



2019-2020

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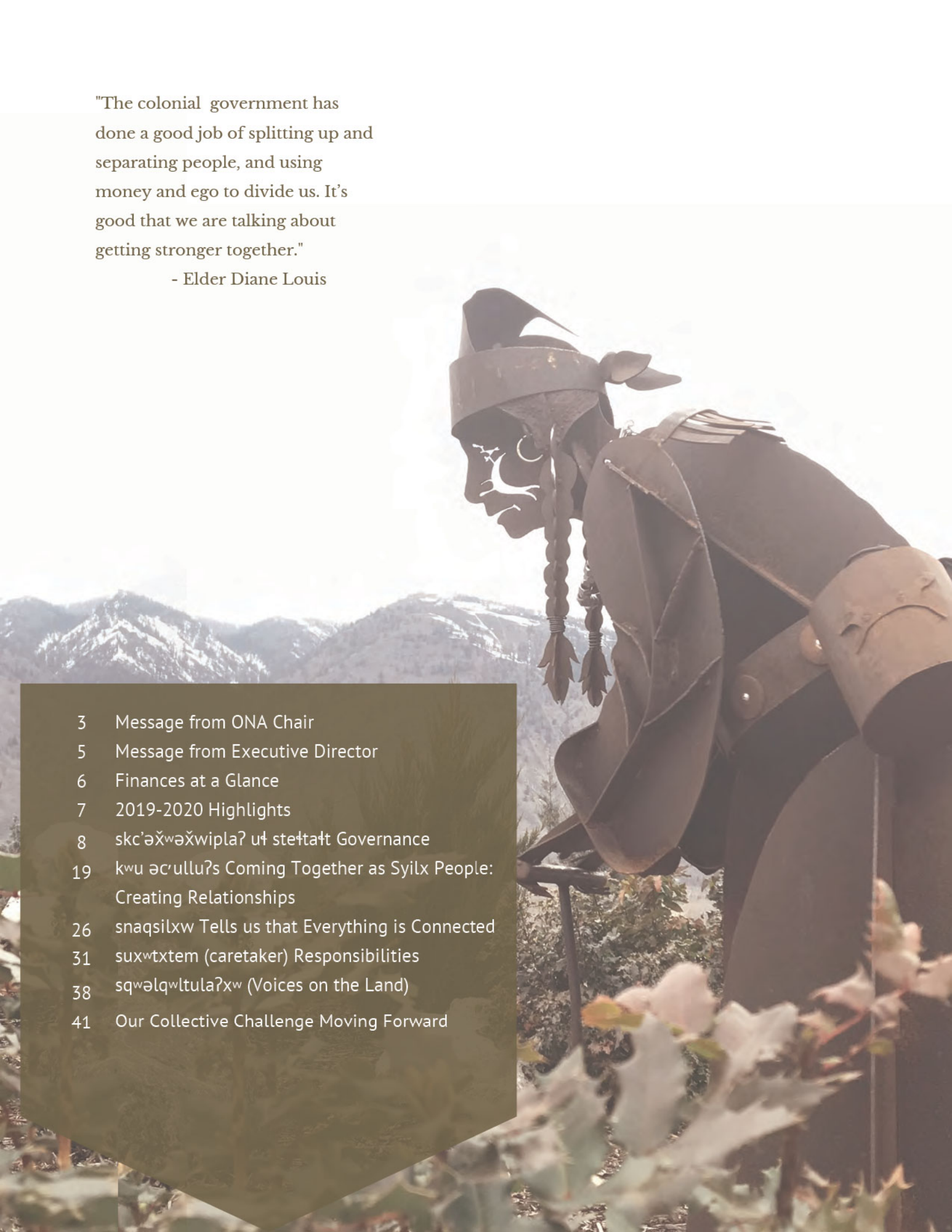


OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

Annual Report

"The colonial government has done a good job of splitting up and separating people, and using money and ego to divide us. It's good that we are talking about getting stronger together."

- Elder Diane Louis

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- 3 Message from ONA Chair
 - 5 Message from Executive Director
 - 6 Finances at a Glance
 - 7 2019-2020 Highlights
 - 8 skc'əḥwəḥwipla? uł stełtałt Governance
 - 19 kwu əc'ullu?s Coming Together as Syilx People:
Creating Relationships
 - 26 snaqsilxw Tells us that Everything is Connected
 - 31 suxwtxtem (caretaker) Responsibilities
 - 38 sqwəlqwtula?xw (Voices on the Land)
 - 41 Our Collective Challenge Moving Forward



i?skt'uk'wk'wps

As Syilx Okanagan people we are united through our common culture, customs and language, nsyilxcən. Our language is steeped in thousands of years of knowledge of this land and contains teachings about natural laws. When we were created a covenant was made that we would act as caretakers of nxwəlxwəltantət, that which gives us life.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was formed in 1981 as the inaugural First Nations government in the Okanagan to work collectively on areas of common concern and to advance and assert Syilx Okanagan Nation Title and Rights over Syilx Okanagan Territory. The ONA Chiefs Executive Council (CEC) is dedicated to upholding our inherent rights and responsibilities.

We are pleased to present to you the Okanagan Nation Alliance Annual Report for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, which reports on initiatives, activities and progress as we work to uphold the Okanagan Nation Declaration.

