

**Reconciling Crown Legal Frameworks Program | Primer 5**

# Legal Pluralism: Indigenous Legal Orders & Canadian State Law



**Motif from 'Qa' (To be Together) /  
Interwoven Landscape, 2023**

**Artist Statement**

This artwork is an abstract design that draws upon traditional Coast Salish forms in a contemporary way to tell a story. The story is told through deconstructed weaving patterns and figurative forms. It is about an interwoven landscape. As we follow the work of forming new systems from different traditions, what does that landscape look like? What teachings do we carry? How can we go about existing within this new space in a good way? The details and different aspects of this design remind us that in Indigenous knowledge systems, our teachings come from the land and they come from each other. It is critical to honour that.

~ Eliot White-Hill

# Overview

The British Columbia Law Institute (“BCLI”) is BC’s law reform agency. The 2019 *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (“*Declaration Act*”) requires the BC government to “take all measures necessary” to ensure the laws of BC are consistent with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.<sup>1</sup> The BCLI Reconciling Crown Legal Frameworks Program supports the research and innovations required to implement this legislation. As part of our series of primers on the *Declaration Act*, the BCLI has prepared three primers that explore legal pluralism:

- **Primer 3** – Legal Pluralism in Canada
- **Primer 4** – Legal Pluralism: Indigenous Legal Orders & Other State Jurisdictions
- **Primer 5** – Legal Pluralism: Indigenous Legal Orders & Canadian State Law

We are pleased to co-publish this primer with the Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria.

**Legal pluralism denotes a situation where two or more legal systems coexist in the same social field.<sup>2</sup>**

Dr. Val Napoleon, Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) Director & Law Foundation Chair of Indigenous Justice and Governance

This primer explores the operation and interactions of different legal orders and jurisdiction in what is now known as Canada. It looks at these interactions from two perspectives:

- 1) as between Indigenous legal orders and
- 2) as between the Canadian state and Indigenous legal orders.<sup>3</sup>

The work of the BCLI primarily takes place on the unceded territories of the x̣ʷməθkʷəỵəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

<sup>1</sup> SBC 2019, c 44, s 3 [*Declaration Act*].

<sup>2</sup> Val Napoleon, “Legal Pluralism and Reconciliation” (2019) Māori L Rev 1 at 5.

<sup>3</sup> For background on legal pluralism, see Primers 3 and 4. Several examples in this primer are drawn from Canada’s federal framework. In implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, BC will need to consider areas of federal jurisdiction, such as reserve lands under the *Indian Act*. Interactions between the federal and provincial governments themselves are an example of legal pluralism as discussed in Primer 3.

The first part demonstrates ways in which Indigenous laws have operated in a legally plural way, grounded in a recognition of neighbouring communities' authority to self-govern. The second part illustrates some areas where Canada's Crown laws and institutions are building frameworks for shared and separate jurisdiction between Crown and Indigenous laws.

BC's 2022-2027 Action Plan for achieving the objectives of the *Declaration Act* affirms that upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples includes a recognition that Canada is legally plural.<sup>4</sup> One of the stated outcomes of the 2022-2027 Action Plan is that "Indigenous Peoples have open, respectful and productive working relationships with the Province that recognize legal pluralism."<sup>5</sup> As noted in Primer 3, legal pluralism encompasses a wide spectrum of concepts, theories and expectations. Legal pluralism can simply involve acknowledging the coexistence of multiple legal orders. It can also refer to an intentional structuring of mutually respectful relationships between legal orders. The examples discussed here, as with the examples from other state jurisdictions explored in Primer 4, show some of the ways in which legal pluralism can be arranged within various areas of law and with varying divisions of power.

