



# ANNUAL REPORT

2017 / 2018





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Change requires commitment, perseverance and above all courage. No matter how necessary or overdue, change will be met with resistance, because a deeply prejudiced and racist society's bad habits are ingrained and persistent. This was particularly evident over the past year, as First Nations' input and interests were ignored time and time again.

A deeply prejudiced and racist society cannot hear or understand if it will not listen. The recent Sixties Scoop "settlement" hearing, and the Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine murder trial verdicts are stark examples of a tone-deaf society and flawed judiciary.

The \$875 million settlement for the estimated 20,000 Sixties Scoop survivors was negotiated largely among bureaucrats and lawyers with minimal First Nations involvement. The federal court judge presiding at the hearing, Justice Michael Shore, pronounced: "You need a tailor made solution for you." This paternalistic statement leaps straight from the 19th century to land in a 21st Century courtroom. It is absolutely unacceptable today.

A further insult was delivered when the survivors at the two-day hearing were restricted to a three minute statement, on the second day only, to describe their experiences. Three minutes to explain a childhood of dislocation and hardship, of lost family and lost culture.

"Was this just to shut us up?" asked Marlene Orgeron, a member of the Sapotaweyak Cree Nation in Manitoba, who was raised in New Orleans. "There is no integrity in this process," she said adding: "I'm tired of leaders in this country telling me what's in my best interest."

Putting aside the courtroom arguments in the Colten Boushie murder case, the glaring injustices began with jury selection. The defence team was allowed to use peremptory challenges (juror rejections without explanation) to exclude potential Indigenous jurors, while crafting an all white jury. The "not guilty" verdict was, then, further proof for First Nations that the justice and court systems are loaded against us.

Following the shocking verdict in the Tina Fontaine case, federal Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett wrote: "Tina's is a tragic story that demonstrates the failures of all the systems for Indigenous children and youth at every level. We need to do better – we need to fix this." Only time will tell if these words have any meaning.

While governments and corporations pay lip service to First Nations consultation, questionable natural resource development continues unabated, in spite of our strident objections. Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline is a prime example. Our opposition to this dangerous project is well known and well documented, since its immense environmental risks far outweigh any economic benefits for British Columbians.

Ironically, the Prime Minister now finds himself in the impossible position of reconciling his environmental and First Nations reconciliation rhetoric and promises, with the demands of Alberta and Big Oil. As Kinder Morgan threatens to withdraw, the federal government is currently considering the use of taxpayer money to complete the project under the guise that it is in "the Canadian national interest."



## Message from the Chairman

**"We need to make sure we're all working together to change mindsets, to change attitudes, and to fight against the bad habits we have as a society."**

— Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Unfortunately, from a First Nations perspective, we recall that the reserve system, the residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop were thought to be in the national interest.

Recently, our representatives were told that their participation would not be welcomed or required at the Columbia River Treaty re-negotiations, even though the entire Columbia River system passes through Indigenous traditional territories. This is yet another case of a deeply prejudiced and racist society that stubbornly refuses to listen. It is also blatantly at odds with the government's commitment to advance rights recognition and meaningful reconciliation.

Last year, my message was that we could not depend on the courts or governments; that we could only depend on each other. Fortunately, that message has resonated throughout the Nation as we continue to cherish and protect our lands, and to safeguard the well-being and quality of life of our people.

We continue to be worthy stewards of our water resources and our fishery. The recent grant of \$1.45 million to undertake an innovative flood-mapping project for the Okanagan Valley will prove invaluable during a time of unpredictable climate change. The 4th siw+kw (Water) Forum, and the publication of nsiw+kwcw (The Language of Water) were significant accomplishments, and this year we released 1.23 million sc'win (sockeye salmon) fry into the Okanagan watershed to strengthen the fishery.

This past year also marked an important opportunity to honour our Elders and Ancestors. In September

2017, I was fortunate to be among those present to gather the ancestral remains from the property in Cawston, and to witness the respectful and proper interment of those remains. Many thanks are due to those who persistently fought for the right to access the site and to finally honour our Ancestors.

In November, the Indian Residential School Monument was unveiled next to the Okanagan Nation's kł c̓p̓áłk stiḡ Hatchery. It is a monument to injustice, which brings all communities together to acknowledge former Syilx students of the Indian Residential School system, while recognizing our continued resilience, culture and spirituality of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

There is important work taking place across the Nation as we strive to strengthen our communities. Several Wellness programs, such as BRIDGES and YES, continue to offer innovative approaches to address youth unemployment, family violence issues and youth mental health issues. The Syilx Okanagan Nation is nothing without the shared strength and vision of its Elders and youth, and of all those who work tirelessly within our Bands and Departments to advance and defend the Nation.

Positive change requires commitment, persistence and courage. Remember always, you are not alone. Together, we will realize the great potential of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

*ᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ*

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
ONA Chair





# Message from the Executive Director



Way,

As I reflect on this past year, I can't help but think of this previous fall. I celebrated 20 years of service to our Nation. I also received the Sovereigns Medal for Volunteers, an award that recognizes exceptional volunteer achievements of Canadians from across the country. I was truly humbled when family, friends, colleagues, members or leadership and community gathered around me on both occasions. I cannot remember all the details, but I can assure you, on those days, I felt love, appreciation and gratitude. I also remember thinking, "is this what happens when you turn 60, not so bad?" When I began this work I never expected recognition, it has truly been an honor.

When I look back at the 2017-2018 fiscal and operational year, I see unprecedented growth and success. The ONA started out with humble beginnings, and now owns an office building in Westbank, in addition to the kł c̓əlk̓ st̓iṛ Hatchery in sn̓p̓iṛk̓t̓n. Through our Okanagan Aquatic Enterprise Ltd. (OAE), we are in the process of expanding the operations of the Fisheries Hub and have initiated trade with coastal First Nations groups, exercising our right to food sovereignty and economic development.

As a step forward to achieving our mandate, the Chiefs Executive Council (CEC) has signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with the Federal Government, "Full Recognition and Implementation of Indigenous Rights". This document will enable our Nation to engage in meaningful, substantive and principled "Nation to Nation" negotiations on Title and Rights. It has also provided initial resources needed to support governance work.

Additionally, the ns̓yilxc̓n Language Declaration and the Syilx Okanagan Family Declaration are both nearing completion. They will support our people individually and collectively to uphold and safeguard our Syilx way of life. We place immense value on respecting and maintaining our relationships to the water, to this land, its resources and its people; "we are one skin."

Our staff continue to implement the policy and direction as provided by our membership at the Annual General Assembly and through the CEC mandates. We have successfully maintained an annual budget of over six million dollars through managing the ebbs and flows of project-based funding. All departments are actively engaged at the Federal, Provincial and Regional levels and in our



**“The struggle continues to decolonize our people, our lands and our institutions. Our people and our communities are constantly challenging the status quo and challenging ONA to reflect Syilx cultural practices.”**

local communities, adapting to all the ever-changing landscapes. We are developing best practices within our existing services, anticipating and responding to both opportunities and challenges as they emerge. We continue to prioritize and listen to community voices and hold space to foster discussion and dialogue.

The struggle continues to decolonize our people, our lands and our institutions. Our people and our communities are constantly challenging the status quo and challenging ONA to reflect Syilx cultural practices. As a step forward, the ONA leadership team looked at our organizational structure and policy. The goal was to see how to effectively reflect Syilx values and cultural practices within the day to day operations of ONA; “snux syilx Breathing Life into our Organizational Culture”.

Without a doubt, our people are facing social challenges everyday; the continuation of poverty, and the fact that young people are still dying by suicide. Our communities are struggling to support members with mental health issues and in how to address the opioid crisis. There are still young girls and womyn who are being victimized behind closed doors. We can write off the rebels and opposition as sour grapes, but we have been taught to listen to fly and not swat it away.

We must continue to face these challenges and look for innovative ways to address these issues. This past year, ONA supported our Indian Residential School Survivors committee, which oversaw the development and unveiling of a spectacular monument that represents our resilience. Further, we create opportunities for youth to get out on the land, connect with each other and with their elders, and host the Spirit of Syilx Youth Unity Run. We have resources, such as the Okanagan Nation Response Team, that assist communities in the wake of crisis. We are working towards de-normalizing violence throughout the Nation and developing youth mental health strategies. Organizationally, we continue to develop the capacity within our Nation to lead, to innovate and maintain the legacy of our ancestors. Our people lead in the areas of governance, children and families, health, fisheries and caring for the land, water and all our relations.

Thus, another year past, we question our own actions. What are we doing individually and collectively, to ensure that all Syilx people are safe, healthy, and are able to secure work that is meaningful and will help them support their families? What can we do to change lateral violence and violence in our communities? How can we help people to see that life is worth living and ensure they enjoy fulfilling lives? That our lands and its resources are flourishing, and the Syilx way of life continues in a way that respects the Unity Principle, the Principle of Seven Generations, the teachings of our tupas, our parents, our aunties and our uncles. I for one am thinking about my own contributions and what can I do better today to uphold the sacred trust of our ancestors and those yet to come. How can I make 2018-2019 better?

These are the conversations I want to have as I continue to serve the people, so that collectively, we can be more responsive and we can continue creating, revitalizing, and rebuilding the “Syilx way.”

Lim’limpt

*Suiki?st*

Pauline Terbasket

Photo Left: Dave George, Syilx Artist





# skc'əḥ<sup>w</sup>əḥwipla? ut stettat

## 2017

### May 18

Special CEC meeting with DFO-RDG,

### May 24 - 25

Slocan Pools Elders' Re-Visit and Lemon Creek

### May 25

INAC Border Crossing Meeting, Osoyoos BC

### May 30

BRIDGES Presentation - Social Development and Social Innovation Centre of Excellence Forum

### June 13

Special CEC meeting Syilx Title and Rights, Westbank, BC

### June 14

CEC meeting, Westbank, BC

### July 04

Syilx Border Crossing Paddle Osoyoos to Orville WA

### July 26

Bi-lateral Columbia River Treaty Meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Global Affairs Canada, Hon. General Andrew Leslie, ONA Boardroom Westbank BC

### August 03

Special CEC *Audit Review*, Penticton Lakeside Resort, Penticton BC

### August 09

Special CEC *Language Legislation* ONA Boardroom, Westbank BC

### August 16

Special CEC & ONA NRC *Strategic Planning* Spirit Ridge Resort, Osoyoos BC

### August 17-18

ONA Annual General Assembly, Spirit Ridge Resort, Osoyoos BC

### August 29

Special CEC/Wellness Meeting with INAC-RDG, ONA Boardroom Westbank BC

### August 31

*Help Honour and Protect Our Ancestors* Cawston BC

### September 05

First Nations Leadership Council - BC Cabinet First Nations Leaders Gathering, Vancouver BC

### September 05

Minister LeBlanc, General Andrew Leslie, Rotary Centre of the Arts, Kelowna BC

### September 06 - 07

BC Cabinet and First Nations Leader's Gathering, Vancouver BC

### September 11

Remains, Ancestral Remains Ceremony, Cawston BC

### September 15

Special CEC *White Sturgeon SARA Permits*

### September 22 - 24

kł cḥalitntm *Calling Our Spirits Back* Healing walk from Kamloops Indian Residential School to Spaxomin, BC

### September 25 - October 01

Syilx Fall Hunting Camp, Mud Lake

### September 27-29

UBCIC 49th Annual General Assembly, Musquem Community Centre

### October 02

OIB Chief and Council host Language Workshop, OIB Office and Spotted Lake

### October 06

CEC Trout Lake Site Visit with NRC, Elders and Youth

### October 12

PIB Chief and Council Host Language Workshop Hardy Falls, Snwilsten Heritage Building, Penticton BC

### October 13

Syilx Nation Assembly - Social Determinants of Health, Penticton BC

### October 13

Community Rally calls for the Ministry of Children and Families to recognize and respect the fundamental human Rights, Penticton, BC

### October 18

AFN: New Fiscal Relationship Regional Session, Kamloops BC

### October 18 - 19

AFN - Indigenous Languages Initiative Engagement Session - FN National Roll Up, Gatineau, QC



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## October 19

Fisheries and Oceans Canada Invitation - Wild Salmon Policy Implementation Plan for Canada's Policy for Conservation, Penticton BC

## October 23

UNB Chief and Council Hosting En'owkin Legal Language Workshop, Spaxomin Meeting Centre and Fish Lake

## October 24

OKIB Chief and Council - Invitation En'owkin Legal Language Workshop Head of the Lake Hall and Caravan to sẉawiṭ (Shuswap Falls)

## October 26

Special CEC Meeting *Interior to Lower Mainland Funds Presentation* by UNB and RBC, Westbank BC

## October 27

Relaunching the National Parks Reserve - Press Conference, Spirit Ridge BC, Osoyoos BC

## November 22 - 23

CEC Quarterly Meeting, Westbank BC

## December 05

Special CEC Language Workshop - USIB Host

## December 06

CEC Meeting, Westbank BC

## December 07

UBC-Syilx Eco-Systems Research Conversation

## December 15

Special CEC Ministry Mental Health & Addictions, Westbank BC

## December 20

Special CEC Syilx Language Legal Workshop - Enowkin Centre

# 2018

## January 03

Kruger Hunting Case, Penticton BC

## January 10 - 11

ONA Welless Committee/CEC Strategic Planning Session, The Cove Lakeside Resort, Westbank BC

## January 15

FNLC - BC All Chiefs' Session on Children and Families, Vancouver BC

## January 16-18

FNLC - Federal Joint Gathering, Vancouver BC

## January 19-21

Lower Similkameen Workshop on Indigenous Laws 2018, Cawston BC

## January 23

Special CEC Meeting with Minister Katrine Conroy - Columbia River Treaty, Victoria BC

## January 24 - 25

National Child & Family Urgent Meeting, Ottawa

## February 15-16

Special Chiefs Executive Council - *Title and Rights*

## February 16-18

FNLC-BC/Federal Joint Gathering, Vancouver BC

## February 21

Special CEC and NRC Session BC Updates: Mule Deer and Ki?lawna? (Grizzly Bear)

## February 28

Special CEC & NRC *Honoring Our Responsibilities Columbia River Treaty*, Cove Lakeside Resort, Westbank BC

## March 6-7

Tribes And Indigenous Nations Leadership *Columbia River Treaty Meeting* Spokane. WA

## March 28-29

CEC Quarterly Meeting, Westbank BC



# Standing Strong Together

## Governance through Unity

### Strengthening the Syilx Okanagan Nation

The Chiefs Executive Council (CEC) uphold our *suxwstem* (taking care of the land) responsibilities, which carefully considers the cultural, environmental, social and economic interests of the Nation. The CEC advances Syilx Title and Rights with the federal and provincial governments. Both levels of government have recently stated their commitments to these rights through adoption of the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). The CEC strategic direction includes a number of these specific opportunities that are emerging due to the changing Canadian and International legal and political landscapes.