Sts-oomsts yeelh
S-Ooknahkchinx
OKANAGAN NATION
DECLARATION

Yeeh koo S-Ooknahkehinx kgoothentem yarpnah shchelhecharli
khlktdekminitet kgel yayari yeeh sentsoo-weeptet. Oothl yalah
yarpnah koo tsoot.

We, the Okanagan Nation make this declaration today as a sign for every generation to come. Therefore, we hereby declare that:

Mneemthlet yeeh koo xahtmaskhiluk, koo temskchiwpooh yatlah te temwchoolahwih, yeeh toomhtemhtet.

We are the unconquered aboriginal peoples of this land, our mother;

Telk kgoollhentsooten swilitzetxet yeeh toomhtemhtet, ksnpe-
eeshmenhtemh. kstxetdenhtimh oothl kskgethikchiwenhtemh.

The creator has given us our mother, to enjoy, to manage and to protect;

Telhs meeras gchesapihs, yeeh koo xahtmaskelihwih kooos qucleewix eel toomhtemhtet.

We, the first inhabitants, have lived with our mother from time immemorial:

Yech koo S-Ooknahkehinx yech tzhohchentsootentet koo xeehxeehstim koo keel yawat phichwiktmentem an hchastan yech telh toomhtomhtet.

Our Okanagan Governments have allowed us to share equally in the resources of our mother.

Loot penihkinh tde xeehxeehxexxmentem yeeh stethltethllei yeeh kgel

toomhietemhiet, yeeh telh toomhietemh an hchastantet, yeeh
ixideoplantentet oothl yeeh noonemwheonantentet.

We have never given up our rights to our mother, our mother's resources, our governments and our religion;

Loot penhkinh koo tacks ntzespoolawhahx. Peentk kstxdiplahntemh
yech teth toomhntemh an hchastantet koo kgel yaryat, teth yarpnah
oothl tdeswhoois.

We will survive and continue to govern our mother and her resources for the good of all for all time.



ONA CHAIR MESSAGE

The coronavirus crisis is one that tragically resonates within the collective memory of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. We have all been here before. Colonization was aided by successive waves of European diseases that decimated the Indigenous populations that had no acquired immunity. Often these diseases, such as smallpox, were assisted by the criminal distribution of infected blankets masquerading as trade goods.

COVID-19 is much like those tainted trade goods, the Indian Act, the reserve system, residential schools and the 60s scoop. The virus is simply the latest in a long line of challenges that must be reckoned with and survived.

To do so, we must ensure that our Elders and Knowledge Keepers are protected. They are our bridge to the past which defines who we are as a Nation, and they are particularly vulnerable to this virus. Likewise, we must care for our Youth. They are our bright future. May we all stay safe.

While the world is temporarily on “pause”, it is an appropriate time to reflect upon the past year and some of the progress that was made. Gaming revenue-sharing with all British Columbia (BC) First Nations is now a reality. It is guaranteed for twenty-five years by legislative amendments to the Gaming Control Act. The first payments began to be

distributed to all BC First Nation communities in early October 2019 and have now been completed. This marks the end of a thirty year struggle, the last thirteen years of which were spearheaded and managed by the ONA.

Another major step was taken by the BC Legislature on November 28, 2019 when it unanimously endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). BC is the only Canadian province to do so and the move is an encouraging nod toward reconciliation.

The devil, of course, is in the details, as numerous subsequent negotiations will be required to determine exactly how UNDRIP applies to questions of Title and Rights, as well as resource development and jurisdictions within BC. The recent use of the RCMP to create exclusion zones and remove lawful protesters from Wet’suwet’en traditional territory shows that industry and governments will revert to past colonial practices if given the chance.

Fortunately, these actions were broadly condemned by a coalition consisting of Native organizations, trade unions and human rights organizations. In addition, protests in support of the Wet’suwet’en sprang up all across Canada in a show of solidarity. The lesson here is that legislative changes will surely be needed to implement the true spirit and intent of UNDRIP to

avoid similar confrontations in the future. Nationally, a federal election last fall resulted in a Liberal minority government. The minority situation, along with the COVID-19 crisis, has drastically modified the government's priorities and agenda. There is little chance that any recommendations of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry will be implemented, or that other initiatives toward reconciliation will move forward.

Once the crisis is over or under control, there will be tremendous pressure from industry to restart the economy by fast tracking all manner of resource and development projects. This is a major concern for First Nations. We do not need more Trans Mountain, Coastal GasLink or Site C projects. We must be united and prepared to resist these assaults on nature and our traditional territories.

Challenging times can bring out the very best, or the worst, in all of us. Ideally, we should face adversity with a unified sense of purpose, and a willingness to identify and overcome obstacles by seeking a common path to their solution. Too often, however, we give in to fear, deep-seated anxieties, and past frustrations that cloud our vision.

The final report on the first year of the Syilx Nation Rebuilding Project was released April 30, 2020. It summarizes an active year of community forums on the theme: Syilx Nation Rising. The project continues the Nation's long tradition of resisting colonial control and striving to assert our inherent rights. It is absolutely essential that this process continue until the Nation is united and guided by an effective constitution that respects our member Bands.

Syilx are resilient as a Nation, and each of us has a responsibility to stand up at this critical point in our history. We must unite – **unity is the heart and soul of sovereignty.**

If we hesitate and give in to our fears and anxieties, or continue to focus energy on the hurts and injustices from the past, our very future as a Nation will be at risk. Industry and governments will continue the tradition of playing Bands and communities off against one another, of making vague promises that are seldom kept, and reaping the rewards that accrue when a Nation is divided. We can not let this happen.