Implementing the BC *Declaration Act* and achieving the goals of the 2022-2027 Action Plan will require collaboration between Indigenous and Crown governments as well as the building and maintaining of respectful relationships between different and distinct systems of law. This work envisions a legal pluralist framework which moves beyond the acknowledgement of multiple legal orders and is grounded in respect for the authority of Indigenous Peoples to self-govern. This in turn supports moving beyond hierarchy between distinct systems of law towards a dynamic and interactive relationship.



**Legal pluralism has always existed between Indigenous societies across Great Turtle Island, and now it is part of Canada. Historically, Indigenous legal orders formed the entirety of the lawscape across Great Turtle Island with intersocietal trade, marriage, agreements, and sometimes war, and the creation of geopolitical spaces with more than one legal order operating at any given time.<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> See British Columbia, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, 2022-2027* at 6, online: <https://bit.ly/3WhnZMQ> [2022-2027 Action Plan].

<sup>5</sup> 2022-2027 Action Plan, *supra* note 4 at 10.

<sup>6</sup> Napoleon, *supra* note 2 at 5.



# Legal Pluralism as Between Indigenous Legal Orders



Multiple Indigenous legal orders have always operated in a legally plural way in what is now known as Canada. Legal pluralism is a useful framework to show how people manage law and jurisdiction between Indigenous legal orders. It is a helpful starting place for building mutually respectful relationships between legal orders and for managing problem solving with specific applications of law and prioritization.

The Fish Lake Accord is one example of Indigenous Peoples with different legal traditions coming together to negotiate and manage a peaceful relationship. Secwépemc people describe the Accord as an “unbroken pact” from the 18<sup>th</sup> century between the Secwépemc Chief Kwolila and the Sylix Chief Pelkamu’lox that still guides both peoples today.<sup>7</sup> The Accord brought an end to war between the Secwépemc and Sylix. It also provided land and resource rights to the Sylix within part of the Secwépemc territory.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, the agreement respects that both parties are self-governing and recognizes the need for a formal relationship for sharing their land and resources while acknowledging each other’s land, laws, and resources.<sup>9</sup>

Indigenous Peoples’ own legal orders may have guidance

on managing a legally plural environment. For example, Secwépemc laws guide their people on how to manage relationships with others. One such example is the Story of the Porcupine which tells the story of reconciliation between the Swan people and the Elk people, each having a different legal order.<sup>10</sup> The Swan Chief wished to reconcile their differences and enable both peoples to live without “continual interference” in each other’s affairs.<sup>11</sup> Swan believed their difficulties arose from ignorance of the other.<sup>12</sup>

Porcupine brought Swan’s message to Elk and his people. Swan hosted a feast where Elk and Swan each gave each other all their ideas and shared knowledge of their peoples. Together, they each gained full knowledge of the other and lived more easily and happier from then on. Indigenous scholar Hadley Friedland explains that this story provides “a road map towards a true Nation-to-Nation relationship within a pluralistic legal system.”<sup>13</sup>

From both the Fish Lake Accord and the Story of the Porcupine, we see that within the Secwépemc legal tradition acknowledging neighbours as self-governing is part of practically managing the coexistence of multiple legal orders.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU), *Secwépemc Lands and Resources Law Research Project*, at 31, online (pdf): <https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Secwepemc-Law-Book-July-2018-1.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* at 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* at 49.

<sup>10</sup> See ILRU, *supra* note 7 at 48: “Each people had a different kind of government and worked differently.”

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* at 48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> Hadley Friedland et al., “Porcupine and Other Stories: Legal Relations in Secwépemcúlecw” (2018) 48:1 Rev Gen 153 at 192.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* at 193.

