

TREATY 8 TRIBAL ASSOCIATION

The Treaty 8 Tribal Association (T8TA) was incorporated in 1982 under the BC Societies Act. The Association acts as a coordinator, a facilitator, and technical support on various issues as mandated from time to time by the Council of Treaty 8 Tribal Association Chiefs.

T8TA is a service delivery organization that is funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND: Tribal Council Funding) to provide advisory services and claims research.

The Treaty 8 Tribal Association represents five First Nations in Northeastern BC. Its membership consists of a Council of five Treaty 8 Tribal Association Chiefs of the member First Nations. The ethno-linguistic grouping within BC Treaty 8 territory include Sicannie (Sikanni), Slavey, Beaver (Dane-Zaa), Cree, and Saulteau. Each Nation is governed by a Chief and Council, with their mandate deriving from their membership. The approximate aboriginal population of British Columbia Treaty 8 First Nations territory is 2500-3000.



PROTECT & PRESERVE

BC Treaty 8 First Nations Chiefs have organized themselves into a unified political body. The purpose of this alliance is to protect and preserve their Treaty and Aboriginal rights. The Chiefs are dedicated to the environmental, social, cultural, educational, and economic development of the Treaty 8 First Nations people.

Member Communities:

- Doig River First Nation
- Halfway River First Nation
- Prophet River First Nation
- Saulteau First Nations
- West Moberly First Nations

Other Treaty 8 Signatories:

- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Blueberry River First Nations
- McLeod Lake First Nation

The Coordinating Lands Office of the Treaty 8 Tribal Association provides land management support to the communities by ensuring that Treaty 8 First Nations have greater participation in the territory with respect to planning and co-management of land and resources. The department is staffed by a team that includes a Biologist, a GIS Advisor and a Registered Professional Forester. The Association is hoping to add a Land Use Planner and Natural Resource Specialist in the near future.

Leeanna Rhodes is the GIS Advisor for the T8TA. Leeanna manages a central repository of information that is used to provide support for the processing of referrals. Some of the information that is tracked includes land use information like oil and gas, mining, forestry, agriculture, renewable energy (wind energy/windmills) and more.



Coordinating Lands Office Staff: From left to right: Kieran Broderick, RPF; Leeanna Rhodes, GIS Advisor; Susan Auger, Executive Assistant & Jason Lee, Wildlife Biologist.

Companies or individuals applying for use of Treaty 8 lands provide information about the proposed land use. This allows the T8TA communities to line up referral points with their traditional land use plans in order to determine the impact on the land. Having the information in one central location allows the communities to look at all existing tenures to see how much of the land is currently being taken up by industry and government.

The members of the Coordinating Lands Office work directly with the Lands Managers of each of the member First Nations. A big part of the role played by this professional services group is to help reduce the administrative burden on the communities by creating efficiencies. In terms of GIS, Leeanna has worked towards this goal by creating an FTP site that allows communities to have easier and faster access to required data.

FAST, UP-TO-DATE & ACCURATE

Another step towards improving efficiencies to the member First Nations was becoming a member of the Integrated Cadastral Information Society (ICIS). Leeanna had heard about the Society from a colleague from the Carrier Sekani First Nations, who is also a member of ICIS. T8TA became a member in May of 2008, in order to improve the Association's access to accurate, up-to-date cadastral information. At the time, they had little or no access to accurate information about private lands. What they did have, was very old and often inaccurate data.

Joining ICIS has provided much needed information to assist with Treaty Lands Entitlement 1999. In this scenario, Bands with growing populations can appropriate Crown land adjacent to their communities but need to be able to easily determine which lands will best suit their community's needs. Leeanna is able to overlay polygons with ICIS data and see where there is a possible encroachment on private land.

"If it weren't for ICIS being so diligent about having the most up-to-date information available for their members, our maps would lack credibility," says Leeanna Rhodes, GIS Advisor for Treaty 8 First Nations. "In my role, you're only as good as the data you've got."



Wind Energy in action at Dawson Creek.

PARTICIPATION & COLLABORATION

The T8TA also sees the day when they will be able to share data with ICIS and actively participate in the collaborative community of members that make up the Society. Leeanna recently traveled to the Prophet River First Nation to get their house locations plotted. She went there thinking that the lot lines existed in ICIS data but they did not. Leeanna proceeded with digitizing the locations. Once confirmed and with the First Nation's permission, the data will eventually be shared with ICIS.

The benefits of membership in ICIS have been significant to the T8TA. When data requests come in, there is always urgency to accommodate these requests.

"ICIS always provides information to us on the day it is requested," states Leenna Rhodes. "The speed at which the GIS office is able to support decision-making enables the Treaty 8 Tribal Association to lead negotiations. This has been one of the strongest tools for use in consultation and accommodation processes."

*Leenna Rhodes,
GIS Advisor
Coordinating Lands Office*

The Coordinating Lands Office of the T8TA is working hard at implementing resource management agreements. The team is about to get even busier with the recently signed agreements between the Province of BC and three of the Treaty 8 First Nations – Doig River First Nation, West Moberly First Nation and Prophet River First Nation. The resource management agreements benefit the region by establishing a process for consultation and collaborative management of lands and resources between Treaty 8 First Nations and the Province. These agreements build on five agreements concluded in 2009 and will contribute to stability and certainty on the land base and will help stimulate investment in northeastern B.C. For the GIS role with the T8TA, this will mean the creation of new cadastral data that accurately depicts the areas of interests covered by the new agreements.