Finally, I would like to thank the ONA staff and the many volunteers throughout the Nation. This is a difficult time as the virus will disrupt your lives and cause many cancellations. Just remember, we have endured for centuries. We will survive this pandemic and together we will thrive in the future.

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Dr. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
ONA Chair

Photo: Pillar Rock



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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I am writing this year-end report during a pandemic that has upended all our lives and made us reflect on the things we take for granted, such as hugging our little ones and connecting with our Elders. This experience gives us a glimpse into the lives of our ancestors who survived everything from smallpox to Indian residential schools. Our people are resilient and we will overcome COVID-19. As Syilx Okanagan People, our Nation will continue to do what we have always done in a crisis - coming together to care for one another.

In the meantime, the ONA Leadership Team has continued to move forward on day-to-day management of contracts and services. This year saw the end of BRIDGES—for which we continue to seek funding. BRIDGES leaves a rich legacy of over 250 youth who accessed employment, training, entrepreneurial programming, and education. These youth will leave their mark as they pursue careers in areas including health, construction, agriculture, and business. Our YES program also left a legacy when it came to an end on March 31, 2020. This program has supported communities to address the impacts of family violence and those community members who were trained to community care circles will continue to find ways to move this work forward.

We are forging ahead with our partners—En’owkin, UBC Okanagan, UBC, Okanagan College, and IndigenEYEZ—on research initiatives that will enhance Indigenous education delivery and foster student success. As well, our research partnership on the impacts of the reintroduction of Okanagan Salmon on Syilx Okanagan health undertaken with UBC, University of Montreal, and University of Alberta has established that restoring our traditional foods is associated with healthier eating and better health outcomes for our people.

This past year has seen the expansion of discussions around the longstanding issues that confront our salmon restoration in the Upper Columbia. ONA was selected as a host agency for the Letter of Agreement signed between five representative governments: the Syilx, Secwémpec, Ktunaxa, Province of BC, and Canada. This group, like the BC First Nations and Revenue Sharing Gaming Commission, will have its own processes and terms of reference. ONA will support these secretariats by administering their contracts. These initiatives have a reciprocal benefit for ONA as we use the funding fees to support operations. This has been especially important over the last couple of years because the tribal council had to give up Tier 2 status with Indigenous Services Canada. As a Tier 1 Tribal Council we have lost \$150,000 in annual funding because member communities were unwilling to sign the annual Tribal Council reports.

Despite these challenges, ONA continues to engage with Upper Similkameen Indian Band and the Okanagan Indian Band and to practice an inclusive approach throughout our operations as a tribal organization.

We know that collective unity not only supports our great Nation but also accesses more resources for each of our communities.

Despite reduced funding, ONA continues to seek and access resources to deliver on CEC mandates and has maintained balanced finances. Our annual administration budget is currently \$1.6M. In order to accommodate organizational growth by the success of our contract delivery, we have had to acquire leased office space in Castlegar, primarily for Fisheries and Natural Resources with plans to expand Wellness initiatives in the region. While we are facing a new year with less core funding, I am confident that we will rise to the challenge.

I am pleased to share that we are making progress on the Wellness Framework planning: Child Welfare, Health Governance and Services, Youth Mental Health, and Education. We look forward this coming year to FNHA launching the Social Determinants of Health Initiative and the ongoing progress regarding our Nation Emergency Management Planning.

Our Fisheries and Natural Resources continue with their good work which keeps our support of food security and advocacy for Indigenous food sovereignty at the forefront. The CEC have led this by their longstanding support of the Nation Hunting Camp, Salmon Feast, and other ceremonies and practices throughout the Nation. This is evidenced by all our departments prioritizing community engagement, on-the-land activities, and the inclusion of nsyilxcən language and culture as part

of all Nation activities to keep connections with our lands, foods, culture, language, and each other. Our Communications Team deserve congratulations for strengthening our organizational professionalism through their communication strategies and projects and delivery of numerous events.

Finally, I want to thank all ONA staff who work so hard to bring programs and services into communities and who are striving to deliver despite this COVID-19 pandemic. Their dedication, activism, and advocacy leads to the ground-breaking, innovative work that contributes to ONA's reputation as a leader in Indigenous best practices.

I have no doubt that 2020 will bring many challenges because of the gathering of many perspectives about how best to move forward collectively. I know that the ONA team will work collaboratively to find solutions, and I remain hopeful that the CEC will find a way forward that supports the development of Syilx Okanagan governance and the assertion of our Title and Rights.

Take Extra Good Care, Be Safe!