# Forms of Legal Pluralism as Between State and Indigenous law

Crown governments in Canada are taking steps to create frameworks for the application and prioritization of Crown and Indigenous laws and jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup>

While Canadian courts have acknowledged the existence of Indigenous laws, there exists a long history of denial of Indigenous laws coupled with the systematic prioritization of Canadian state laws. Not all forms of legal pluralism involve mutual respect for the authority and validity of other legal orders. Some forms of legal pluralism are built on power imbalances and simply uphold the paramountcy of state laws. Delegation, for example, can further an imbalance of power relations if it does not account for the authority to self-govern as recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>16</sup> The BC 2022-2027 Action Plan contemplates a legal pluralist environment where Indigenous Peoples' "self-determination and self-government, include[s] developing, maintaining and implementing their own institutions, laws [and] governing bodies."<sup>17</sup>

Developing a legal pluralist framework as contemplated by the 2022-2027 Action Plan requires a series of transitional steps. This transition might initially preserve interim elements of delegated authority and the operation of non-state legal orders under the purview of state authority. These measures can build legal relationships that are grounded in self-determination.

Structural changes, such as the amendments to the BC *Interpretation Act* further support this transition. The *Interpretation Act* has been amended in BC to require that every act and regulation be construed as being consistent with the UN Declaration.<sup>18</sup>

Applying legal pluralism as an analytical framework is helpful when examining:

- 1) state legislation,
- 2) government-to-government agreements,
- 3) private contracts, and
- 4) state courts.



<sup>15</sup> The Government of Canada has also released an Action Plan, The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Action Plan, 2023-2028 [National Action Plan], which sets as one of its goals, a Canada where legal pluralism recognizes and reflects Indigenous legal orders. "Recognition of the inherent jurisdiction and legal orders of Indigenous nations is therefore the starting point of discussions aimed at interactions between federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous jurisdictions and laws." See National Action Plan, Chapter 1: Shared priorities, at 29, online (pdf): <<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/ap-pa/ah/pdf/unda-action-plan-digital-eng.pdf>>.

<sup>16</sup> See *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, GA Res 61/295, UNGAOR, 61st Sess, Supp No 49, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007), online: <<https://bit.ly/3pNSX3c>>. Article 27 which requires the development of state processes "in conjunction" with Indigenous Peoples and in a manner that gives "due recognition" to Indigenous Peoples' laws.

<sup>17</sup> 2022-2027 Action Plan, *supra* note 4 at 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Interpretation Act*, RSBC 1996, c 238, s 8.1.



**It should be recognized that Indigenous groups will not always exercise every aspect of their law making powers. In such instances, Indigenous peoples could continue to have provincial or federal law apply on their reserves in accordance with currently recognized rules under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, or section 88 of the Indian Act... It is important that people not consider that a legal vacuum exists on a reserve or Indigenous territory if a group does not immediately exercise the entirety of its authority. The Nisga'a, for example, refrained from exercising their authority to run a tribal court and yet there is no legally vacant space on their land... In such cases, Indigenous peoples might place their jurisdictional powers in abeyance without relinquishing their authority over them.<sup>19</sup>**

John Borrows, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law

## 1. Legislative Steps Towards Legal Pluralism

Recent federal legislation has attempted to create a framework within which multiple Indigenous legal orders and state laws can operate in a coordinated way. These federal frameworks apply to limited areas of jurisdiction.

### **a) Framework Agreement on First Nations Land Management Act**

In December 2022, *The Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management Act* ("Framework Agreement Act")<sup>20</sup> replaced the *First Nations Land Management Act*.<sup>21</sup> While both laws provided a mechanism for delegating authority to Indigenous Peoples to enact their own laws for land management on reserve, the

*Framework Agreement Act* ratifies the Framework Agreement as the law and incorporates its original intent.<sup>22</sup>

The Framework Agreement, which was signed in 1996, represents the first time that a group of First Nations came together to sign an agreement with Canada to recognize their self-government.<sup>23</sup> The ratifying legislation permits First Nations to develop their own land codes in relation to reserve land and opt out of 44 sections of the *Indian Act* related to land management.<sup>24</sup> The Framework Agreement affirms the authority of First Nations to make their own laws in relation to lands, natural resources and the environment independently of any other government.<sup>25</sup> First Nations also

<sup>19</sup> John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) at 162.

