

Hello

Thank you for inviting me to your territory. I acknowledge the inherent rights, title and jurisdiction that the Nation asserts over its lands.

My name is Alan Hanna

I am a descendant of Siksika, Blackfoot Confederacy on my father's side, and Scottish on my mother's side.

I grew up in Kwikwetlam territory on the lower Fraser River, and now live in Northern Secwepemc territory.

I am a law student at the University of Victoria. Before law school, I earned a master's degree in anthropology, where I studied the social, legal and political relationships of First Nations and the Crown in British Columbia.

The national government invited me here into your community as a part of a legal research project founded by the Indigenous Bar Association.

This research project is focused on identifying the law in historic oral traditions that are already publicly available, and which concern successful historical responses to conflict, compensation and injury, and peace-making and dispute resolution. Working with communities, the research will identify internal strengths and resiliencies within indigenous legal resources and processes, and ways of teaching.

I am here today to ask to have a conversation about your stories. In return, I will offer a contemporary legal analysis of those stories.

What I mean by that is: I will apply a contemporary legal case analysis that is used in law schools across the country, which allows people to consider the rules or principles that a case represents.

Cases that are heard in Canadian courts are stories about life that occur between and about people.

In a similar fashion, the stories of a nation embody the relationships people have among ourselves, with others, our environment and our world. The relationships may emphasize how conflicts are addressed, how we are to act, what are our obligations and responsibilities toward ourselves and others, how we manage our lives, and how we make sense of and negotiate our existence in this world.

When Europeans came to these lands, they brought their own laws. They refused to recognize that the people in whose country they arrived had their own laws, and as a result tried to bury those laws by ignoring their existence.

The teachers and researchers in this project share the understanding that these Indigenous laws are not erased. They have been protected within our stories. Working together to identify the teachings contained in the stories, we can reveal a slice of how these teachings embody laws about how we live in our world.

Our goal, with the nation's permission, is to be able to teach these laws in law school. Doing this may allow us to begin to change the way the Canadian legal society understands Indigenous peoples.

The communities will also retain the resulting material to be used in any manner you see fit. This may assist in strengthening the community through the reassertion of its laws; aid in healing; or resolving conflicts by relying on them for direction or decisions.

I do this work with a good heart and sincere intentions.

So with your permission, I look forward to starting a relationship together and seeing where this conversation will take us.

Thank you kindly for sharing your time with me.

Do you have any questions for me?