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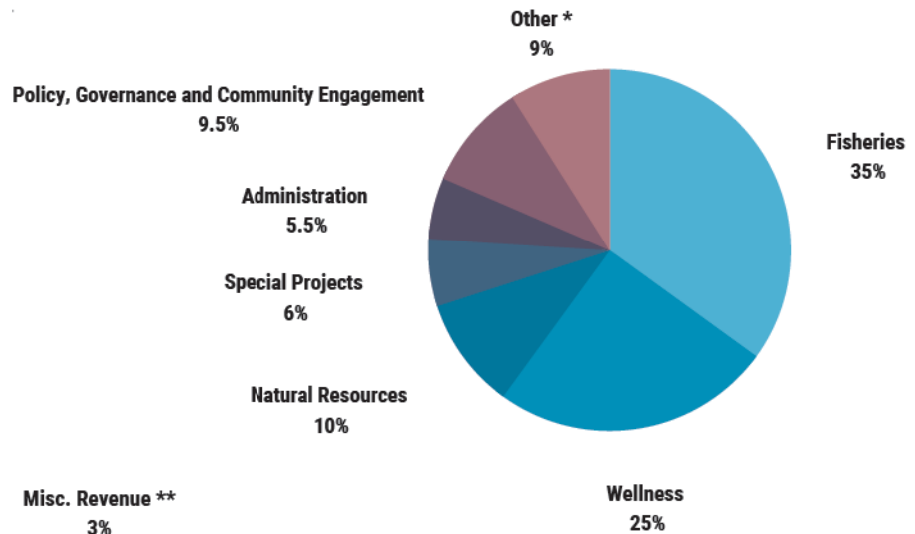
Pauline Terbasket
ONA Executive Director



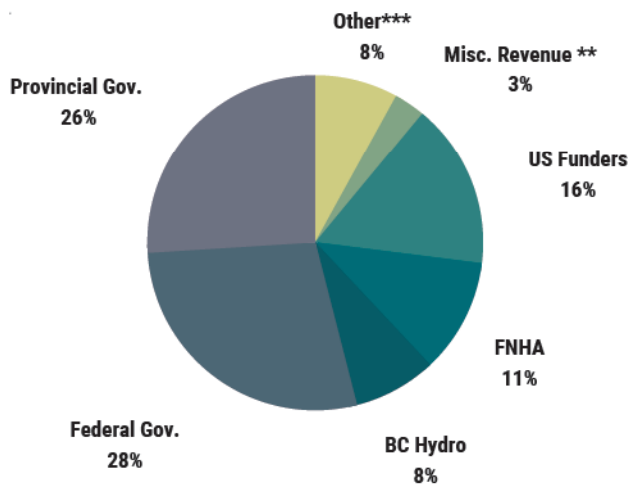
FINANCES AT A GLANCE

The ONA is primarily a project and proposal driven entity with a small amount of core funding to support administrative processes. We continue to leverage our systems, staff and assets to be able to deliver consistent results. See audited Financial Statement under separate cover.

REVENUE BY DEPARTMENT



REVENUE BY FUNDER



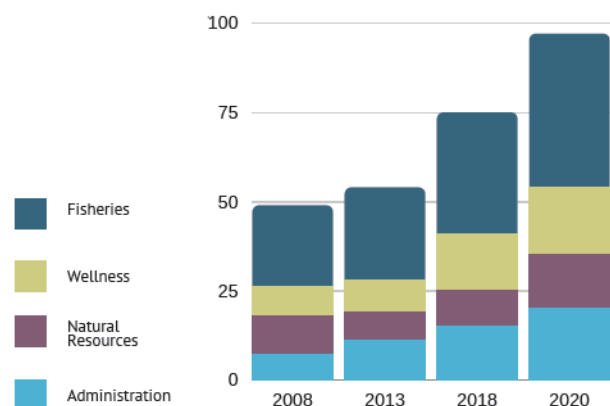
Revenues from the US are primarily for the hatchery and salmon reintroduction and habitat initiatives.

**Misc. Revenue is revenue earned through rent and investment returns.

*** Other is primarily project related funding.

GROWTH BY FULL TIME STAFF

The growth in the organization is attributed to the following: Administration has added a finance director to support increased reporting and analysis required with the increase in project funding. Natural Resources has seen fluctuations in staffing levels but expect to be on a slow but steady growth curve due to their increasing project portfolio. Wellness has seen some staff increases due to additional program funding to deliver mental wellness and land based healing programs. The biggest increase in staff has come from the Fisheries Department over the last two years within the locations we complete projects, south Okanagan, Columbia and central/north Okanagan. The reason for the additional staff is due to the increase and expansion of projects funded within the territory.



2019-2020 HIGHLIGHTS

By working together, our member communities are able to share strengths, advocate more effectively, and leverage resources in a way that is only possible through collective capacity. Here are some of the major achievements of what our Nation did together this past fiscal year:

REACHED A LANDMARK AGREEMENT TO CREATE THE COLUMBIA RIVER SALMON RESTORATION INITIATIVE – BRINGING THE SALMON HOME!

- This Upper Columbia River Basin Initiative, the first of its kind between Five Governments, including the 3 First Nations in the Basin, is an initial 3 year agreement with \$2.5 million in technical funding, that seeks to investigate and plan for the re-introduction of salmon into their historical spawning grounds in the Canadian portion of the Columbia River.

88 CHILDREN HAD PLANS MADE FOR THEM BY THEIR FAMILIES AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE FAMILY DECISION MAKING (FDM) PROGRAM

- FDM works with Indigenous children ages 0-19 and their families within the Territory to support them in making decisions and plans for the safety and wellbeing of their children.

ACTIVATED OKANAGAN DAM FISHWAY, PROVIDING ACCESS FOR SPAWNING SALMON TO OKANAGAN LAKE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1953

- Achieved fish passage on October 17; sockeye salmon returning from the ocean will now have a path through Penticton dam to Okanagan Lake.

IMPLEMENTED POLICY AND PLANNING TEAM WAS IMPLEMENTED WITH MENTAL WELLBEING JOINING THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, AND HEALTH

- This team will support community to plan, collect data and advocate for policy changes that impact our Nation and communities.