<sup>20</sup> *The Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management Act*, SC 2022, c 19, s 121.

<sup>21</sup> *First Nations Land Management Act*, SC 1999, c 24.

<sup>22</sup> Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management" (1996), ss 5 and 6, online (pdf): <<https://labrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Framework-Agreement-on-First-Nation-Land-Management-Dec-2022.pdf>> [Framework Agreement]. The passing of new legislation does not affect laws and documents established under the *First Nations Land Management Act*.

<sup>23</sup> "A history of the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management", online: *Lands Advisory Board & First Nations Land Management Resource Centre* <<https://labrc.com/our-history/>>.

<sup>24</sup> Framework Agreement, *supra* note 22, ss 6(1), 18, and 38.

<sup>25</sup> Framework Agreement, *supra* note 22, ss 18.1 and 18.2.





have the authority to establish summary conviction offences and to appoint enforcement officers and justices of the peace.<sup>26</sup>

### **b) Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act**

The *Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act* (“Family Homes Act”) recognizes First Nations’ law-making authority in relation to family homes on reserves.<sup>27</sup> The legislation was enacted to fill a gap between provincial and federal laws in relation to certain family law matters on reserve.<sup>28</sup>

### **c) Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families**

The *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* (“Children, Youth and Families Act”) affirms the inherent right of self-government in relation to child and family services.<sup>29</sup> The *Children, Youth and Families Act* provides that Indigenous governing bodies may enter a coordination agreement with a provincial government.<sup>30</sup> Where a coordination agreement exists, section 22 applies to clarify that the Indigenous laws will prevail in the case of a conflict

or inconsistency with any federal or provincial act or regulation.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the *Framework Agreement Act and Family Homes Act*, this legislation recognizes Indigenous self-government beyond the territorial restrictions of reserves and the law-making authority of self-determined Indigenous governing bodies. It also clarifies that Indigenous laws hold equivalent legal authority to provincial and federal laws and are paramount to state laws where a coordination agreement exists.

These examples demonstrate some ways in which Crown legislation can guide the building of respectful relationships as between multiple legal orders.

## **2. Government-to-Government Agreements**

Government-to-government agreements are another way to structure legal pluralist relationships. They are a means by which state and Indigenous legal authorities can recognize and agree on the bounds of each other’s jurisdiction.

Agreements between state and Indigenous governing bodies



<sup>26</sup> Framework Agreement, *supra* note 22, ss 19.1 and 19.4.

<sup>27</sup> *Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests Act*, SC 2013, c 20, s 7(1).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, preamble. First Nations who have signed onto the Framework Agreement can enact state recognized laws in relation to matrimonial property on reserve through their Land Code. The *Family Homes Act* is another avenue for recognizing First Nations’ law-making authority over matrimonial real property.

<sup>29</sup> *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, SC 2019, c 24, s 18(1) [*Children, Youth and Families Act*].

<sup>30</sup> *Children, Youth and Families Act*, *supra* note 29, s 20(2).

<sup>31</sup> *Children, Youth and Families Act*, *supra* note 29, ss 20(3), 22(1) and 22(3).



can take a variety of forms. One example is the Gwets'en Nilt'i Pathway Agreement ("Pathway Agreement") between the Tsilhqot'in Nation and the provincial and federal governments. Self-determination is one of the guiding principles of the agreement.<sup>32</sup> The Pathway Agreement contains milestones for recognizing and implementing Tsilhqot'in governance, providing for the roles of the state governments and the Tsilhqot'in Nation in this process.<sup>33</sup> Notably, the Pathway Agreement does not take away from any Aboriginal rights or title.<sup>34</sup>

The *Declaration Act* Consent Decision-Making Agreement for Eskay Creek Project between the Tahltan Central Government and the BC Government is another example of a government-to-government agreement. This agreement creates a framework for the approvals and consent required from both governments in relation to a proposed mine on Tahltan Lands.<sup>35</sup>