Over the last year the ONA's Policy & Legal Team has been actively involved with a number of key files that advance the Nation's Title and Rights interests, along with the work needed to strengthen Syilx governance structures. These governance matters will remain a central focus for the team for the coming year.

### Recognition of Rights and Respect

One of the key means by which the CEC are further advancing Syilx Title and Rights is through the development of agreements and legal instruments. The federal Letter of Understanding ("LOU") continues to be a priority file for the Nation. The LOU will establish a "Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination" discussion table between the Syilx Nation and the federal government in relation to a number of our priorities, including language, culture/heritage and governance. The Syilx Nation table is one of thirteen discussion tables established in BC, each with the goal to "bring greater flexibility on the recognition of rights, respect and partnership." Additionally, the federal government has announced its intention to pass Recognition and Implementation Framework ("RIF") legislation in Fall of 2018.

A significant part of the LOU is the internal governance and re-building work being undertaken by the Nation. The first initial phase includes collaborating directly with the Nation's communities to define and reinstitute Syilx governance structures





and processes in order to help assert Syilx law and decision-making in the territory driven by our communities.

Another initiative central to building upon the Nation's process for Indigenous recognition is the Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU"). It aims to develop joint decision-making bodies and seeks to ensure that Syilx law will be respected on the territory. Over the past year, progress on the MOU with the Province has remained relatively slow, as a result of the change in provincial government and related policy and process shifts. The MOU had recently expired and the new NDP government has committed to extending this relationship and re-establishing regular high-level meetings between the Province and the CEC.

A significant legal case was heard on December 28, 2017, the BC Supreme Court released its decision in the Desautel appeal and upheld Mr. Desautel's acquittal on hunting charges. The Court confirmed that Mr. Desautel's defence that he was exercising an aboriginal right to hunt for ceremonial purposes when he shot and killed a cow elk near Castlegar,

BC. Mr. Desautel is a member of the Lakes Tribe of Colville Confederated Tribes ("CCT"). The two issues on appeal were whether an aboriginal group needs to reside in Canada to be considered an aboriginal people of Canada with constitutional protections under section 35 and whether Mr. Desautel's hunting right is incompatible with Canadian sovereignty. The Okanagan Nation Alliance intervened in this appeal to ensure that the Nation's interests weren't adversely affected.

"The ONA and CCT will continue to be united through our cultural, familial, territorial, economic and political ties. Neither the Court's decision nor an imaginary line at the 49th parallel can affect the relationships of our Sinixt people and the Title and Rights that belong to us" stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

The Province of BC has appealed the decision to the Court of Appeal. The hearing of the appeal will be held in Vancouver on September 12, 2018. The ONA is currently applying to be an intervener in the appeal so as to continue to protect the Nation's interests.



**“The unilateral decision to exclude Indigenous Nations is an act of absolute treachery. It undermines recognition and threatens the reconciliation path that Prime Minister Trudeau has so boldly championed. I’m genuinely afraid for Canada’s future economic stability if Canada lacks the courage to stand by its convictions and can so easily disregard its commitments to Indigenous Peoples.”**





## Demands for Recognition in the Face of Exclusion

In 2018 the federal government made a unilateral decision to exclude Indigenous Nations from the direct US-Canada CRT Renegotiation process and the Syilx Nation, in addition to 2 other Nations are exploring all options available to reassert our collective leadership on this international agreement. Considerable amounts of time and resources have been spent on the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty (CRT). Prior to this decision, over the past year, Canada had appointed its negotiator and the Nation had been working with other Nations to advance its interests with respect to the CRT.

The CRT has created one of the most significant and on-going infringements of Syilx Title and Rights that resulted in the construction of three major dams in Canada that flooded the Slocan Valley (Arrow Lakes) and converted the Upper Columbia watershed into a massive reservoir system. While the Nation worked with two other Indigenous Nations on the CRT renegotiation, there are Syilx-specific issues such as the impact on salmon and our relationship with the territory that must be addressed directly by Canada and BC.

The Syilx Nation has been excluded since 1964 when the CRT was ratified and is now being told that they will continue to be marginalized and shut out of decisions directly affecting their title and rights. This decision is blatantly inconsistent with the Government's commitments to advance reconciliation.

"The unilateral decision to exclude Indigenous Nations is an act of absolute treachery. It undermines recognition and threatens the reconciliation path that Prime Minister Trudeau has so boldly championed. I'm genuinely afraid for Canada's future economic stability if Canada lacks the courage to stand by its convictions

and can so easily disregard its commitments to Indigenous Peoples," states Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

The CRT holds back 15.5 million acres/feet of water every year for flood control and power generation with an estimated annual value of \$3 billion USD. The CRT has had massive impacts on the Territory including; the desecration of sacred, village and burial sites; the loss of fish populations and harvest areas, and; the turning of a vibrant river into industrial water storage reservoirs. All residents of the Columbia River Basin continue to live with the devastating impacts of the CRT and its destructive legacy. The ONA will continue to demand a place to contribute to these negotiations.

## Taking a Big Picture Approach

The energy sector continues to rapidly evolve on Syilx territory, demanding that we coordinate and take a big picture approach. Due to the disruptive nature of extractive developments there is a demand that we affirm our responsibilities to *suxwxtem*. Our knowledge of our *tmx'ulax'* and our understanding of the Syilx way is our collective strength for addressing these issues.

The ONA Energy Executive Committee (EEC) advances the daily business and economic interests of the Nation in the energy sector. They provide recommendations for energy-based decisions, to enhance collaborative collective authority, minimize impacts and maximize benefits to the Nation. Currently the EEC Chair is Chief Clarence Louie, with other key members including Chief Byron Louis (OKIB), Councillor Tom Konek (WFN), Raf DeGuevara (WFN), Peter Hilton (UNB), and Councillor David Lindley (UNB). The Committee continues to engage in and oversee the vast array of BC Hydro, Fortis and other energy activities, opportunities and projects that are underway.



Over the last year the EEC met 10 times, with a total of 65 completed actionable items. Under the Revelstoke Generating 6 Project, the EEC and Project Review Committee (PRC) asserted and protected the Nation Title, Rights and Responsibilities to Revelstoke and the Arrow Lakes. As well the EEC continues to be a table to move forward and have ongoing discussions on mitigations and commitments that are outside of the EA process scope.

The EEC also initiated a process to hire a Syilx Business Development Specialist, who will work directly with the Syilx member communities, the Nation, BC Hydro and key external Industry and Business contractors to support partnerships, joint ventures that enhance the uptake of Syilx Nation community owned businesses within BC Hydro's direct award business commitments, procurement contracts and other competitive bid work opportunities. The EEC table continues to advance a potential business partnership and agreement between the Nation, communities and the Upper Nicola Indian Band for the ILM 50 MW Energy Opportunity. Alongside this the Procurement Working Group met regularly to strategize procurement opportunities in BC Hydro's 10-Year Capital Plan that are a priority to the Nation and ensure there are no missed opportunities.

## Leading the Way for Syilx Health and Families

The Chiefs' Executive Council (CEC) continues to be committed to improve the health, well-being, safety and quality of life of Okanagan Nation community members. With the respected guidance and knowledge of our Nations Wellness Committee the ONA continues to work toward self-determination in all matters of wellness including the full jurisdiction over our Children and Families.

As we continue to move forward in our Nation's strategic planning, further integrating services to better meet the needs of our People remains a

priority. There are four Nation-based plans, endorsed by the CEC, that are centered within our community voice, captikwl and language: the Syilx Child and Families Plan, Syilx Health Plan, Youth and Mental Health Plan and our Quality Assurance Model. These are our legacy documents and the foundation on which we operate.

The health of our communities is critical to ensuring that we thrive as a Nation moving forward. As such, there is a need to affirm and safeguard a range of essential health-based rights and access to resources that ensure the cultural integrity, safety, and well-being of all our members, for generations to come.

Our Health governance and joint project work is building as we provide the leadership and information to our communities. Allan Louis our Syilx Health Interior Region Representative echoes our concerns and put forth our recommendation at the Provincial level so that our priorities in achieving positive health outcomes will improve. These achievements are supported by working collaboratively with each other and the First Nation Health Authority. We know the principle and mission of FNHA to see us through the challenges of transition are still daunting tasks with so many issues to address i.e. Pharmacare, Opioid Crisis, access to a higher standard of medical care, yet we still remain mindful of Nation based community-driven principles.

We continue to advocate for increased and improved access to quality health services that recognize Syilx perspectives and are designed in partnership with the Nation. There are many unique challenges that face our citizens, therefore we need to be involved in all aspects of decision-making that have an impact on our Nation. Overall, the ONA has been and continues to develop specialized programs, plans and strategies regarding wellbeing, and are committed to advocating at all levels of governance.





The Social Determinants of Health Strategy has been a major topic in Health and Child & Family planning this year. The CEC and Wellness Committee have been monitoring this plan to determine how it will impact the communities.

First Nation Health Benefits was another major concern in 2017-2018, as FNHA moved to use Pharmacare as a health benefits provider. Many of our Nation citizens suffered from this transition and the CEC and Wellness Committee sent letters and advocated relentlessly to address this issue.

The CEC met with Deputy Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Doug Hughes to discuss the serious concerns and problems with the mental health system. The ONA continues to advocate and reiterate that services must be developed and implemented, by the community and Nation, for any real change or positive outcomes to occur.

The CEC and Wellness Committee have also been discussing re-signing the Interior Health LOU, there have been some challenges with the effectiveness of this agreement, and discussions continue to be underway to ensure that sustainable changes occur to the service provided to our citizens.

The Syilx Child and Families Plan sets a clear direction for Nation-wide and community strategic initiatives that enhance and promote the well-being of our Syilx Nation members and communities that includes preventive practices in program and service delivery.

As part of this direction, the ONA CEC appointed a representative to attend First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) meetings. The FNLC has developed an internal working group to guide the work of the

Tri-partite Working Group (WG) between the FNLC, Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC) and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). This table addresses policy and planning discussions that will create space to move the Syilx Child and Family Plan forward. This year the FNLC WG drafted and had approved the Reconciliation Charter, and submitted a proposal to DISC and MCFD for technical support to implement the work plan that was created.

We recognize that to change the way services are delivered we must also change the policies and that direct these very services. The CEC had a special meeting with DISC Regional Director, Catherine Lappeto, to find resources and make partnerships in order to revisit the Child and Family Plan, develop a Syilx Child and Family Declaration and to create formal relationships with MCGD and DISC. As a result of this meeting, the ONA was provided with \$150,000 to revisit and enhance the Syilx Child and Family Plan with community engagement including articulating Syilx law or Tribal Code for Child and Family Services. This has also enabled us to engage with MCFD and DISC on Child and Family legislative reform, the FNCFS program transition and policy, and Nation and Community based MOU's.

We continue to serve and respond to community needs under the mandate of the CEC.

We will stand together and step forward for our citizens and families to advocate and foster social change.







## For the People

As with every year the Okanagan Nation Alliance continues to rapidly evolve and grow as an organization. With the onset of these varied programs, projects and efforts comes the demand to develop capacity through the acquisition of more expertise and staff in order to sustain the organization.

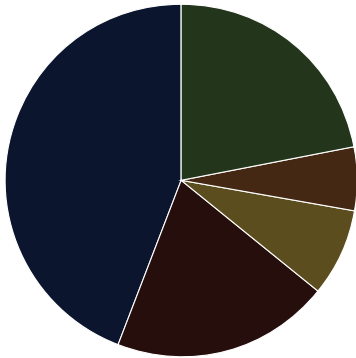
And yet we remain committed to ensuring our foundations form the base to all the work we do. We must remain vigilant that our Syilx Cultural Principles and Protocols are not compromised, and that they frame all of the work that we carry forward. Regardless of the task at hand we are dedicated to fulfilling the mandate of asserting Syilx Nation Title and Rights over Syilx territory. This includes many of the legal processes and actions, but extends out to the protection of the *tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup>* and empowering community and individuals in the process of restoring our identity, culture and territory. As such, all ONA endeavors are rooted in serving the bigger picture of Title and Rights.