COMPLETED THE SYILX OKANAGAN FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT FOR BOTH OKANAGAN AND SIMILKAMEEN WATERSHEDS

- This will assist communities to understand their risk for flood and debris flow. As well, its the first step in the National disaster mitigation program and when all four steps are complete, communities will be eligible to access mitigation funding.

STUDIED THE INCORPORATION OF TEK AND CULTURAL INTERESTS INTO THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY NEGOTIATION PROCESS

- Under the Indigenous leadership and participation this is the first time since 1964 that the Canadian/US governments have considered cultural and ecosystem interests. A Cultural Values Working Group was established by ONA to work with Communities and Knowledge Keepers to identify those interests and needs to be included in the process.

AWARDED \$8.6 MILLION IN CONTRACTS THROUGH THE ONA PROCUREMENT WORKING GROUP AS PART OF THE ENDURING RELATIONSHIP WITH BC HYDRO

- The ONA Procurement Working Group is designated by the CEC to help Syilx Nation individuals and businesses to apply for and obtain contracts/work with BC Hydro.

100+ PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE SYILX NATION MMIWG GATHERING

- The ONA opened up space and let the people take the lead in laying the foundation for a Syilx strategy that identifies actions that can be taken at every level to stop this strategy.

THE CEC ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF ABORIGINAL CAPACITY BUILDERS TO CONDUCT AN ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW



SKC'ƏǻʷƏǻWIPLA? UŁ STELTAŁT

Syilx people have never ceded, surrendered or released any Syilx inherent title and rights and live, use and occupy the tmxʷulaxʷ (lands), siwłkʷ (waters) and resources in Syilx Territory.

Throughout this year the Chairman and Chiefs Executive Council (“CEC”) have worked hard to continue to carry out their mandate to protect, defend, and advance Syilx Title and Rights. In all their actions, the CEC aim to uphold its suxʷtxtem (caretaker) responsibilities that carefully considers the environmental, cultural, social, and economic interests of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

Much of this past year’s work focused on our Nation leading and securing its gains and advancing identified opportunities designed to advance the Nation’s collective title and ultimately benefits for the communities. The Nation’s CEC Policy/Legal Team continues to be involved with a number of important files and hot button topics that advance the Nation’s Title and Rights strategy. This work is cumulatively building working to advance the voice, governance role and outcomes of the Nation in decision making processes and positive outcomes on the territory.

Photo: Elder Madeline Gregoire passing the staff to Syilx youth Brenden Wright at the 2019 AGA in Vernon, BC

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- April 4 FNLC All Chiefs Mtg on Children and Families, Vancouver BC
- April 6 Syilx Nation Rising Artist Forum, Westbank BC
- April 10 Syilx Health Assembly
- April 10 Syilx Nation Rebuilding (SNR) presentation, LSIB Chief and Council
- April 11 SNR presentation, OIB Chief and Council
- April 11 Syilx Flag Rising, SD 67 Queen's Park Elementary, Penticton BC
- April 15 SNR presentation, OKIB Chief and Council
- April 16-17 CEC Quarterly Meeting, Westbank BC
- May 22-23 UBCIC Symposium: Implementing our Title and Rights, Vancouver BC
- June 10 SNR presentation, WFN Chief and Council
- June 13 CEC Meeting, Westbank BC
- June 17 Syilx Flag Raising Ceremony, Kelowna BC
- July 2 MOU Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve, Nkmip
- July 2 Special CEC Governance Recognition Agreement
- July 8 Finance Committee Meeting, Westbank BC
- July 11 Special CEC, Westbank BC
- July 12 Solar Energy Project Workshop, Westbank BC
- July 16 Syilx Flag Raising, Okanagan College, Vernon BC
- July 29 Letter of Agreement (5 Gov't) Signing Ceremony, Castlegar BC
- Aug 17 ISC Minister Seamus O'Regan, Penticton Indian Band, Penticton BC
- Sept 24 Truth and Reconciliation Commitment Ceremony, UBC Okanagan, Kelowna BC
- Oct 22 Syilx Nation Health Assembly, Penticton BC
- Oct 31 CEC Meeting Westbank BC
- Nov 5-6 B.C. Cabinet & First Nations Leaders' Gathering, Vancouver BC
- Nov 12-14 Indigenous Tourism Conference, Kelowna BC
- Nov 27-28 CEC Quarterly Meeting, Westbank BC
- Dec 12 Special CEC Meeting with Interior Health, Westbank BC
- 2020**
- Jan 14-16 FNHA Gathering Wisdom X, Vancouver BC
- Jan 21-23 Joint Gathering 2020, Vancouver BC
- Jan 28 Special CEC and Wellness Committee Mtg "Child and Family", Penticton BC
- Feb 13 Special CEC - Legal
- Mar 11 Pandemic Declared
- Mar 11-13 FNLC Shared Territories and Overlaps Forum
- Mar 20 ONA Finance Meeting
- Mar 22 World Water Day Water Ceremony for ncquiltakw
- Mar 25 CEC Quarterly Meeting



Federal Letter of Understanding Process

The CEC continues to consider the Federal Letter of Understanding ("LOU") process. The LOU resulted in intense negotiations that ultimately saw the federal government pull away from its final commitments due to the impending election last year. The CEC put all further related governance discussions on hold in the fall of 2019 including the "Syilx Nation". The CEC put all further related governance discussions on hold in the fall of 2019 including the "Syilx Rising" Constitutional development process until further notice. Further internal decision-making and governance discussions and reforms continue to advance, while the CEC proceeds with its long-standing mandates to protect and advance the collective title and rights on the broader territory in a structural and strategic manner.