The *Nang K'uula • Nang K'úulaas Recognition Agreement* is a Reconciliation Agreement between Canada, BC and the Haida Nation. As such, it sets out

the constitutional relationship between the parties and defines their respective powers, authorities, jurisdictions and duties.<sup>36</sup> Within the agreement, Canada and BC formally recognize the Council of the Haida Nation as the governing body of the Haida Nation. The agreement also affirms the Haida Nation as the holder of Haida Title and Rights, including inherent rights of governance and self-determination.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Legal Pluralist Contracts

Indigenous laws can also operate in conjunction with state laws through contracts, further operationalizing legal pluralist arrangements. The incorporation of Indigenous legal principles in contracts, where appropriate, can reflect broader societal acknowledgment of Indigenous legal orders and ways in which Indigenous laws can have both public and private law functions. While a contract itself does not represent a reform of a public state law, contract law in Canada is largely based on a state legal framework.<sup>38</sup>

An agreement between the artist of the "Witness Blanket" and the Canadian Museum

<sup>32</sup> "Gwetsen Nilt'i Pathway Agreement," s 3.2, online (pdf): [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/gwetsen\\_nilti\\_pathway\\_agreement\\_signed\\_15august2019.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/gwetsen_nilti_pathway_agreement_signed_15august2019.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* at 22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, s 18.4.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on this government-to-government agreement see Primer 1: The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and BC's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

<sup>36</sup> *Nang K'uula • Nang K'úulaas Recognition Agreement* ss 2.1 & 9.9 online (pdf): [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/nangukula-nangukulaas\\_-\\_signed\\_by\\_haida\\_mmr\\_mmm.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/nangukula-nangukulaas_-_signed_by_haida_mmr_mmm.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, s 1.1. See also Government of Canada, "The Haida Nation, British Columbia and Canada sign the Nang K'uula • Nang K'úulaas Recognition Agreement", News release (18 July 2023), online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2023/07/the-haida-nation-british-columbia-and-canada-sign-the-nang-kuula--nang-kuulaas-recognition-agreement.html>.

<sup>38</sup> For a further discussion of how contracts between private actors and Indigenous communities have various public law dimensions both within public state law and Indigenous public legal processes see Val Napoleon, "Public Faces: Indigenous Law Today and Through the Futuristic Looking Glass" (Paper delivered at the Public Law Conference 2022) at 9-10, online (pdf): <https://allard.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/Napoleon%20Indigenous%20Public%20Law%20012.pdf>.





for Human Rights (“Museum”) demonstrates the first example of a Crown Corporation ratifying a legally binding contract through Indigenous traditions.<sup>39</sup> The Witness Blanket is a large-scale work of art containing hundreds of reclaimed items from residential schools, churches, government buildings and traditional and cultural structures across Canada.<sup>40</sup> It is currently under the care of the Museum. The contractual relationship for its care includes a written agreement and joint participation by the parties in a feast ceremony.<sup>41</sup> The relationship is guided by both Canadian contract law and Kwakwaka’wakw Big House legal orders. Kwakwaka’wakw law requires witnesses, gifting, and feasting to activate an agreement to establish precedents and share responsibility over care for the Witness Blanket. Kwakwaka’wakw law also requires parties to renew their commitments regularly.<sup>42</sup> The written agreement thus provides for annual review meetings and renewal feasts every four years.<sup>43</sup>

As private actors increasingly engage with Indigenous laws through contract, those laws may be brought into the realm of state regulation. Ultimately, state courts or other dispute resolution bodies may be called upon to interpret and apply the multiple legal orders reflected in private contracts. Over time, principles of interpretation from these arrangements can be expected to inform other private law matters.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. Legal Pluralist Issues in the Courts

Another way to give effect to legal pluralist relationships is through the procedures and structures of state courts. State courts may be called upon to apply Indigenous legal principles or defer jurisdiction to Indigenous decision makers and dispute resolution forums.