Over the past year the ONA and our financial department has seen growth across multiple areas including projects, finances and capacity. During this period we have reviewed and revised our Policy and Procedure manuals including the HR Manual. We completed an Occupational Health & Safety needs analysis to ensure a safe and secure work environment for all staff, which will be implemented in the coming year.

A new company Okanagan Nation Holdings Ltd was set up to purchase a commercial office building that has proven to be a wise business decision. We have three long term tenants including First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Central Okanagan Massage. A variety of challenges are presented with this kind of growth; to ensure timely reporting, payments and maintaining cash flow. The recent ONA audit has proven that the finance department has done just that, with the ONA following the GAAP standard of accounting, as a society we are in good standing.

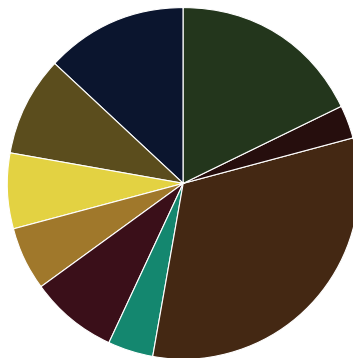


# 2017 - 2018 Revenue Analysis



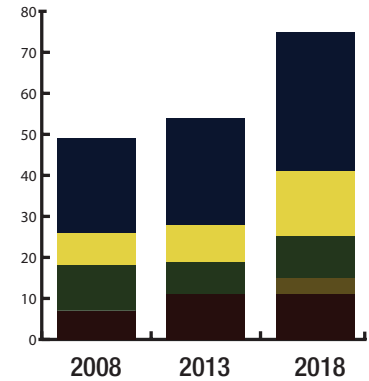
**REVENUE BY DEPARTMENT**

Administration	22%
Natural Resources	6%
Policy & Governance	8%
Wellness	20%
Fisheries	44%



**ACTUAL REVENUE**

USA PUD	18%
USA CCT	3%
Other Income	32%
Indigenous and Northern Affairs	4%
FNHA	8%
DFO	6%
Other Gov of Canada	7%
Prov of BC	9%
BC Hydro	13%



**DEPARTMENT GROWTH**

	2008	2013	2018
Administration	7	11	11
Bridges	0	0	4
Natural Resources	11	8	10
Wellness	8	9	16
Fisheries	23	26	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>75</b>



\* See Audited Financial Statement under separate cover





## SUPPORTING NATION HEALTH

**214** physician and other healthcare professional appointments with Okanagan members

**141** Home visits/Office visits with community members

**63** Health education sessions delivered in communities



## TRAINING

**9** participants in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills

**38** participants in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Skills

**9** members in BC Schizophrenia: Strengthening Families Together, First Nation Edition

**45** children and families participated in a workshop on stress and how to cope

**47** members learned tips on how to use Play and Movement to heal trauma

## CHILD WELFARE and YOUTH JUSTICE

Family Decision Making (FDM) helps families work through issues as a means to early intervention.

**77** FDM Circles were held this is a 40% increase from previous year

**71** Children/Youth were planned for

**44** Families were served

**9** Youth Justice Circles were held

## OKANAGAN NATION RESPONSE TEAM

**1** Youth overdose **1** Death by suicide

**5** Youth Suicide Attempts

Adult Suicide Attempts **4**

**7** Youth Suicide Ideation

Adult Suicide Ideation **3**

**92** Follow-up support

**274**  
People Supported

Debriefing for youth **22**

**15** Violence support

Debriefing for adults **52**

**24** Nation staff support

**48**  
Robotti/Louie Trial Support



# INVESTING IN YOUTH

The ONA is doing a considerable amount to invest in youth. We are making greater efforts to engage youth in cultural activities such as being out on the land, educating them issues that impact them, and providing them with opportunities to be a part of the nation.



Building a Better Future Bursary recipients with ONA Executive Director and Fortis Representative Bruce Falstead, Aboriginal Relations.

- 67** Youth Participated in the RNative Voice Program ages 13-17

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- 25** participated in Wellness and Balance Session

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- 6** trained in Depression and Anxiety

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- 6** trained in Gang and Violence

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- 111** ages 7-12 registered for Kwu xast program

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- 14** Girls participated in a 13 session Youth Group

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- 45** Youth partook in the 10 session Street Wolf Program

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- 83** took Anger Solutions for Kids

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- 15** Teen Boys – Dialectical Behaviour therapy

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- 12** Youth and Families learning about medicines

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- 15** girls participated in self-wellness session

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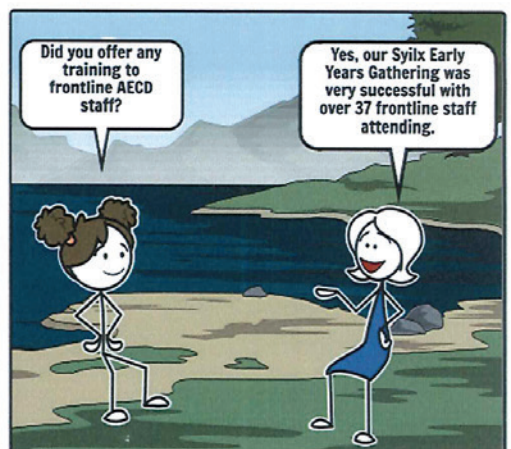
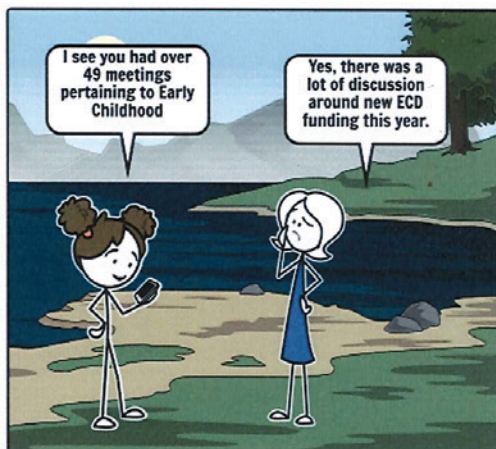
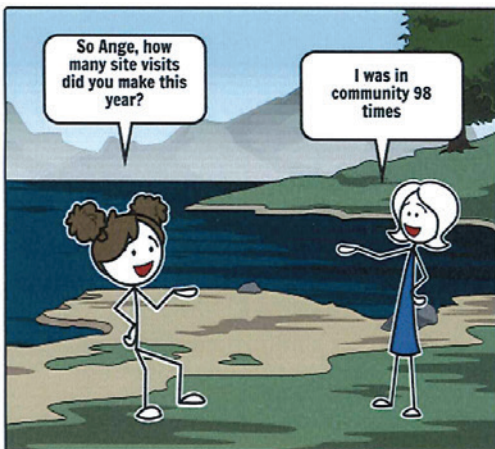
- 136** Youth Registered for BRIDGES Program

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- 56** Youth ran as part of the Spirit of Syilx Unity Run with all 8 members communities represented

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- 18** one on one sessions provided by Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Coordinator





# Recognizing the Dedication of Our Youth

We proudly recognizes the 38 Syilx participants from across the Territory who competed at the 2017 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG). All of these competitors demonstrated a high level of dedication and excellence in their sport. They have further exhibited a strong commitment to their participation and representation at NAIG through the support of their families and communities in competing in the Regional tryouts and training to represent Team BC. We honor their determination to compete and vie for a spot on the Team by their fundraising efforts in order to enable their own participation. For many of these athletes NAIG was the premier sporting event that they participated at in their athletic careers.

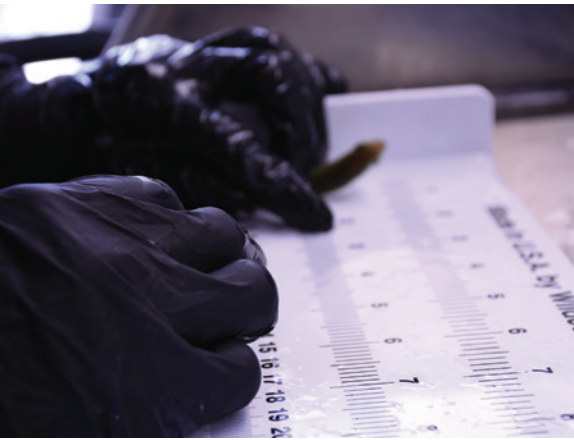
The 2017 NAIG was held in Toronto, Canada, from July 16-22. This is the largest continental sporting and cultural gathering of Indigenous people, with over 5000 indigenous athletes attending. Since 1990 the event has been hosted every three years, now intermittently between Canada and the USA. The next games will be hosted in 2020.



# BRIDGES Activities

- Apr 12, 2017** Sacred Site Tour, Upper Nicola
- Apr 13, 2017** Sacred Site Tour, USIB/ LSIB
- Apr 20, 2017** Inspirational Series w/ Duane Howard, Chopaka, BC
- Apr 21, 2017** Inspirational Series w/ Duane Howard, Enowkin Centre, Penticton, BC
- Apr 25, 2017** Sacred Site Tour, Penticton Indian Band
- May 2-5, 2017** Through the Eyes of the Tmx'ulax' Camp, Silver Lake, Peachland, BC
- May 8, 2017** Aboriginal Business Match, Penticton, BC
- May 12, 2017** Inspirational Series w/ Michelle Thrush, Oliver, BC
- May 13, 2017** Sacred Site Tour, LSIB
- Jun 10 - 17, 2017** Okanagan Environment Leadership Camp, Glimpse Lake, BC
- Jul 12, 2017** Columbia River Treaty Neg., Spokane, WA
- Jul 27, 2017** Repatriation of Remains, Nakusp, BC
- Jul 31 - Aug 4, 2017** IndigenEYEZ & Enowkin Syilx Leadership 2 camp, Ashnola Camp Ground
- Aug 29, 2017** Pillar Lake; Coyote Canoe, OKIB
- Oct 6, 2017** Trout Lake; Burial Site, Nakusp, BC
- Oct 14 - 15, 2017** Youth Advisory Meeting, Spirit Ridge, Osoyoos, BC
- Oct 17, 2017 – Jan 26, 2018** Bridges to Trades, NVIT, UNB
- Oct 17, 20, 23, 24, 26, 30, 2017** Cotton Wood Planting, PIB, LSIB, USIB, OK Falls
- Oct 30, 2017** BCAFN – Women's Session, OKIB
- Nov 25 - 26, 2017** Youth Leadership Gathering, Blind Creek, Cawston, BC
- Nov 27, 2017** Kelowna Job Fair, Kelowna, BC
- Dec 2, 2017** Video/ Photography Workshop, LSIB
- Dec 21, 2017** Winter Solstice; Captikwl Night OKIB, Vernon, BC
- Jan 19, 2018** Filmmaking workshop, Cawston, BC
- Jan 20, 2018** Storytelling/ Interviewing Skills, Cawston, BC
- Jan 24, 2018** Film Workshop Follow up Session, Cawston, BC
- Jan 28, 2018** Ribbon Skirt Making, PIB
- Jan 27, 2018** Cross Country Skiing, Apex Nordic Centre
- Jan 31, 2018** Film Editing Mentorship, Cawston, BC
- Feb 5 - 6, 2018** Seeking Your Snaqsilx Penticton Lakeside Resort
- Mar 5 - 7, 2018** Salish Language Conference, Spokane, WA
- Mar 7 - 9, 2018** Water Treaty Negotiations Conference, Spokane, WA
- Mar 26 - 27, 2018** Financial Fitness, Sandman, Kelowna, BC





# Highlights from our Technical Work

## Out on the Land

Working to support our relations

**167** Fisheries and Natural Resources projects underway

Released **4.5** million sockeye into Skaha lake

**1,500** mulx (black cottonwood) whips were planted in partnership with the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) and the En'owkin centre

Lab provided age data for over **1400** mountain white fish

**11** wildlife species were studied: migratory birds, waterfowl, owls, deer, moose, insects, bats, frogs, toads, snakes, turtles

**+10,000** fish processed for samples by the Lab

Released **700,000** sockeye into Okanagan Lake

**\$250,000** received for hatchery modifications to expand the Chinook reintroduction plan

**11,588** Sockeye smolts were purse seined in Osoyoos Lake and PIT tag

Installed a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) array in Penticton Channel near the KVR Bridge pilings. With this new array, we are able to estimate the number of adult Sockeye spawning in Penticton Channel each year.

**46** kilometers of winter tracking surveys (by foot and snowshoe) were carried out by ONA staff and community members to assess the presence of moose, deer and elk along the WKTL. There was relative abundance, and habitat use.

**288** kms of road transects were travelled by snow machine along the WKTL, along with 20 km conducted by snowshoe tracking, to assess presence and relative abundance of furbearers (lynx, weasel, marten).



# Highlights from our Technical Work

Established habitat monitoring transects and hydrometric stations on **11 streams**.