Photo T to B: Queens Park Flag Raising
MOU Signing Okanagan -Similkameen National Reserve Park,
SNR Engagement Session



Columbia River Treaty

This year, the Nation sought to expand the negotiations and opportunities under the Columbia River Treaty (CRT), creating more precedents in the process. The CEC's Policy Legal and Negotiations team helped lead, secure and advance ground breaking outcomes and agreements with the two senior settler Governments. This Upper Columbia River Basin Initiative is the first of its kind between Five Governments, including the three First Nations in the Columbia Basin. It is an initial three year agreement with \$2.5 million in technical funding that seeks to investigate and plan for the re-introduction of salmon into their historical spawning grounds in the Canadian portion of the Columbia River.

Canada entered into the CRT with the United States in 1964. The CRT is an international treaty to coordinate flood control and optimize hydroelectric energy production on both sides of the Canada-US border. The CRT was entered into without any consultation with the Syilx Okanagan Nation or the other Indigenous Nations impacted by the CRT and its related dams in the Columbia River Basin, and without the Indigenous Nations' consent.

Canada and the US started renegotiating the CRT in 2018, as it otherwise terminates in 2024. If the CRT terminates in 2024, Canada will no longer have an obligation to provide planned flood control operations for the US. Instead Canada will be required to provide ad hoc flood control measures, which will increase the flood risk on the lower reaches of the Columbia River and could have grave environmental impacts on both sides of the border.

The CRT constitutes one of the largest infringements to the Nation's Title and Rights. It 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.

The Nation continues to work with two other Nations the Ktunaxa Nation and the Secwepemc Nation in

relation to the CRT. This collaboration is principled and designed not to impact nor undermine Syilx Title but rather to strengthen the voice of the Nation with the government and neutralize old divide and conquer tactics. This novel approach has produced a powerful First Nation's voice in the CRT discussions on issues and interests that commonly matter to all communities. The representatives of the three Indigenous Nations that intersect in the basin meet on a regular and on-going basis with Global Affairs Canada and the BC CRT Team. As described in last year's annual report, Global Affairs reversed a previous decision to exclude Indigenous Nations from direct US-Canada CRT Renegotiation process. Through the hard work and dedication of Syilx Okanagan leadership and staff, Global Affairs reconsidered this decision and in April 2019, granted observer status to Indigenous Nations. The CEC's representatives have been active in these international negotiations for three rounds now and have had a significant impact on the issues being discussed, to advance the Nation's current and historic interests.

Two additional tri-lateral tables with Canada and BC have been establish. First, the construction of a 'CRT Benefits Sharing' Table with First Nations. This is a new precedent in the province for BC First Nations. The second is on the necessary re-dress of impacts from the CRT and its on-going water storage and flow operations. The negotiations architecture for both of these important tables is being developed with the two senior settler governments and will begin to meet over the next year.

Columbia River Salmon Restoration Initiative

Bringing the Salmon Home

The re-introduction of anadromous salmon into the Upper Columbia River Basin across their historical range has been a central issue for the Syilx Okanagan, Ktunaxa, and Secwepemc Nations since the beginning in the 1930s due to the construction of Grand Coulee Dam. This and other hydroelectric developments in Canada have impacted fish habitat and have had an effect on the Indigenous Title and Rights and interests of the Nations.

As such, the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, led by the Indigenous Nations have solidified the need and interest in working together in an urgent basis under the new and ground-breaking 'Columbia River Salmon Restoration Initiative - Bringing the Salmon Home'. This collaborative salmon process will identify common interests, develop options, explore their feasibility, and take appropriate collective action to re-introduce anadromous salmon into the Upper Columbia River Basin. To demonstrate their interest and commitment in working together all five Parties signed a Letter of Agreement (LOA) on July 29, 2019 that provides the resources and mandates necessary to work together in a formal working relationship, in good faith, and in a respectful and transparent manner to explore the risks and benefits of pursuing different actions in support of salmon reintroduction

Commitments made in this LOA represent an opportunity for the Parties to:

- Acknowledge that salmon re-introduction and passage is of critical importance to the Indigenous Nations due to their connections to salmon for cultural, spiritual, and livelihood purposes since time immemorial;

- Advance reconciliation between the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, and the Indigenous Nations as guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Acknowledge the goal of the Indigenous Nations to achieve self-sustaining salmon populations and their passage throughout their historic range in the Upper Columbia River Basin;
- Accept that technical, scientific, and governance complexities and uncertainties require collaboration amongst the five Parties;
- Align, complement and share expertise from existing initiatives and priorities related to the reintroduction of salmon stocks and their habitats, where possible; and
- Benefit from the distinct perspectives, authorities, attributes, and capacities that each of the Parties brings to the collaborative effort.

This strategic direction framework provides a summary of the priorities, activities, and approaches to guide implementation of the the Initiative by the Parties over an initial commitment period, but also in the longer-term as momentum grows into the future. As the initiative proceeds, this document will be reviewed and may be adapted based on new information, learnings, and circumstances.



