and Treaty rights, arising from recent forestry, range, and land use legislative amendments that were unilaterally developed by the Province without consultation or accommodation of BC First Nations
- Use all available means to create incentives for the provincial Crown and resource industries to recognize Aboriginal Title and Rights
- Stand unified in the face of threats by the provincial Crown and resource industries to our Aboriginal Title and Rights, and Treaty rights, resisting divide-and-conquer tactics
- Hold the federal Crown accountable regarding its fiduciary obligations to Aboriginal peoples

At a meeting hosted by the Okanagan Nation Alliance in September 2003, bands and Tribal Nations from around the province developed a "Joint Statement From Participating Nations." In the Joint Statement participating representatives pledged to work to develop and implement a coordinated and integrated Action Plan that would combine legal, financial and political strategies to protect the integrity of the land and resources and advance Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

In October, at a follow-up meeting hosted by the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, the Joint Statement was ratified and a coordinated Action Plan was developed and affirmed unanimously by participating representatives – the Lheidli Action Plan. A four person steering committee consisting of Guujaaw, Grand Chief Edward John, Justa Monk, and Chief Stewart Phillip was tasked with guiding the process. This includes implementing the short-term action items in the Action Plan, further developing the medium and long-term actions, planning and organizing the next Title and Rights Alliance meeting, and continuing to work to secure the financial resources necessary to implement the Action Plan.

How you can get involved:

- Share information about the Title and Rights Alliances initiative with your members and communities
- Contribute funds toward developing and implementing the Action Plan (see attached form)
- Many strategies in the Action Plan will require active participation by bands and Tribal Nations from around the province – consider how you plan to get involved and let the Steering Committee know
- Contribute information about templates and models that can be shared to collectively advance our position

Title and Rights Alliance – Contribution Form

Together we can prevent infringements of Aboriginal Title, and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, arising from recent provincial forestry, range, and land use legislative amendments.

The _____ [name of band, tribal nation or organisation] wish to contribute \$ _____ towards the further development and implementation of the Lheidli Action Plan, a coordinated Action Plan to protect the integrity of the land and resources and to advance Aboriginal Title, and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

Contact Name:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Please enclose this form, and make cheques payable to “West Coast Environmental Law.*” Mail to:

1001-207 West Hastings,
Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7

Contact phone #: 1-800-330-9235

*At the Building Land and Resource Alliances Among First Nations II: Exploring Strategies and Actions meeting in October 2003, West Coast Environmental Law, a non-profit law organisation based in Vancouver, BC was requested to administer funds raised for the Title and Rights Alliance initiative. Use of funds raised will be determined by the Steering Committee and disbursed according to an approved budget. Copies of funding administration letter of agreement are available upon request.