Determine Environmental Flow needs for **19 Okanagan Streams** throughout the Okanagan Basin, including: Coldstream Creek, Equesis Creek, Inkaneep Creek, McDougall Creek, McLean Creek, Mill Creek, Mission Creek, Naramata Creek, Naswhito Creek, Pentiction Creek, Powers Creek, Shingle Creek, Shorts Creek, Shuttleworth Creek, Trepanier Creek, Trout Creek, Vaseux Creek, Lower Vernon Creek, Whiteman Creek

Ellis Creek Sediment Basin Fish Passage project will make creek function more effectively, increase fish populations, improve spawning habitats and overall habitat diversity while opening up **4 kms** of stream habitat. This project will also, allow the Ministry to do their routine sediment extraction without disturbing fish passage and provide a healthier ecosystem for the community to enjoy.

There were several new projects for the Central/ North Okanagan Area, which allowed us to dedicate resources to have a new Biologist for the area. One of the key projects was the Bessette Resistivity Counter, which allowed for counting fish, Coho, in the Bessette Creek system. Another project was in partnership with OKIB, where we provided support and completed an assessment of the Brown's Creek area.

Monitoring for bats resulted in the documentation of **12 species** occurring in the mid- and lower Arrow Lakes Reservoir. Five of these species are of provincial/ national conservation concern, including Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Western Small-footed Myotis, Northern Myotis, Fringed Myotis, and Little Brown Myotis.

Initiated a partnership with UBCO and FLNRO on the connection between fire disturbance and measuring Mule deer population growth rates relative to predator activity. GPS collared **50 mule deer** in the Boundary region (Rock Creek fire to Gladstone Provincial Park) and the West Okanagan (Garnet Valley to the Testalinden fire). Deployed 90 remote wildlife cameras and analyzed field data to create a population model to assess the effect of fire on Mule deer population size.

In the Revelstoke area, approximately **300 turtle observations** were recorded, resulting in transmitters being recovered during the spring 2018 project. At the Airport Marsh Red Devil Hill site a peak of 44 turtles were counted and a total of nine basking logs were anchored to add habitat complexity for Western Painted Turtle (WPT). Both coarse woody debris for hiding cover and adequate basking habitat were lacking. The surveys confirmed that the logs had remained in place and that they were being used by turtles, as well as waterfowl species, great blue heron, and river otter.





# Holding Our Elders Up

Syilx elders are integral and central to ensuring the continuity of nationhood. They are, and always have, been essential for the transmission of knowledge and culture, and are the key link between our past and future. Elders provide a number of roles within our communities and families, as caregivers, leaders, and knowledge keepers.

With this in mind many of our elders have faced the greatest atrocities possible. As we come to understand the full implications of such things as the Indian Residential School system, the Sixties Scoop and general forms of systemic racism that many of our elders have suffered, it is now becoming apparent that we must focus on honouring, supporting and healing with them.

Under the guidance of the Wellness committee the ONA is working on obtaining funding to develop a Nation Elder Care Strategy. In the meantime we are working to ensure that our elders are supported. The ONA hosted numerous initiatives for elders, including in ceremonies, events for connecting with youth, incorporating knowledge and seeking guidance.

**12** members participated in an Elders Circle; Sharing Stories

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**32** Elders participated in Depression/Anxiety Workshop

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**32** participated in Grief and Loss Workshop

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**6** Elders provided guidance on the Spirit of Syilx Unity Run

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**114** attended the Elders Retreat

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**52** Elders participated in the Youth Gathering

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**56** Elders participated in the Community Action Initiative Elders Mental Health Literacy Project from August 31 - Dec. 19, 2017









# Nation Events



## 2017

- May 11-14 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Spirit of Syilx Unity Run  
Revelstoke to Mica Dam
- May 17 Okanagan Fry Release  
Shingle Creek, Penticton
- May 30 Syilx Water Forum  
UBCO Campus, Kelowna
- June 2017 Okanagan Lake Fry Releases  
June 15-20 Honouring Our Ancestors and  
Praying for the Salmon ceremonies:  
Kettle Falls, Castlegar, Revelstoke,  
McIntyre and Enloe
- July 4 Annual Border Crossing Canoe Paddle  
July 6 PM Justin Trudeau, UBCO public town hall
- August 17-18 ONA AGA and  
OKA Run for Peace Commemoration  
Hosted by OIB, Osoyoos
- Sept 15-17 Syilx Annual Salmon Feast  
*sx̣ẉəx̣ẉnitḳẉ* (Okanagan Falls)
- Oct 3-4 15 Years of Restoring Salmon Habitat  
in the *q̣awsitḳẉ* Okanagan River  
technical workshop, Penticton
- Oct 30-31 Syilx Nation Wellness Forum  
Penticton Trade & Convention
- Nov 20-23 RIZE workshop with Colby Tootosis  
Nov 28 SIRS Monument Unveiling

## 2018

- Jan 29-30 Syilx *Captiḳẉl* Forum, En'owkin Centre
- Feb 5-6 BRIDGES—Seeking Our *Snaqsyilx*  
Penticton Lakeside Resort
- Feb 26 *l? scmala?tet*  
Syilx Early Years Gathering
- Feb 28 ONA Hosts *sx̣ẉ?aṃat* (Home)  
Theatre for Living, Shatford Centre, Penticton
- March 22 Syilx Nation Water Forum & Field Tour
- March 28-29 Syilx Elders Retreat  
Spirit Ridge Resort, Osoyoos



One key initiative, in partnership with the Community Action Initiative, we launched the “Community Series: Let’s Talk About Health and Wellness” workshops. From August through December, this series of five workshops engaged our Syilx Elders and their caregivers to increase elder mental wellness literacy, which is understood as the knowledge, beliefs and abilities that enable the recognition, management or prevention of mental health problems. This program developed curriculum that was shared with the Nation’s elders on a variety of mental wellness topics including isolation and addiction.

Upon completion of these workshops ONA requested feedback as what the elders would like to see for future presentations. They voiced their concern that the Syilx communities no longer visit with one another like they used to and that Elders Gatherings are usually organized at a National level. From this

discussion, a Syilx Elders Retreat was organized, which will include all member bands. The event provided multiple opportunities to engage, laugh, learn, relax and share stories.

As part of the transference of culture, language and history, we recognize the deep need to ensure that elders are also connecting to and interacting with youth. During the Unity Run we had six elders come out to support, provide guidance and stability to the runners, while offering cultural and language teachings along the way. caylx (Richard Armstrong) and Hazel Squakin provided the youth with knowledge of territory and ancestral connections. In the words of Syilx elder Pauline Gregoire during this years Unity Run “xast ispu?us”.

To all our elders, lim’ limpt for all that you are and all you do.

## Caring for Ancient Burial Grounds and Our səsƚaws

Caring for ancient burial grounds and our səsƚaws (ancient ancestors) is one of our most sacred responsibilities. When the sesƚawses sqəlxʷsc’im (ancient ancestor bones) become disturbed or are exposed in our time, it is our responsibility to put them back to their original burial sites in the proper way. Our cultural laws, ethics, beliefs, and practices guide the repatriation process for the sesƚawses sqəlxʷsc’im. This is the pathway to recognition of our inherent rights to protect our ancestors’ burial grounds and guide a culturally appropriate repatriation process.

The ONA continues to uphold our responsibility to care for and protect our ancestors. Over the last year we have collaborated on multiple initiatives with elders, leadership, band technicians, committee and community members to ensure that our sesƚawses sqəlxʷsc’im are honored and that they remain in the places from where they came.

This can be seen in the work supporting the Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) to have ancestral remains reburied. The burial ground was desecrated on February 29, 2016 and since that time LSIB had not been able to fully recover the remains of our ancestors on the site.

In response to this, LSIB held a Day of Action, committing to the reburial of these remains regardless of the decision of the Province to grant access to the site. This Day of Action brought out Syilx community members from across the Nation to raise awareness. Due to the persistence of LSIB and the support from throughout the Nation, the Province granted access. With Chiefs, elders, community members and law enforcement present, a technical team legally entered the premise and began the work of respectfully recovering the remains.

The recovery and reburial of these ancestral remains marks an unprecedented action by the Province, who engaged Section 14.4 of the Heritage Conservation Act and provided a Heritage Ministerial Order Permit to LSIB. The Ministerial Order ensures that this reburial was expedited and sanctioned.

Our devotion to our ancestors’ graves is unwavering.







# A Collective Responsibility

As Syilx people, we were born with intrinsic responsibilities to the *tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup>* and *siw<sup>tk</sup><sup>w</sup>*, our communities and families. These values are deeply rooted to our past through connection to our ancestors since time immemorial and in which define who we are as a Nation. Thus, these responsibilities form the foundation of the work that we take on at ONA.

Yet the challenges to secure environmental and social stability are increasingly more complex and difficult. Ecosystems are being fragmented and collapsing, climate change is disrupting weather and water flows through the territory, and industrial and commercial development are pushing out our relatives. Simultaneously our communities are destabilized by a wide spectrum of issues created by centuries of colonization, from suicide and drug overdoses to domestic and systemic violence. In the face of these challenges we stand united. We are coordinating on the ground to collectively reinforce our demand to enact our collective responsibilities so that we can be more resilient and thrive in the face of some of the most disheartening challenges.

## Responding to Environmental Disruption

With each passing year the increasing effects of climate change are felt across the territory. In 2017 we simultaneously had flooding in the valley with wildfires on the mountainsides. These natural occurrences are beyond any one person or Nation's control, demanding that we be attentive and come together in partnership to take on these problems to the best of our abilities. We are using both cutting edge technology and our Syilx knowledge to create dynamic responses to these effects, to ensure the public safety of all our communities and to be responsible for the sustainability of ecosystems.

Over the spring of 2017 many Syilx communities, were greatly affected by flooding. Following the dramatic flooding that threatened the safety and wellbeing of multiple communities throughout the Nation, there is a pressing need to undertake risk assessments and flood plain mapping, and make the Okanagan more resilient to extreme precipitation. In response to these floods the ONA has been addressing





## Securing a Future for Fish

The effects of climate change and industrial development create a range of challenges to all of our relatives. In response to a constantly shifting environment the ONA laboratory facility, located at the *kl c̓p̓álk stím* Hatchery, provides dedicated space for carrying out the ongoing laboratory investigations. These laboratory services increase capacity for the ONA by providing data to inform scientific decision-making. The knowledge generated through application of laboratory testing equips decision makers to integrate ONA generated scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge, all of which advance and assert Syilx Title and Rights.

To support salmon restoration work the laboratory has processed samples from approximately 10,000 fish providing data on lengths, weights, diet, age, origin and disease status from all life stages. In addition this year we have provided age data for over 1400 mountain white fish and disease testing on harvested white sturgeon, to help with our long-standing goal of restoration of *č̓amtus*. We continue to implement environmental DNA testing for a number of fish and amphibian species and to expand our water quality testing capabilities. Water chemistry work has been expanded and the lab now completes water analysis monthly to support the hatchery.

through partnership, between member communities, municipalities in the Okanagan and other water organizations to attain \$1.45 million in funds for LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) and digital aerial imagery acquisition for the entire Okanagan Valley watershed. This will greatly assist all partners to facilitate effective and dynamic flood mapping and risk assessments.

Though forest fires may not be a new phenomena, in 2017 they came on early and strong in BC, with more than 1.2 million hectares of forest burning up throughout the province. These fires threatened both communities and habitats, particularly as they often became impossible to contain. In response the ONA is working with member communities, the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and the BC Wildfire Service to re-establish our traditional knowledge and practice of prescribed fire as a tool for responsible care of the landscape within the territory. Over the fall and winter, ONA worked closely with these partners to successfully plan a prescribed fire in the Garnet Valley in 2018, and will plan for one in the Ashnola Valley in the spring of 2019. This included attaining \$75k from the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) to implement the project in 2018-2019 to develop a Syilx prescribed fire Working Group and a Collaborative Okanagan Prescribed Fire Steering Committee, and provide continued and ongoing support for existing and future prescribed fire projects in Syilx Territory.

## De-normalizing Violence to Empower and Heal

Like indigenous peoples across Canada, Syilx communities are disproportionately affected by violence. This violence has many faces and takes many forms, but always serves to harm our communities and families. Suicide and other forms of violence persist, creating further wounds for our communities to address. Issues of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) are pervasive, undermining the safety of our women and girls. There continues to be little effort at any level of government to effectively take on these issues in a meaningful way. In the face of these issues the ONA is committed to working at the community level to ensure that we denormalize all forms of violence. We only become stronger when we gather and heal these wounds together.

In order to address the many challenges we face the ONA Mental Health Team uses a collaborative approach in program service delivery, crisis response, and mental health awareness. The team utilizes Syilx-focused, evidence-based models and curriculum to provide prevention, intervention, and support services for children, youth, families, and communities, experiencing mental health issues.

In addition, the ONA Youth Wellness program supported communities through wraparound meetings, community networks, community events, youth group sessions, community training and presentations. Some of the trainings and sessions included lateral violence, suicide intervention, healing trauma through play, grief and loss, gang violence, and depression and anxiety to name a few. For example, on September 12, 2017, the ONA hosted the “Wrap Around Approach to Suicide”. The Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT) facilitated this day-long event with 45 people, including representation from each band and 10 youth representatives from across the Nation. This gathering allowed for ONA staff to engage frontline workers with best practices to enhance capacity development with existing community, social and health workers and services in regards to suicide prevention and intervention. The focus was on how to engage families and band workers to concentrically all wrap



around the victim, creating safe and consist spaces for healing to take place.