Photos: cpūtaʔstm iʔ xaʔxʔitāt uʔ ck'aʕxtm iʔ ntytyix ceremonial release into the Columbia River (Left) at skaʕaykntn (Right) in snʕuxwqnm 2019



TAKING OVER RIGHTFUL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Syilx Okanagan Nation has an undeniable sovereign responsibility and mandate to ensure that the cultural integrity, safety, and well-being of all our children and families are upheld.

Jurisdiction Over Our Children: The Children First Forum (June 6-7, 2019; Head of the Lake) featured Indigenous social work scholar Raven Sinclair as a speaker and shared information about the new federal legislation, *Bill C-92: An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis, Children, Youth and Families*. It provides specific methods and opportunities for re-affirming Syilx social and governance structures in relation to jurisdiction over child and family services.

Accordingly, the CEC resolved that the Syilx Nation move forward with our own laws, jurisdiction, and service planning to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Syilx children and their families. An essential aspect of this work, as directed by the CEC, is the recently drafted *Syilx Children and Families Legislation and Governance Strategy* that addresses the position of the Syilx Nation within federal and provincial legislation regarding jurisdiction over our children and families as the Nation moves towards a coordination agreement with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and MCFD. The Syilx Legislation and Governance Strategy is currently awaiting review by the CEC prior to being shared for discussion with communities.

Making Syilx Laws: Another important element is the *Syilx Child and Family Declaration* and its articulation of Syilx laws and standards. The Declaration was proposed at the 2016 Children First Forum and rests on guiding principles developed through a community consultation process in 2017. It upholds the inherent right to self-determination including our ability to protect the health and well-being of our children and families in a manner consistent with our way of life. The work of the ONA planning team has supported communities to develop vision statements and strategic goals for children and families. These affirm that the Nation vision is a cumulation of the visions of each community. It is crucial that the document has the support of the people, therefore the second draft of the Declaration was shared door-to-door with homes in every community prior to the Syilx Family Declaration Forum (Jan.28, 2020; West Kelowna). At the Declaration Forum, members from each Nation band provided feedback which is being incorporated into the Declaration under the continued guidance of the Wellness Committee. Over the coming year, ongoing engagement and revisions will continue until there is a broad sense of acceptance and language speakers will work on translating the Declaration into nsyilxcən.

A Voice at the Table: The ONA has made multiple efforts to engage with federal and provincial governments to take up our inherent jurisdiction over the wellbeing and safety of our children and families. The Syilx Child and Family Governance Representative has an important role to play to increase the participation and inclusion of the CEC and all Okanagan member communities at child welfare-related political consultation including ongoing advocacy for proper implementation of

Jordan's Principle. This past year saw the appointment of Chief Keith Crow, who has long been speaking up for Syilx children and families, to represent the Nation at political tables and working groups for a 2-year term, and report to the CEC and Wellness Committee on matters discussed. As the ONA Child and Family Team moves forward with the community-based work of developing a model for service delivery, political governance leadership is needed to secure support federally and provincially.

Advancing the Syilx Agenda on Health Governance

Ensuring the health, well-being, safety and quality of life of all Syilx Okanagan Nation members.

Advocating for Self-Determining Communities:

The CEC has approved the Interior Health (IH)—Syilx Letter of Understanding (LOU). The LOU process created the opportunity to meet and build relationships between the Chiefs and IH with discussions on resource allocation and working together more effectively. The LOU opens doors that enable IH to work better with our people. An important contribution is continuing to clarify with IH and other government partners that the ONA supports the communities and acts as a coordinator, building unity on common issues and facilitating collaboration that respects the wishes of each member Syilx band. The CEC, Syilx Health Rep, and ONA Wellness Manager continue to inform government and partners about Syilx Okanagan Nation bands and the respective band collaborative efforts.

Raising Issues in Indigenous Healthcare with Interior Health Executives:

A unique chance for relationship building came in the form of a tour of hospitals in the Kootenay Boundary area with IH CEO Susan Brown and IH Board Chair Doug Cochrane. Syilx Health Governance Representative Allan Louis and Syilx Elder Leon Louis joined the tour through the hospitals in Grand Forks, Trail, and Nelson. Spending two days together afforded the chance to have ongoing discussions about cultural safety, making space for spiritual practices, and respecting the right of Indigenous people to use both traditional treatments and western medicine at the same time. There was also pointed dialogue around medical staff in emergency rooms discriminating against Indigenous people as if they are drunks and dismissing them without treatment. Our Syilx advocates pushed the IH CEO and Board Chair for increased education of hospital staff to change this unacceptable situation. CEO Susan Brown acknowledged that IH must do better.





Supporting the Chiefs' Call for Emergency

Management: Over the years and finally at a FNHC Interior Caucus in 2019, Interior Nation Chiefs raised the need for a coordinated approach to emergency planning stemming from recent natural disasters such as floods and wildfires. Our Syilx Nation bands have also been impacted by these annual occurrences. Thus, Allan Louis and Jennifer Lewis with Collette Sunday, stepped up to join the Interior Region Nation Executive and FNHA to lobby the federal government ISC and Emergency Management BC to better coordinate emergency planning efforts for the Interior Region Nations. This resulted in the signing of a Collaborative Emergency Management Service Agreement, endorsed at our ONA AGA in 2019, to better deal with respective planning needs, input, and identifying appropriate resources for emergency management response and mental health. With this agreement in place, implementation will be carried out by the ONA Natural Resources department to launch our Syilx Nation Emergency Management Planning.

