

Kelly Lake people have lived as one with the land since time immemorial.

Trapping started us on our journey and brought us to the place we call home. It fed us, clothed us, and it is how our ancestors survived. Our way of life was connected to the seasons as we lived off the land and in relation with the spirit world. Though we were nomadic, traveling across the land as trappers and hunters, generations ago we established our home base in what is now known as Kelly Lake, a strong and vibrant community based in the Northeast of British Columbia, bordering Alberta. Our journey ensured that our children were protected and never taken away from us. Prior to the 1960s, we lived entirely off the land.

We are the people of Kelly Lake. We speak the truth, and we speak for our whole community. We tell our stories, as told by our people through our ancestors. Our ancestors followed the ways of Mother Earth. Integrity, honesty, and respect is ingrained in us. Our past, present, and future are connected; in order for our future generations to survive we persevere.

Our land and our right to govern ourselves was given to us through ***kisemânito***. The land talks to us. Everything has life and we exist in relation to everything around us. Our spiritual connections have taught us how to live. The teachings of the medicine wheel guide us; it is divided into four equal quadrants each representing the four sacred directions – east, south, west, and north. Each direction offers its own teachings and lessons that are interconnected to one another. These teachings offer us the four elements that we need for our survival – water, air, fire, and earth and the four seasons – spring, summer, fall, and winter that provide our livelihood. The four colours that represent all the peoples of Mother Earth. The four sacred medicines, tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar that help with our spiritual journey. The aspects of life which are spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional are integral parts of our being. We respect the time of day, morning, noon, evening, and night.

We honour those that came before us, our future generations, and the four stages of life – childhood, youth, adulthood, and elder. We work together to protect our relations, our lands, and our waters. We are one family, and everything we do is a family affair. We have always raised our children together.

We are governed by the relations that we as ***nehîyawak*** have with the land. The land and the lake are both sacred gifts from ***kisemânito*** and have long since provided a safe space that allows us to take care of our family through hunting, fishing, and gathering. It is our responsibility to maintain these relationships and protect our language, culture, and traditions, as generations before and for the future generations.

We invited outsiders with welcome, showing them our places and they turned around and claimed them as their own. There was a time we were told we had to abide by colonial

laws. Outsiders encroached on our lands and waters, disrupting our relations and our way of life. We faced the loss of our traditional ways, but we persevered, and we survived as a **nehîyaw** community. We were never subjected under the *Indian Act*. We never signed a treaty. Though colonial ways were imposed, we continued to follow our ways and adhere to our protocols the way we had always done.

As kin we have taken care of one another as well as supported each other through adversity and hardship. We are always community first and ensure our Elders and children are taken care of as they are the link between our past, present, and future. As a principal component of who we are, we work toward conserving our language, culture, and traditions.

We are united by our **nehîyaw** culture, our resilience, our collective history and a profound connection with our Lands. We adhere to **wahkohtowin**. We respect all creation and Natural Law.

We have always had these rights and practiced our way of life. The colonial government recognizes this through s.35, UNDRIP, and DRIPA. We expect all levels of government to abide by these laws.

**otipaymisowin** is based on **mamawihtowin** and **tapwewin**, our ways of relating to each other and engaging with others, working with transparency and integrity. It is the only legitimate government representing us, the people of Kelly Lake.

We work in solidarity and cooperation with our extended families and relations (First Nations), recognizing that we are united under the cause of securing our lands, waters, cultures, languages, and brighter opportunities for our future generations.

As a self-governing community, with inherent rights, we work to create new opportunities for our people that foster economic and social well-being. Through shared work and transparency, and with respect for **kâhkiyaw**, we create natural resource equity and build models for further business development.

**kinanaskomitinan**

Phonetic pronunciations

*kisemânito*

*nehîyawak*

*nehîyaw*

*wahkohtowin*

*otipaymisowin*

*mamawihtowin*

*tapwewin*

*kâhkiyaw*

*kinanaskomitinan*