A large part of the Nation’s support for communities to deal with trauma, provide prevention in relation to suicide and suicide behaviours is through our Okanagan Nation Youth Response Team (ONRT). The Nation team held fourteen consistent team members throughout the year, each providing support to crisis and education. The ONRT Lead was involved in planning many opportunities on the Mental Health Act Training, Suicide Talk & Awareness and Ethical Responsibility for Nation frontline workers, as well as community members.

YES (You, Empowered, Strong) is community-based response to the impacts of violence. This process will empower community to deal with the impacts of violence and will create solutions for the community, by the community. This year, YES achieved a major goal of the project which was to create an advisory panel. The group consists of a member from Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House (ONTEH), Ending Violence Association (EVA), Aboriginal Police Officer Program RCMP, South Okanagan Women in Need (SOWINS) and the South Okanagan Victims Assistance. This panel will act as a resource to the Nation.

Another key outcome for YES was the development of community safety planning (CSP) for each of the member communities. Communities were provided with funds from ONA as part of the YES program to meet and work on the CSP using community input.

Currently there are 7 draft plans and addendums that have been forwarded to our funder Public Safety Canada (PSC). These plans and addendums will be considered for funding by PSC to implement the wishes of the community.

YES continues to working steadfastly towards changing the community norms that support and perpetuate violence. We are building relationships within community to support capacity building, including prevention and education opportunities that will be available to communities to enhance knowledge around family violence and its impacts, personal safety, trauma informed practice among others.

This movement toward denormalizing violence has included the creation of a resource video “DeNomalizing Violence” as well as looking at the way we speak to each other. Over February and March, 2018, YES staff distributed nsylxten and English ‘love language’ candies throughout Syilx communities as a means to campaign and create more understanding of the YES program, alongside promoting Syilx culture and values. This campaign took place alongside broader events, such as the Sisters in Spirit Vigil, which were all raising awareness of issues of violence in our communities.







# Celebrating and Living Our Culture and Language

Since contact, the systemic processes of colonization have attempted to degrade our way of life, dissolve our language and alienate us from our lands. In the face of these aggressions Syilx people have stood strong. Our ancestors and elders have led the way forward, remaining steadfast in the face of this aggression with a commitment to passing down our Syilx culture and nsyilxcen language. We are dedicated to promoting every opportunity for the Nation to honor and transmit our living and dynamic forms of the Syilx Way.

## Putting Our Footprints On-the-Land

Connection to territory is not a conceptual claim but one that is enacted by getting out and putting our footprints on our land, just as our ancestors have always done. An essential Syilx teaching is that in order to truly know ourselves and to bring our gifts to the world, we must also know our land and connect with it as our strength. We are listening to these calls and constantly finding means to bring our community members, elders and youth to all parts of this beautiful territory. A variety of activities, actions and initiatives culminated over the past year, all of which have strengthened these connections for the Nation. Youth are key to carrying our Nation forward and thus are at the center of our need to reconnect

and identify with our territory. The Building Resources and Innovative Development Growth and Economic Stability (BRIDGES) program is grounded in this recognition and is actively providing land-based teachings mentorship as part of a broader vision for connecting youth to meaningful forms of employment. We provided culturally based support and employment readiness programs to 136 Okanagan youth from each of the 7 bands. As part of this process, we provide an assessment of skills and cultural knowledge, and opportunities for youth to engage with other Okanagan youth and communities in on-the-land, cultural and standard training programs. During our camps and programs all youth in attendance are mentored and supported. There are 15 youth that we are working with closely and supporting through specific educational and training goals in collaboration with their education or social worker.

The success of BRIDGES is due in part to a range of partnerships with organizations like UBCO who continue to conduct the research component of this project. BRIDGES enhanced events in community and other events that were taking place through collaborations with En'owikin, indigenEYEZ, and the Okanagan Pre-Employment Services Program and other community organizations. BRIDGES is funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation.





The “Stories From the Land: BRIDGES Youth Filmmaking Basics Workshop” illustrates this work. Over two days in December Syilx youth were provided the opportunity to get out on the land and learn from mentors. We cultivated leadership development using creative facilitation that was grounded in our Syilx Way. At the same time, participants learned skills through filming cultural learning activities. Youth built capacity through making short videos so when we go out on the land in our communities we have tools for documenting and sharing with others. The innovation here is primarily the content of the videos. Using technology and skill acquisition to engage youth in seeking out and creating relationships with Elders and traditional knowledge experts they are not only learning the technical skills but also about the Okanagan culture, stories and lands. This program is teaching youth how to gather, document, edit and depict Okanagan knowledge in a way that is from their personal perspective, with the wisdom of knowledge keepers. It is a powerful way to have youth learn about the Okanagan culture and lands, while exploring and expressing their individual values and reflecting on how this impacts their future decisions and goals. The technology and technical expertise is a vehicle to gaining insight and expanding their knowledge about what it means to be Syilx.

The 2017 Spirit of Syilx Youth Unity Run provided further opportunities for youth and members of the Nation to reconnect to our lands and territory while also raising awareness on issues of suicide and violence within communities. The Unity Run took place from May 11-14, 2017 with 120 participants including youth from all eight member communities. This year the run covered over 274 km in the northern part of Syilx territory past Mica Dam. As part of the Enduring Relationship with BC Hydro we were able to stay on site at Mica Dam. It enabled Syilx youth and elders to educate BC Hydro staff on our deep connection to this part of our territory. This area had no cellular reception and thus, youth were also able to disconnect from digital devices and remain present to the territory and each other.

By participating in the Unity Run Syilx youth were provided the opportunity to experience being out on their territory together as a Nation. It serves as a means to address a broad range of community and societal issues from loss of identity and culture to mental health issues, while deepening of cultural rejuvenation. Youth who have never drummed or sang in the language are learning from one another, engaging in the healing that occurs through reconnecting with deep ancestral roots. In the face of both challenging terrain and weather, youth persevered, overcame personal limitations and healed while being supported by elders and others drumming and cheering them on.

We are thankful to all the elders that continue to join us on the Run to support the youth. This year the Unity Run ended with the youth making a circle and elder Pauline Gregoire speaking from the heart to the youth in only the language. This heartfelt moment deeply resonated with the youth through listening to the language, “out on the land”.

## Syilx Food Sovereignty

Modern, industrial food systems provide cheap but deficient foods that have displaced our original Syilx foods. This transition has created a host of illnesses including diabetes, obesity and heart disease. At the same time it has distanced us from some of our core cultural practices, experiences and ways of being. ONA is committed to protecting our first foods, including fish, game, berries and medicinal plants for all Nation members. Restoring, maintaining and practicing our Syilx food systems is foundational to the well-being of our communities and invigorating these traditional food ways provides the opportunity to reaffirm cultural practices.

sc’win remain an integral food source to the Syilx people. In previous years the ONA has worked to distribute this important food to our community, due to natural cycles the return of sc’win was minimal to our territory in 2017. In light of this, and recognizing the need to maintain sustainable stocks, we did not actively fish any sc’win. Yet recognizing the need for



food security in our communities we did respond and coordinated canned Okanagan sockeye salmon for food fish distribution using sc'win from our 2016 fishery frozen in inventory in partnership with CCT (120 cases of 24) through community health departments. We also encouraged communities to have their own summer students to help facilitate community fishing and distribution. As with previous years, the Okanagan will have to balance the need of increasing catch to benefit transboundary negotiations while ensuring their access for the future when food fisheries are recovering.

As we recover lost fisheries, the ONA is looking to continue to support a diversity of food sources for the Nation. As part of this work we continue to support water and fish ceremonies that take place in this area throughout the year. This past year the ONA looked to small lakes, specifically Pennask Lake. Historically this was a significant fishing site to the Syilx Nation as both a fishery and camp. This year the ONA supported the harvest of 4,200 rainbow trout for food distribution to communities. The ONA will be working to revitalize the Pennask fisheries as a fishing site for food, social and ceremonial purposes.

The kł cpə lk stiḡ Hatchery is also central to our food sovereignty initiatives. We are currently operating a pilot (feasibility) study releasing 15,000 Chinook per year. This expansion will give us the ability to grow 400,000 – 500,000 Chinook fry for release, and could mean up to 7,500 adult Chinook returning to the Okanagan River. In conjunction with the fry releases there will be work on restoring habitat for fry to smolt rearing. Outplants of fry will be in multiple locations so as to restore the Chinook into as many tributaries of the Okanagan River as possible. 5,000-10,000 returning fish will then create a food fishing opportunity and will be the beginning of a restored naturally spawning population.

The persistent degradation of ecosystems has continued to erode the ability to retain many of our other first foods as well. The Syilx Nation has title and rights throughout its territory, which includes the right to be secure in the pursuit of their means of harvesting practices. The Syilx people have always cared for the wildlife and wildlife habitat of their territory and have a continuing responsibility to steward these resources for future generations. For several years, the ONA and its member communities have met with and expressed concern to the Province about the need to change how the Province managed wildlife and regulated hunting in the Syilx territory.

The ONA and the province of British Columbia have been negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to come to mutual agreement on hunting

and wildlife management in Syilx territory for fifteen years. The BC – CEC Accord under our Government-to-Government MOU process is currently underway. It is designed to build upon recognition and will create the space necessary for joint land and resource decision-making tables (including wildlife) with the Nation beginning with the CEC's top priority areas on the Territory. In the interim, ONA, Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), and the Okanagan-Shuswap Natural Resource District (DOS) staff have been taking an ad hoc approach to collaborate on wildlife projects where values were aligned and funding was available. Currently, all four organizations are undertaking wildlife and wildlife habitat projects and carrying out one-off projects within Syilx Territory.

With the onset of broader consumers interest in local and wild foods, black st'xalq (huckleberries) have also come under increased pressure, and are being harvested at a commercial scale not seen before. This activity is also robbing skemxist (bear) of a natural food source. Chiefs' Executive Council continue to lobby the newly-formed NDP government to immediately put a stop to the commercial harvesting of wild st'xalq and develop stringent regulations to govern the harvesting of wild foods in BC.

## Invigorating Syilx Values and Cultural Practices

Expressions of Syilx values and cultural practices take many forms and vary based on the cycles of life. Though rooted in traditions they are continuing to flourish today. Our youth and community members are learning our language, about the land, and captikwł that define our values and laws. The ONA is determined to support a range of actions across the Nation that enables our values and practices to continue to rise.

The ONA, guided by Elders and speakers, continues to be committed to the preservation and practice of Syilx language and culture. The revitalization of language brings wellness back to our communities while rejuvenating our inherent connection to culture and territory. This year the ONA released the book sḡkḡlip mḡas iḡ ḡḡyḡyix stqip, How Coyote Broke the Salmon Dam. This story is part of our children's captikwł series developed through ONA Wellness as a resource for our communities and our Nation.





Another language resource that was developed as a result of the publication of the Water Book is a Water Language poster. This poster is for Nation band schools, and acts as another educational resource for promoting cultural awareness and connection.

We honored our ancestors by performing a series of annual Salmon Ceremonies. From June 15-20th, 2017, a series of five Salmon Ceremonies took place throughout the Columbia Basin. These Salmon Ceremonies empower our people throughout the territory, providing the opportunity to both honor ancestors and continue to conduct ceremonies for the successful return of the salmon. All locations are historical fishing and harvesting sites of the Syilx people from time immemorial, and included snq'əq'ulaʔxntn (Kettle Falls), sʔuxʷqaynm (Castlegar), skʔyknntn (Revelstoke), and nʔaylntn (McIntyre Dam).

ONA and the Incheilium Language House Association (ILHA) joined in partnership to co-host both the snq'əq'ulaʔxntn (Kettle Falls), sʔuxʷqaynm (Castlegar) ceremonies. In addition, during the ceremony at nʔaylntn there was a ceremonial release of 15,000 Okanagan Chinook fry. Such ceremonies and releases contribute to kʔ cʔəlk stim (to cause to come back) and are central to Syilx community's food security.

Language and cultural revitalization continues to be a key priority for the Nation. Incorporating and reconnecting our children and youth to culture and language is at the forefront of these efforts. It is necessary for our children learn nsyilxcən as early as possible so that they may fully embody the culture and language.

As part of the Syilx Early Years program has developed numerous educational resources that are distributed throughout the Nation. One of the innovative resources includes the iʔ citxʷtət (Our Home) tool. It was developed as a speech and language instrument for use in community based programs. This resource, which is part of a range of tools developed, promotes the use of oral history and the nsyilxcən language. It further combines the teaching of traditional knowledge through play that allows children to use their imagination while developing their speech. This cultural resource was developed in conjunction with elders, artists, storytellers, language speakers and early childhood educators.

kwu ʔast is currently in it's forth year of working with children ages 7-12. It is a mental health prevention program based on Syilx teachings and beliefs that supports the development of identity, self-esteem, self-expression and self-awareness. Our group project was a favorite part with a lot of the children. A large part of this was because the coordinator had all the children participate in the planning process, as a group they picked the puppets, what captikʷt story we would use and what characters they would make a puppet of.

Our longest standing program is RNative Voice, has been delivered in our communities for over 10 years. This program continues to utilize Syilx teachings and language all through its curriculum for ages 13-18. Due to the length the program has been running, we are currently looking at undertaking a review and evaluation of RNV in keeping with best practice. The objective is ensure this program can best serve the needs of the youth. We need to be diligent in keeping up with the changing needs of youth. ONA will be meeting not only with youth to get feedback but previous attendees, band staff, cultural resource people and other key informants. The evaluation and re-development will take place within the next fiscal year with implementation to take place in September 2018. This work is necessary so that programs are responsive and evolve as our communities evolve.