In *K’ómoks First Nation v Thordarson and Sorbie*, the BC Provincial Court applied the K’ómoks’ Land

<sup>39</sup> The Witness Blanket, “About the Blanket,” online: <<https://witnessblanket.ca/about-the-blanket>>.

<sup>40</sup> The Witness Blanket, “Discover the Witness Blanket,” online: <<https://witnessblanket.ca/>>.

<sup>41</sup> “An Agreement Concerning the Stewardship of the Witness Blanket– A National Monument to Recognize the Atrocities of Indian Residential Schools,” at 1, online (pdf): <<https://humanrights.ca/sites/prod/files/2022-06/Witness-Blanket-Stewardship-Agreement.pdf>> [Stewardship Agreement].

<sup>42</sup> Jessica Asch and Tara Williamson, Practice Material: Introduction to Indigenous Law (Law Society of BC Professional Legal Training Course, 2022) at 12, online: <<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/becoming/material/Indigenous.pdf>>.

<sup>43</sup> Stewardship Agreement, *supra* note 41 at 2.

<sup>44</sup> The Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *C.M. Callow Inc. v Zollinger*, 2020 SCC 45 [Callow] demonstrates how Canadian state courts may choose to draw on legal pluralist analysis in private law matters. In *Callow*, which involved a claim of breach of contract in Ontario, the Court held that the duty of good faith in contract law imposes an obligation on the parties to both perform a contract honestly and to exercise their contractual rights honestly. Although the contract was governed by Ontario law, the Court drew on the Quebec civil law doctrine of “abuse of right” to interpret the duty of good faith as applying to the manner in which parties exercise their contractual rights. As Kasirer J. noted at para. 58: “[A]uthorities from Quebec do not, of course, bind this Court in its disposition of private law appeal from a common law province, but rather serve as persuasive authority, in particular, by shedding light on how the jurisdictionally applicable rules work.”



Code enacted pursuant to the *First Nations Land Management Act*.<sup>45</sup> The decision demonstrated the Court's willingness to enforce Indigenous laws. The case concerned the K'ómoks' application to pursue a private prosecution under s. 508 of the *Criminal Code* to prosecute non-Band members for trespass under the K'ómoks' *Land Code*.<sup>46</sup> The Provincial Prosecution Service and Federal Crown had declined to enforce the K'ómoks' law.<sup>47</sup> The Court concluded the K'ómoks were entitled to a remedy and allowed the s. 508 application.<sup>48</sup>

In *Pastion v Dene Tha' First Nation*, the Federal Court applied Indigenous election laws and deferred to Indigenous decision makers. In that case, Justice Grammond held that the principle of deference towards administrative bodies is particularly applicable for Indigenous decision makers, noting that "Indigenous decision makers are obviously in a better position than non-Indigenous courts to understand Indigenous legal traditions."<sup>49</sup>

**The enactment of Indigenous election legislation... is an exercise of self-government. The application of laws is a component of self-government. It is desirable that laws be applied by the same people who made them.<sup>50</sup>**

Grammond J., *Pastion v Dene Tha' First Nation*, 2018 FC 648 at para. 23.



<sup>45</sup> K'ómoks First Nation Land Code, June 2016, online (pdf): <[https://komoks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Land-Code\\_Final\\_2016.pdf](https://komoks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Land-Code_Final_2016.pdf)>.

<sup>46</sup> *K'ómoks First Nation v Thordarson and Sorbie*, 2018 BCPC 114 at para 17 [K'ómoks].

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* at para 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* at para 20.

<sup>49</sup> *Pastion v Dene Tha' First Nation*, 2018 FC 648 at para 22.

<sup>50</sup> *Pastion*, *supra* note 49 at para 23.