## Syilx captikʷt Forum

In partnership with the En'owkin Centre, the ONA hosted a Stories Forum on January 29 and 30, 2018. The forum continues the important work of articulating Syilx ways of thinking. When we look at stories they explain not only the collective mythology but also outline how to interact socially and within the family, and create a wider, more holistic and integrated point of view.

This was the second forum that was held to examine Syilx captikʷt and how it connects with the development and operation of a Syilx organization. More specifically, this work looked to provide direction and input into the You Empowered Strong (YES) project. Therefore discussions included how to integrate Syilx values and principles within captikʷt and the utilization of stories in family violence.

This event provided direction for the work on de-normalization of violence from a cultural lens, community lens and from front line workers. Further it engaged leadership, through the invitation to the CEC, by providing space for discussion and open dialogue for feedback and community engagement about the Syilx perspective regarding laws and roles within families and community.

The forum featured a panel of traditional knowledge keepers, academics and researchers to inform the group and provide guidance in the analysis of captikʷt. They spoke on their experience in the analysis of story and its contemporary application in our work.

By having this forum we continue to ensure culture and tradition are components of dealing with the impacts of violence in community.



# Snaqsilx: Fostering Dialogue and Discussion

“snaqsilx refers to all Syilx people and their connection to one another, to their land, and all living things”.

At ONA we recognize that inclusion and fostering relationships are at the core of successful achievements. To be effective in all our programs, projects and initiatives demands that we continuously and consistently build upon all our interactions through a wide range of working relationships. These connections enable our actions to be dynamic while greatly enhancing our capacities for a diversity of responses. We are committed to engagement and participation at all levels of work that we carry forward.

## Community Voices at the Table: Committees and Working Groups

At the core of ONA is our Nation members. As such, we are community focused and we rely on the guidance and direction of our members to enrich how our work is forwarded. It is the experience and voice of communities from all parts of the Nation that resonate and make for success.

In order to actualize this commitment we have a number of committees and working groups that provide the community perspective. These committees work collectively with cultural and ecological knowledge keepers on all major issues to address project and policy impacts, benefits and management concerns, all the while reinforcing the Syilx Nation’s collective interests on the territory.

ONA CEC Mandated Committees include:

- Wellness Committee
- Health Sub-Committee
- Education
- Child and Family Sub-Committee
- Syilx Indian Residential School Committee
- Energy Executive Committee (EEC)
- Natural Resource Committee (NRC)
- NRC Forestry Working Group
- NRC Culture and Heritage Working Group

Our Committees are responsive to a range of work being carried out on the ground.





The Wellness Committee is central to reaching our Nation Wellness goals; providing input and guidance on a wide range of joint wellness initiatives and strategies. As such the Committee continues to have high volumes of health planning at the Nation table. This year the South Okanagan Aboriginal Patient Navigator was supplemented and approved as a full-time position, which is a critical resource to community. Resulting from this action Interior Health (IH) found funding to allow for the position to become full-time. At the same time \$163,000 was distributed to the communities for traditional wellness, support for nurse practitioner, mental health and family violence supports. The Wellness Committee also worked diligently on the Nation's priority of addressing fentanyl. They brought in fentanyl awareness information, training and distribution of naloxone and gathering information on how to resolve this crisis in community.

This Committee continued to enhance partnerships. A few fundamental advances included the development of the relationship with the local MCFD Executive Director of Service. Discussions began to develop formal protocols with the local MCFD teams to plan for services for Syilx citizens. We also met with UBCO School of Social Work Director John Graham to establish an Aboriginal Advisory to the School of Social Work, and the Committee is now the Advisory to the School of Social Work. This Advisory will now meet 2-4 times per year to provide advice and input into the School. As an outcome, this group supported the development of a Community Advisory Committee to the School of Social Work to provide community advice to the Director.

Another critical Wellness priority is to ensure better health care and supports for Nation members. This includes the development of a Cancer Care Strategy. The ONA, with the support of Committee members, met with the BC Cancer Agency in Kelowna for introductions, to build relationships and discuss how to better support indigenous citizens at the clinic. Another key measurable in achieving this goal was to join in partnership with IH to secure most of our Nation communities now have access to meditech, which will improve community-based access to health information and health care provided by the Nurse Practitioner. There was a feasibility study completed by the ONA on the opportunity to increase the youth treatment beds at Ashnola at the Crossing. Specifically, there will be beds for 10 Indigenous youth in the interior region. An indigenous programming review and recommendations regarding the programming was also completed to enhance their services for indigenous youth who attend.

The Syilx people are gaining strength every day. As a Nation, we are working to reclaim and restore our traditional Syilx ways of being and knowing. As part of

this restoration, the ONA continues to rely on the Syilx Indian Residential School (SIRS) Committee. This group is highly dedicated, committed, and has provided invaluable in providing direction to ONA staff on numerous projects. This Committee, represented by the seven member communities, has expressed that they feel a true sense of belonging and healing from participating on this Committee. They have a true ownership role in ensuring that these projects move forward, taking into account their knowledge and experience.

Significantly, they guided the development and implementation of the Syilx IRS Nation Monument and the Syilx IRS Healing Strategy Focus Group Sessions that were held in each community. The information gathered through these sessions will be used to develop a Syilx IRS Healing Strategy. The Committee also lead in the development of the Syilx IRS book, which will be released this coming year. Also, ONA has hosted numerous workshops and developed resources for Nation members focusing on telling the story, providing space for families to heal, and revitalizing cultural and language activities.

The sustainability of our forests is an issue that continues to evolve. To respond to the member community's needs to actively address forestry development and the health of our forests the Natural Resource Committee (NRC) established a Forestry Working Group. The Working Group met multiple times to improve the collective approach to forestry issues in the Syilx territory while respecting individual member community's forestry agreements. They also initiated the development of forestry policy and strategy on the territory, particularly if further demands for collective Nation-based involvement in forestry planning and decision-making are denied by BC.

## Finding Solutions in Partnerships

The challenges we face require partnership across the Nation, within the region and across BC and Canada. From working with grassroots organizations and NGOs to ally institutions and governmental bureaucracies, ONA has showcased an insatiable capacity to model successful partnerships. We continue to showcase an advanced ability to work with a multitude of organizations to find solutions and collaborative processes for a more sustainable future. These partnerships amplify our voice and presence while also allowing us to assert a broader range of influence on multiple stages. It is beyond the scope of this report to fully account for the full range of dynamic partnerships that ONA is currently engaged in, yet some examples may illustrate this work.

On March 22, 2018 as part of World Water Day, the ONA hosted our 4th siw+k™ (Water) Forum. This event brought together 85 people, including Syilx leadership, elders, traditional knowledge keepers and community



members, alongside regional and provincial governments, NGO representatives and academics to connect out on the land, share perspectives and build a collective *siwʔkʷ* (water) consciousness. The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and BC Ministry of Forest, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (MoFLNRO) are both ONA partners on the collaborative Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) project. Together, we are continuing to develop and build on working relationships necessary for better water management, specifically regarding Okanagan Lake within the Territory. Participants engaged in dialogue on drinking water protection, wetlands, habitat and other important issues to uptake all our responsibilities to manage water responsibly.

The tour began with a Syilx Water Ceremony on *nʔxʷaqʷaʔstn* (Mission Creek). Attendees then toured the watershed with Syilx elder’s and knowledge holders who shared place names, protocols and the Syilx natural laws regarding the *ukʷnakinx* (Okanagan) watershed. The Syilx guides exhibited how water centric planning and management is a long-standing concept that Syilx people continue to practice as fundamental guiding principles.

The Syilx Nation is a leader in the restoration of salmon in the territory. In October 2017 we hosted a “15 Years of Restoring Salmon Habitat in the *qʷawsitkʷ* (Okanagan River)” workshop. Participants included government representatives from the Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO), MoFLNR, Indigenous organizations including the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, NGOs and environmental and engineering consultants from across BC and Washington State.

Participants were provided the opportunity to learn about what enabled a successful restoration of salmon habitat and how to apply lessons learned. Over the last 15 years the ONA and a multitude of project partners have worked persistently to restore spawning and rearing habitat for Columbia River sockeye salmon on the Okanagan River. In order to be successful, the ONA has engaged in a wide range of practices including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, best management practices, measured stream geomorphology and the natural habitat features, all guiding the restoration work. As such, we are not just becoming leaders but we are sharing experiences to build on best practices and continue to forward our partnerships.

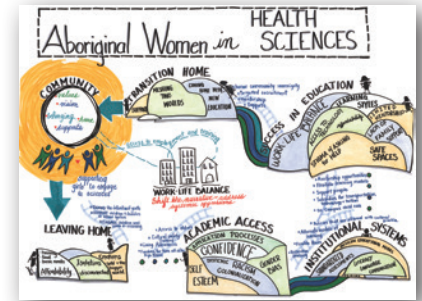
There are numerous “barriers” faced by Aboriginal women even prior to pursuing a formal and post-secondary education. These include commonly identified issues such as leaving community, employment, childcare, and financial stress of accessing education. It is also recognized that the challenges faced by our youth, and particularly

our young women, in attaining post-secondary education and secure employment demands active collaboration. Partnerships continue to enable us to cultivate capacity for Nation members. Knowing

some of these common issues faced by our members, the ONA pursued a project with the Status of Women Canada. The main goal of the Aboriginal Women in Health Sciences project is to increase opportunities for Aboriginal women in the health sciences sector. Through the identification of barriers and working with key partners (including the education system, health sciences institutions and employers) we are finding ways to empower and support women to access employment opportunities, education and training in a wide ranges of choices in the health science fields.

Building upon the extensive community engagement process in 2016-2017, dialogue continued with communities on strategies at local, nation and provincial levels. These focused particularly on increase access to health science careers and a particular focus on youth. We have enhanced relationships with internal partners such as BRIDGES and community partners, in particular Interior Health Authority (Aboriginal Recruitment) and First Nations Health Authority (Human Resources), recognizing the shared objective to increase the number of Indigenous employees providing health care to our communities. We are also continuing to collaborate with educational and training institutions as critical players in the education of our youth to prepare them for health careers. For example, we are developing resources and support mechanisms, and with Okanagan Training and Development Council (OTDC) we will launch their video focusing on health sciences careers in the spring of 2018.

At the same time we hosted a strategy session, attended by over thirty participants representing communities, OTDC, School Districts, post-secondary institutions, Interior Health, First Nations Health Authority and BC Emergency Health Services. The session identified further strategies and provided the foundation for continued collaboration and partnership towards achieving the project’s overall goal (with each participant making a commitment to this initiative). Most importantly we are laying the foundations for the next year, including planning for the “Exploring Health Careers” event, another multi-agency collaboration aimed at raising awareness of health careers.





## Gathering as a Nation

As Syilx, we have always come together for ceremony, celebration, support and to share in the abundance of our lives. These are essential parts of nurturing unity and spirit throughout the Nation which have profound effects on connecting for social, mental, and physical well-being for all those that take part. As part of continuing to enable such Nation-building opportunities, ONA hosts a variety of gatherings, including 11 annual events alongside a range of meetings, forums and programs that draw members from across the territory.

Although various gatherings are highlighted throughout this Annual Report, two events that illustrate the importance of coming together are the “Seeking Our snaqsilx” Gathering and the OKA Commemoration Run, which took place during the ONA’s 2017 Annual General Assembly.

From February 5-6, 2017 Okanagan Nation Alliance’s (ONA) BRIDGES program, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, and Okanagan Indian Band’s Pre-Employment Support team hosted the “Seeking Our snaqsilx” Gathering that brought Syilx youth and front line workers (social, education, employment, HR, Syilx organizations and industry) for a 2 day event that connected youth with the various programs that can holistically support them in pursuing their educational and employment dreams. This event had 54 Syilx youth from all Okanagan communities, 9 industry partners and 33 frontline staff all participating. The event included engaging workshops, interactive panel discussions, cultural activities, inspirational Okanagan youth speakers, resource presentations and display tables from Bands, organizations and industry that want to connect with youth. It was unique in that youth set the agenda and identified the topics. The opportunity to bring youth and those that provide the services within the community to have a dialogue about the gaps and barriers to services was a critical conversation that improved services and access for youth.

This event signifies the important role of partnerships for ensuring our youth are successful. It exemplifies the progress being made by our Nation in addressing the gaps and barriers that have prevented our youth from gaining skills and knowledge from employment and training programs and services that were meant to serve them. It was an opportunity to hear from the youth what they see as the barriers and seek input from them about how to address these barriers.

On August 17, 2017 as part of the Okanagan Nation’s Annual General Assembly (AGA) the OKA Commemoration Run took place from chuchuwaya (Hedley) to swiw’s (Osoyoos), BC to commemorate the OKA Run for Peace. The original run took place in the summer 1990 over six weeks and saw more than 73 Okanagan Nation members run from Syilx to Kanehsatà:ke territory to show solidarity with the Mohawk resistance to developments on their sacred burial grounds during the Oka Crisis.

“This Commemoration Run is meant to honor and recognize this time Syilx history where the Syilx Nation took a stand for peace and solidarity with the Kahnawá:ke during the Oka Crisis and whereby all Indian Nations continue to do so to protect their lands, peoples and resources” stated Chief Clarence Louie.

These historical acts continue to resonate with the current need to face the challenges imposed on Syilx territory and our member communities and Indigenous peoples across Canada. Though the Oka Crisis highlighted the struggles faced by Indigenous communities in Canada we continue to demand for the right and responsibility to protect our sacred sites and territories. The Nation invited Ellen Gabriel, a Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Territory Indigenous human rights activist and Leader and key spokesperson during the Oka Crisis, to the event.





# kʷu\_ alá?: We are Still Here

One of the key achievements of the Nation was the unveiling of the Syilx Indian Residential School Nation monument.

With the dedication and guidance of the Syilx Indian Residental School Committee on November 28, 2017 we officially unveiled the Syilx Indian Residential School Nation monument. It was important to the committee that the monument be placed where the train and the cattle trucks came to gather Syilx children and take them away to Indian Residential Schools. Therefore the monument is located next to the kł cpə̀ lk stiḿ Hatchery in snpíntktn.

The Nation monument is dedicated to all Syilx (Okanagan) people who went to Indian Residential School, especially to those who did not make it home. It is a testament to what our people have endured—it is a tribute to our strength and resiliency. The Indian residential school system significantly impacted the Syilx Nation and the effects continue to be felt today. It also serves to educate our people and others about the tragedy and inhumanity our children experienced through Indian Residential Schools era in Canada.

Eric Mitchell, a Syilx Indian Residential School survivor, implored other Indian Residential School survivors to “Find it in your heart to share your story. The more you talk about it, the more you understand.” It is through the sharing of these stories that the information surrounding the monument came to be.

The monument houses a series of five panels that are intended to educate people about the Syilx Nation and the effects that the Indian Residential School system had on our people. As a central feature of the monument, Syilx artist ‘Smoker’ Virgil Marchand created a sculpture titled “kʷu səckm̄ antaʔx iʔ scəcmalaʔtət kl” citxwtət (Bringing Our Children Home)”. Marchand is a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes and is himself a survivor of the Indian Residential School system. This sculpture is significant in that it honours the many ways in which we are calling those children who had been torn away from their parents, families and communities back to heal and move forward.

Over 200 people attended the unveiling ceremony from our Syilx communities, including many Indian Residential School survivors and interested citizens at large. When the monument was unveiled drummers sang and the survivors present, their families and community members danced around the monument in celebration! “We are still here”.





# k<sup>w</sup>u<sub>~</sub>tl tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup> Our Inherent Connection

We, the Syilx People, feel a deep connection with our land, relatives, and the trees, rocks and all living things that share the environment.

This connection also reverberate through our personal and community ties.

The Nation envisions a sustainable territorial land, culture, and ways of life hundreds of years from now. By managing our land responsibly today, we entrust our future generations to a healthy land base and clean waters. By ensuring that familial systems are retained we are foraging new ways to affirm these inextricable bonds. That message has resonated throughout the Nation as we continue to cherish and protect our lands and to safeguard the well-being and quality of life of our people.

## Rejuvenating Diversity for Our Relatives

Decades of industrial development practices have degraded our tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup> and siw+k<sup>w</sup>, fragmented ecosystems, and in some cases nearly destroyed habitats and species. Though we are not usually the ones responsible for this degradation, we recognize the need to restore all parts of the tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup> as part of our inherent connection and responsibility.

The Syilx Nation remain vigilant in their dedication to restore all salmon species back to the territory. In the 1930's the Okanagan River was deeply impacted

by channelization, in an attempt to divert waters to prevent flooding and support industrial agriculture. This was followed in the 1960s by the Columbia River Treaty, which led to the creation of industrial reservoirs and the building of hydro-electric dams, making it impossible for fish passage, while deeply impacting Syilx cultural and food systems. Years of hard work, direct action and political advocacy, particularly in the last two decades, have seen the ONA working with provincial, federal government, the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) and transboundary entities, alongside local and regional agencies to restore ecosystems on the Okanagan River, and rebuild this sc'win run from 3,000 to 500,000 sockeye salmon returning annually. Partnerships and tribal collaboration are at the heart of this work. The ONA, along with Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), have worked for years in order to re-introduce sc'win (sockeye salmon) into the Okanagan natural habitat. These Tribal partnerships continue on many fronts, such as the Chinook restoration plan amongst other initiatives to ensure all our species and habitats are restored and protected.

"These are our sacred responsibilities entrusted to us by our Creator. Therefore, our People are very excited to finally launch our first pilot year of releasing summer Chinook fry into the Columbia Basin system," affirmed Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.







## siwtk<sup>w</sup> is Life

For Syilx (Okanagan) people, the ways of knowing siwtk<sup>w</sup> are embedded in our language and bequeathed to us by our ancestors. Maintaining the integrity of siwtk<sup>w</sup> is essential to our identity and is entrenched in our responsibilities to our homelands. siwtk<sup>w</sup> is our most sacred medicine.

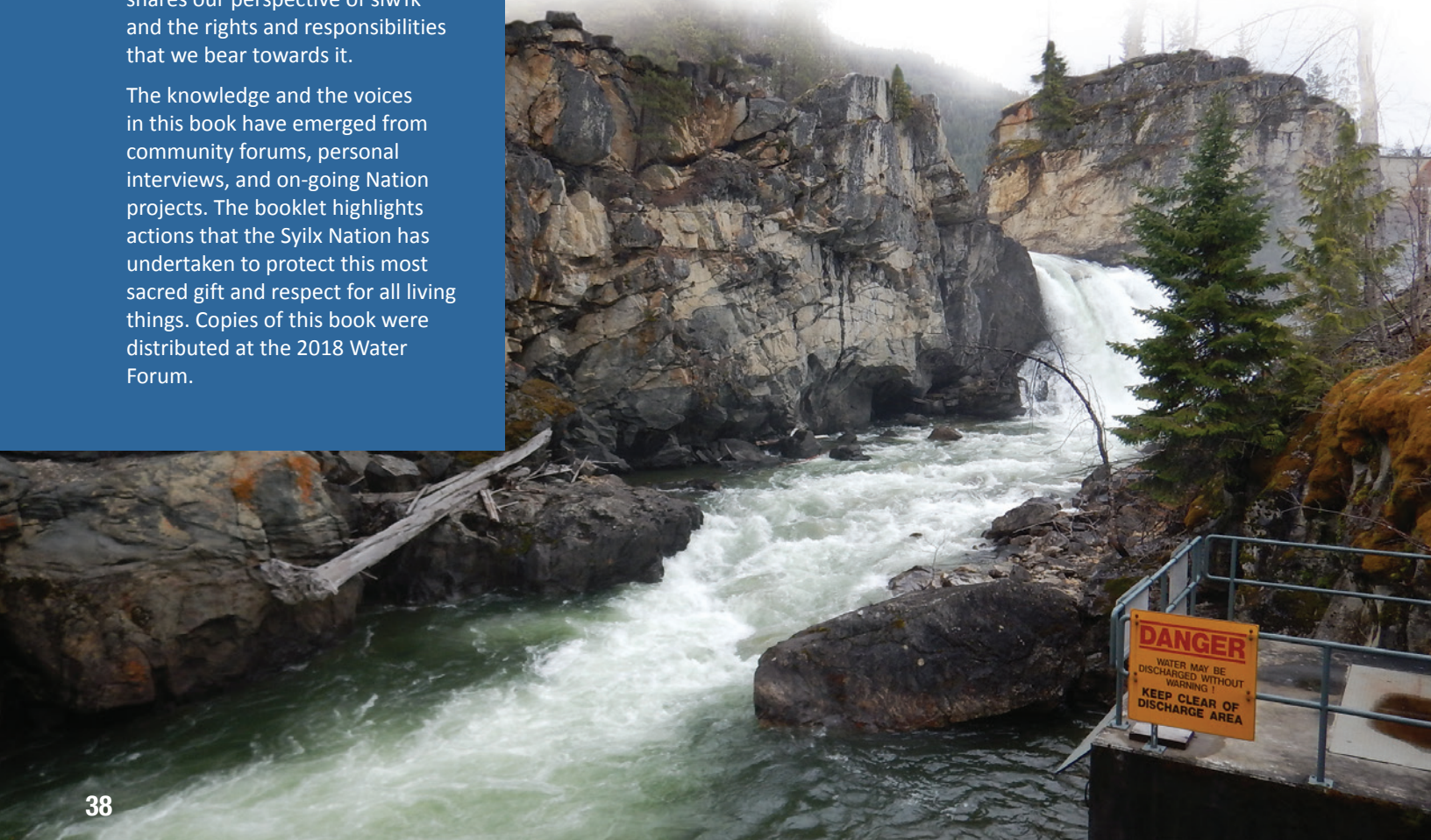
In acknowledging this responsibility with siwtk<sup>w</sup> the ONA has published the booklet “nsiwtkwcn: The Language of the Water”. This booklet is both an articulation of the relationship that we share with siwtk<sup>w</sup> and a call to action to others to reflect on their relationship with this vital gift. It is grounded in the Syilx Nation siwtk<sup>w</sup> Declaration and shares our perspective of siwtk<sup>w</sup> and the rights and responsibilities that we bear towards it.

The knowledge and the voices in this book have emerged from community forums, personal interviews, and on-going Nation projects. The booklet highlights actions that the Syilx Nation has undertaken to protect this most sacred gift and respect for all living things. Copies of this book were distributed at the 2018 Water Forum.

In October 2017, the Chinook Recovery Plan has been reviewed by DFO and the ONA's aquaculture license has been expanded to include Chinook. As part of the recovery efforts for 2017 we partnered with Colville Confederated Tribes (“CCT”) for a pilot project that would bring 15,000 eyed-eggs of Okanagan Summer Chinook from the CCT Chinook Hatchery to the kc'pelk stim Hatchery in preparation for a 2018 ceremonial release and broodstock collection activities of up to five Chinook females from the Oliver area in 2017.

One of the most serious and devastating impacts of hydroelectric dam operations in the Basin has been upon the Okanagan fisheries, including a variety of salmon. The ONA is committed to not only rejuvenating salmon back to the Okanagan sub-basin, but to all parts of our territory. Our deep, ancestral connections to the whole of our territory, including the Upper Columbia, are still recognized through a wide range of ceremonies and practices that continue today.

The Syilx Nation has paved the way for the return of Salmon into the Upper Columbia with the success of the return of Okanagan Sockeye into Skaha Lake. The return of salmon demonstrates that sockeye can be restored in the Upper Columbia as the migration for sockeye is the same distance from Grand Coulee to Penticton as it is to Kettle Falls. Based on lessons learned from Salmon Recovery in Okanagan Basin, we aim to establish interim recovery objectives for anadromous fish to Kettle River, Upper Columbia Arrow Lakes, and Slocan for Sockeye and Chinook, followed by Steelhead based on secure multi-year funding. Interim small lakes, resident salmon management recovery plans for harvest are under way, including opportunities (e.g. Whatshan Kokanee, Arrow Lakes Rainbow Trout), and invasive finfish control (e.g., carp, bass, yellow perch, walleye, pike).





In order to prepare for the return of salmon the ONA are actively engaged in a number of projects, programs and initiatives within the Columbia that enable for the rejuvenation of the local ecosystems. The over-represented year-classes of sturgeon issue, in the Lower Columbia, below Hugh Keenleyside Dam, still exists. As part of the Federal White Sturgeon Recovery Strategy, the removal of these fish, that pose a genetic diversity risk, are targeted for removal. We will continue to pursue opportunities for Nation Members to be involved in their removal, and have them available for harvest.

ONA have continued project development and delivery in a diverse spectrum of projects (i.e., BC Hydro Water Use Planning projects [Mica Dam, Revelstoke Dam, Hugh Keenleyside Dam, Duncan Dam]), habitat restoration projects (Deer Creek Kokanee access, Pass Creek riparian habitat enhancement), to native mussel detection and distribution.

We continue to strengthen relationships with external stakeholders, including NGO groups active in the eastern extent of the Territory; including Slocan Lake Stewardship Society, Arrow Lakes Environmental Stewardship Society, Salmo Streamkeepers, Slocan Streamkeepers and Wetland Stewards, Kootenay lake Partnership, Brilliant Headpond Stewardship Steering Committee, Trail Wildlife Association, Christina Lake Stewardship Society. We also continue to strengthen relationships with industry, including: Celgar, Interfor, FortisBC, CPC, Teck Metals. We also look to continue to strengthen relationships with the Regional Districts of Kootenay-Boundary, Central Kootenay, and Columbia-Shuswap.

The Fish in School (FinS) program is one of the key fish education programs for youth in the region, particularly in regards to sockeye salmon. Our hope is that students may become future advocates for both salmon and their habitat. This year we extended the program to fourteen schools, including into the Columbia at Glenmerry and Twin Rivers Elementary schools, providing tanks and sockeye eggs.

We provided further educational services within the Columbia as well, as guest speakers to Selkirk College's Fish & Wildlife and Integrated Environmental Program students to provide an overview on ONA's Salmon reintroduction workplan, as well as a summary of our varied projects – in support of creating greater interest in ONA as a possible employer for graduates.

mulx (black cottonwood) provide crucial habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species. This tree is extremely important for our People, who for millennia utilized it for survival. In collaboration with the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, En'owkin Centre, UBCO and other contributors this project

saw the planting of 150 cottonwoods in ten selected riparian areas throughout the territory. It also acted as an opportunity to engage Syilx youth and elders, along with the regional public in connecting to and educating about the importance of these essential trees.