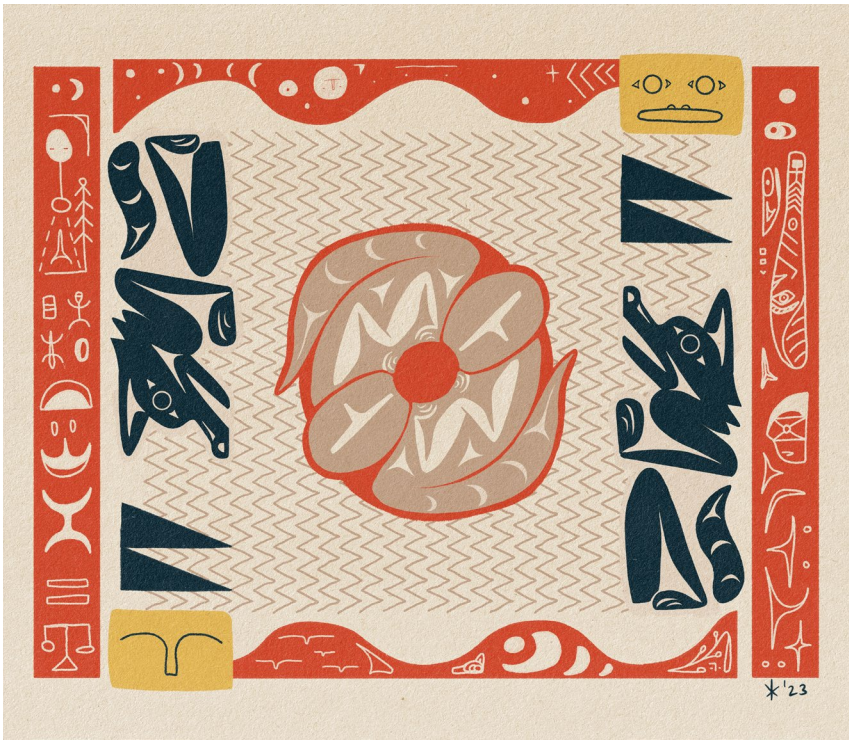
# Conclusion

There are various ways state law and institutions can facilitate the operation of legal pluralist relationships in a manner consistent with the *Declaration Act*. Building respectful relationships between multiple legal orders will require cooperation between Indigenous and state governments. Additionally, meaningful engagement with Indigenous law and legal traditions by Crown legislators and courts needs to be approached with humility. As BC’s Chief Justice Bauman recently said:

“I attempt to do what scholars of Indigenous legal orders urge us to do and engage seriously with Indigenous law as law, and as intellectual systems with unique and time tested ways of approaching problems, which I daresay we need now more than ever.”<sup>51</sup>

# Further Resources

For more information on the BCLI’s Reconciling Crown Legal Frameworks Program, please visit: <https://www.bcli.org/project/reconciling-crown-legal-frameworks/>



<sup>51</sup> The Hon. Robert J. Bauman, Chief Justice of BC, “Intersocietal Approaches to Dispute Resolution: Learning from Indigenous Legal Orders” Keynote address delivered at the Alternative Dispute Resolution BC Symposium, June 5, 2023), at 3, online (pdf): <[https://www.bccourts.ca/Court\\_of\\_Appeal/about\\_the\\_court\\_of\\_appeal/speeches/Speech\\_Intersocietal\\_Approaches\\_to\\_Dispute\\_Resolution.pdf](https://www.bccourts.ca/Court_of_Appeal/about_the_court_of_appeal/speeches/Speech_Intersocietal_Approaches_to_Dispute_Resolution.pdf)>





# RECONCILING CROWN LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

BRITISH COLUMBIA LAW INSTITUTE

## PRIMER 5

### About the BCLI

[www.bcli.org](http://www.bcli.org)

The BCLI is BC's independent law reform agency. We have been bringing collaborators together to clarify and improve the law, develop just and innovative solutions, and increase access to justice for over 25 years.

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