As the work of ONA progresses we are increasingly recognized for professional and technical capacity and leaders in the field of riparian and habitat restoration. The Ellis Creek Fish Passage (ECFP) project further illustrates our commitment to and capacity for habitat restoration. A part of Ellis Creek currently functions as a sediment catchment basin, which is located near the creek's mouth and is bordered on the downstream end by a rock weir that was constructed to retain transported sediment and prevent it from entering Okanagan River. The rock weir is not passable by fish species year round. In addition, the ongoing process of sediment extraction over time negatively impacts the local environment and initiates extensive maintenance requirements.

Through this project the ONA is currently creating fish friendly access through Ellis Creek's sediment collection basin. We are determining the optimal project design, carrying out this design with construction, and performing site rehabilitation and monitoring to ensure the restoration is successful.

A similar process was recently carried out on Shuttleworth Creek's sediment basin, and the ECFP will be streamlined due to what we have learned from Shuttleworth basin including: a steering committee is in place, scoping design possibilities has been focused on one feasible option, and we will be learning from the maintenance of Shuttleworth basin.

Once completed, this restoration work will provide annual fish passage, increase fish populations, improve spawning habitats and overall habitat diversity while opening up 4 kms of stream habitat. Rehabilitation of the environment will also allow for permanent riparian vegetation to be planted, also assisting in regenerating fish and wildlife habitat. It will also allow for easier clean out and maintenance of the sediment basin due to less fines being collected and no increase in costs or liability to the Ministry in terms of Public and Community safety.

For the Syilx people, ki?lawna? is a significant part of our laws and protocols. ki?lawna?, as are other species, are an important part of our creation stories reminding us of our responsibilities to the tmx<sup>w</sup>ulax<sup>w</sup>. The decline of the population demonstrates that the health and security of the landscape is in dire need of protection. For generations, habitat fragmentation, ecosystem degradation and a number of other factors have contributed to the decline of ki?lawna?.





The ONA has been taking action to reduce pressures on *ki?lawna?* and recover threatened populations. Most recently, in collaboration with ONA, Clayton Lamb at the University of Alberta Department of Biological Sciences, released the results of a new study that provides insight on the relationships between *ki?lawna?* and road density. The results of Lamb's study provide a scientific foundation for access management and habitat securement for this iconic and culturally significant species in the Kettle Granby region. This information will support similar work in the North Cascades and other threatened populations in the BC Southern Interior.

The ONA has also hosted a number of meetings with neighboring First Nations and Conservation Northwest as part of a Joint Nation Grizzly Bear recovery initiative. The group's main objective is to recover threatened populations of *ki?lawna?* within our Territories. ONA is excited to seeing the results of positive working partnerships and raising the importance of this work to ensure *ki?lawna?* is recovered. This includes working closely with national Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Sub-committee on Species at Risk (COSEWIC) regarding *ki?lawna?*.



It is our duty and responsibility to protect and care for the lands that are inhabited by our relations. The Province of British Columbia, Government of Canada, as well as the State of Washington and the United States Government have a fiduciary obligation to protect the Grizzly Bear from potential extinction.

The ONA is calling on them to act promptly and effectively to implement cooperative actions for the protection of *ki?lawna?*.

## Monitoring for Informed Decision-Making

The ONA continues to be out on the land throughout the territory monitoring water and species. In the face of a rapidly changing environment it is necessary that we thoroughly understand the shifts occurring on our territory, and the challenges that these pose. This work spans across the Nation and assists the CEC in making informed decisions.

One of these projects currently being managed is determining the final design of the WKTL corridor path. Environmental assessments are being conducted throughout the entire proposed corridor to alleviate, minimize, and mitigate any potential environmental risks caused by construction and operation of the transmission line. Fish and aquatic habitat assessments were conducted for all streams, lake, and wetlands within the proposed corridor.

The ONA conducted the wildlife and fisheries and aquatic assessments of the project corridor, working alongside community technicians from OKIB, WFN, and UNB. The field work, to conduct stream, wetland, and lake surveys was completed with more planned.

To determine the water needs of both humans and fish flow needs must be assessed. The Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) project is a collaborative project between ONA, Ministry of Forest, Land, and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) and the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB). The goal of the project is to develop Environmental Flow Needs (EFNs) ("target flows") and Critical Flows ("minimum flows") for water management in Okanagan streams. A list of 19 priority streams was developed collaboratively at the beginning of the project.

This 2-year project gathers field data in order to assess EFNs for fish for water allocation purposes and critical Flows for drought management





purposes. Field efforts included the installation and maintenance of hydrometric stations throughout the basin, measurement of habitat parameters using transect-based methods to calculate Weighted Useable Width (WUW) and the develop EFNs and Critical flows based on WUW analysis at varying flows.

Alongside these actions, the ONA initiated a partnership with UBCO and FLNRO on the connection between fire disturbance and measuring the Mule deer population growth rates relative to the predator activity. The project aims to help restore vital mule deer populations by providing evidence of how wildfire affects the recruitment, survival, and abundance of mule deer on the landscape.

While it has been known for millennia that fire is a critical part of mule deer habitat, and thus Syilx Nation food security, no population modelling in relation to wildfire affected habitat exists. Bringing to light the link between mule deer and fire dependent habitat will support further Nation landscape responsibility objectives, such as prescribed fire and improved forest management standards. In 2018 the project will begin to measure the predator activity and population growth rates of mule deer relative to wildfire affected habitat. So far 30 mule deer have been GPS collared in the Boundary region (Rock Creek fire to Gladstone Provincial Park) and the West Okanagan (Garnet Valley to the Testalinden fire) with a goal to collar 50.

In the Revelstoke area, approximately 300 turtle observations were recorded. At the Airport Marsh Red Devil Hill site a peak of 44 turtles were counted and a total of nine basking logs were anchored to add habitat complexity for WPT. Both coarse woody debris for hiding cover and adequate basking habitat were lacking. The surveys confirmed that the logs had remained in place and that they were being used by turtles, as well as waterfowl species, great blue heron, and river otter.

Some highlights of the technical projects to monitor the Eastern territory include:

The Wildlife Effectiveness Monitoring of Revegetation in Kinbasket Reservoir which monitors spiders, beetles, and birds to provide feedback on how to improve habitat for wildlife through methods other than re-planting.

Our staff studied the potential impacts of additional electrical generators proposed for Mica Dam and how the increased amount of water stored would affect wildlife. In 2017, we documented the presence of three species of amphibian (Western Toad, Columbia Spotted Frog, and Long-toed Salamander) and two species of reptiles (Common Garter Snake and Western Terrestrial Garter Snake) using the drawdown zone of Kinbasket Reservoir. We suspect that the changing water levels due to hydro operations are impacting the number of amphibians and reptiles in the reservoir. We also studied Common Garter Snake use of the Valemount Peatland and other locations. Our study identified that snakes and amphibians are living in the same key areas and that snakes spend winters at upland locations above changing water levels.

The Wildlife Effectiveness Monitoring and Enhancement Area Identification project for the Lower and Mid Arrow Lakes Reservoir is a long-term wildlife monitoring project to see if past planting efforts increased wildlife use of the high and low shoreline areas of the Arrow Lakes Reservoir. Overall there was no increase in the variety of birds using the areas that were re-planted. This suggests that the current re-planting areas were not sufficient to help wildlife. We also monitored for bats





and found 12 species in the Arrow Lakes Reservoir. Five of these 12 species are of provincial/national conservation concern, including Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Western Small-footed Myotis, Northern Myotis, Fringed Myotis, and Little Brown Myotis.

To see all the projects the ONA is undertaking go to: [www.okanagannation.com](http://www.okanagannation.com)

## Safeguarding siw̓tk̓w for Everyone

We have always spoken with siw̓tk̓w as with a relative, and have gone to siw̓tk̓w so that it will know us. When we have left this earth, our children's children will know siw̓tk̓w based on the connection that we affirm with it today. This is an ancient and inherent bond that has sustained our people for countless generations and is a cornerstone of our material, cultural, and spiritual identity.

siw̓tk̓w was, and continues to be, central to our ceremony and celebration as a Nation. This continues through the ceremony of snxa?l'iwlem (to honour the sacredness of the river) which takes place each year at the Salmon Feast.

The Chiefs are dedicated to upholding our inherent rights and responsibilities to care for siw̓tk̓w. In 2014 they signed the Syilx Nation siw̓tk̓w Declaration as a reflection of the collective voices of the Syilx people. The Declaration is a living document that affirms the commitment that we must safeguard siw̓tk̓w for everyone in the Okanagan and throughout the territory for perpetuity.

Carrying this work forward the ONA has undertaken a number of siw̓tk̓w-based initiatives and actions. We hosted two Water Forums over the last year. Due to the severity of the issues surrounding water management, stewardship and numerous other factors the CEC mandated Annual Water Forums be undertaken to keep our members informed of the work we undertaken in the Territory and the partnerships we are establishing. In May 2017 we hosted the third Water Forum titled 'Forward Thinking: Syilx Knowledge Informing Watershed Management'. This event saw over 130 people attend including Syilx Nation members, government staff, and regional water stakeholders to exchange knowledge and have dialogue in an effort to build relationships and find a common vision for our shared responsibility for water. This gathering also served as an opportunity to find future collaborators and partners as the ONA looks forward to the implementation of the pilot watershed management plans within the 4 key Okanagan watersheds.

"When I think of how important Water is for all living beings in balance and harmony with the natural world, I think of the original agreement of Creation. We as indigenous peoples know and understand how we are inter-dependent on clean, safe, drinking water, which was put here for us by the Creator. It is all of our responsibility to be educated about the sacredness of Water," stated Chief Chad Eneas, Penticton Indian Band.

Furthermore, as a means of strategically working with siw̓tk̓w we initiated Syilx Watershed Responsibility Planning for Shingle Creek, Ashnola River, Kettle River, Inkaneep and Arrow Lakes. This included completion of a Watershed Fragmentation analysis and a draft Syilx Water Responsibility and Planning Methodology that was endorsed by NRC and CEC.

The ONA recognizes that part of our responsibility to siw̓tk̓w is a need to gather, thorough research, a wide range of water topics and issues throughout the territory. Over the last year we conducted seven interviews on Syilx perspectives, historical uses, impacts and continued use of wetlands in the territory. This is part of a broader initiative researching the importance of wetlands to watershed health.

We also continue with research in the Arrow Lakes. We provided studies in relation to the environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Revelstoke Unit 6 Project. Objectives for this project were to understand pre-contact and continuous use of the area and impact that the dam has had on Syilx traditional and on-going practice in the area. Our outcomes included an overview of the Syilx perspective in relation to the s?alt'ikwət (Arrow Lakes) district of Syilx Territory. In addition to interviews, we attended the hunting camp last fall to conduct research in a Syilx camp setting and to reach land based citizens.

To keep community informed and participating in some of the most complex water issues occurring on the territory ONA hosted a Columbia River Treaty community information session "Honouring our Responsibility in the Columbia". Syilx scholar and activist Dr. Jeannette Armstrong provided the keynote and invited guests Dr. Michel and John Sirios from the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) to present on their specific Columbia River Treaty views. These presentations along with our own ONA and CEC Leadership updates provided information required for more discussions about our commitments to undertake the connection to siw̓tk̓w and how this is important in the face of specifically, current developments of the Columbia River Treaty negotiations.



## We are All Connected

As a Nation, we take collective sacred responsibility for our children it is through their connection to their family, and community that ground them in who they are as Syilx. The responsibility for our children includes ensuring that they are connected to their ancestral lands, culture and language.

The Syilx Child and Family Plan is an approach to service delivery that addresses complex issues caused by a history of colonialism. Our plan reinforces our community's capacity to create rebuild healthy environments where children are safe and can thrive. The Syilx culture, as told through our original captik<sup>w</sup>l, the Four Food Chiefs, the nsyilxcan language, and the enowkin'wixw process are the foundation upon which this Plan rests. Families are at the center, and prevention is the focus.

Family Decision Making (FDM) is the guiding principle of the Syilx Child and Family Services. Beginning from the premise of collective responsibility, FDM treats the wider network of kin and community as a source of strength and seeks to actively involve them in child and family wellness. The FDM circle is a process where extended families gather to plan for their children. Coming together to problem solve in this manner has been happening in the Okanagan since long before contact. It delivers services within a Syilx philosophy that respects the autonomy of families and recognizes their strengths and resiliency. FDM believes solutions developed by the family, rather than those imposed by professionals, are more likely to respect and preserve children's bonds to their families, communities and cultures.

Responsibility for a child comes from an inherent collective perspective and holistic worldview and the requirement to consider and acknowledge all aspects of the child's well-being. Child rearing and teachings are a shared responsibility between the family and community with the Nation having an overarching interest in their health and wellbeing. Our people believe that "the children belong to us, we never gave that up". This knowledge is transferred through daily interactions and activities. Through this process we ensure connection to ancestral lands, culture and language for our children and seven generations ahead.

"Between the efforts of the family, the FDM team, and very supportive Social Workers on the front line, we were able to finally obtain a clear, concise outline of the options available for the family on the day of the Family Decision Making Circle. The family came into that circle visible tense and frustrated, and left with obvious and expressed relief, as they had been able to decide on a plan. The plan allowed the children to remain in the home of their grandmothers. As with many aspects of life, success in this scenario required the cooperation of multiple individuals; it took the teamwork of the 'village' to provide the best solution for the children." – FDM Coordinator Davis J., December 2017.







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