Holding FNHA Accountable: Syilx Okanagan leaders were among those who called for evaluations of FNHA. The FNHA organizational review, completed in January 2020, looks at the progress FNHA has made against its mandate and strategic plan as well as assessing challenges and constraints. Another evaluation was completed of the Tripartite Framework Agreement looking at partners within the broader health system. Other evaluations look at the FNHA Board of Directors to identify strengths and opportunities to improve governance, and the FNHA's Health Benefits Pharmacy Program. The completed evaluations were set to be reviewed at the Nation Assembly and Interior Region Spring

Caucus but these events were cancelled due to Covid-19. See <https://www.fnha.ca/about/governance-and-accountability/audits-and-evaluations>.

Getting Funds and Resources Closer to Home: The 7 Nations of the Interior Region have chosen to pursue Nation Shared Services as the delivery model for healthcare in the region. The history of the Nation Shared Services approach in the ONA predates the FNHA, going back to 2006. The FNHA influx of resources created more resources and services and has provided supports to better position ONA to share these with communities. A SWOT of Nation Shared Services was completed by ONA and the FNHA Interior Regional team in 2019/2020 in order to address gaps and optimize potential.

Facilitating Health Care Planning: The Ministry of Health is developing Primary Care Networks in BC to increase access to family doctors and better link doctors to clinical services so patients get coordinated care and a team response to complex needs. The planning process is localized and led by regional health authorities, divisions of family practice, and First Nations. Considerable resources are being allocated through this process and participation by First Nations will help ensure outcomes are responsive to our unique situations and needs. Together with other Interior Nations, Syilx leadership has been sending the message that this planning process is burdensome to our communities and that sufficient resources must be mandated by the Ministry of Health to support this work. FNHA has come through with one-time funding for the first two waves of planning while the third wave is currently stalled due to Covid-19.

Photo Allan Louis, Syilx Rep FNHA/IRNE presenting at the ONA AGA

Collaborating to Support the People: The wellness of our citizens extends throughout the Territory as our Okanagan Nation Declaration attests. As part of the planning for Primary Care Networks in the Kootenay Boundary area, a committee has been formed to represent the diverse Aboriginal population. Keeping the focus on ensuring suitable services for Kootenay Boundary, a collaboration of Syilx, Ktunaxa, Sinixt, Metis, and urban representatives have been able to come together and are making good strides in learning about the needs of the Indigenous people in this under-represented area. With the success of our participation and advocacy, we hope to ensure the Syilx Nation is represented in the eastern part of our Territory as articulated in our *Syilx Health Plan*. Through our determination, we believe the standards in which we deliver our programs and services will evolve and make impact. Thus we hope to have some of these programs available and delivered out of our ONA Castlegar office in the near future.

Bringing Syilx Perspectives to Regional, Provincial, and Federal Tables: Community-driven and Nation-based are core principles for how ONA Wellness initiatives are developed. Community engagement and support are sought for this vital work. Collaboration and innovation with the objective of community development direct the work of the Syilx Nation to effect change for the health and well-being of all Syilx citizens.

- Syilx Health Rep Allan Louis has been appointed by the BCAFN to the AFN Chiefs Committee on Health.
- Racism is an ongoing concern and the Syilx Health Rep is involved in work to address racism including at the board level with IH and on the Interior Region Nation Executive (IRNE) table with FNHA.
- Advocacy work through IRNE and FNHA has seen the 2-year tripartite funding for Mental Health extended for an additional year.
- FNHC Accountability: Following the removal of the FNHC Chair and Deputy Chair, the CEC is corresponding with the FNHC about accountability and structural issues with FNHC terms of reference. The CEC is committed to ensuring an open and transparent process for FNHC business.
- Social Determinants of Health: Advocacy continues to represent Syilx interests in the ongoing work of the FNHA to secure funding and services that take a more holistic approach to Indigenous wellbeing, recognizing social and environmental factors.





SYILX NATION RISING!

Syilx Nation Rising! is a multi-year process of Nation rebuilding launched in March 2019 with facilitated community forums that laid the foundation for conversations that continue to evolve. The work is guided by the unified commitment expressed by the Chiefs Executive Council to create a Syilx Constitution: ank'x̌wiplaʔntət uł yʕat iʔ ks sactxətstim – our laws and responsibilities. In keeping with the CEC statement released in December 2018, this project initiated inclusive, transparent, and accountable engagement that directly reached more than 1,000 Syilx Nation members.

This is a vital stage in our ongoing decolonization. Many of our past leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers laid the foundation upon which this project rests. Our inherent Title and Rights are held collectively at the Nation level, so a strong and united Syilx Nation is needed to fully realize and protect them. The ONA continues to serve as the important transitional organization to support the Nation rebuilding work. Year One of Syilx Nation Rising! brought diverse Nation members together and drew on their knowledge, experience, and insights to discuss the governance that works best for our Nation while maintaining and respecting the local governance processes of Syilx member bands

Engage the Nation: From the outset, the work was understood to require the active collaboration of everyone from Elders to youth and from artists to veteran politicians. A preliminary forum invited participants from across the Nation to help shape the approach and activities. A few weeks later, in late March 2019, the launch announcement went out through ONA member band newsletters and the ONA website. Outreach to Chiefs and Councils of the seven Syilx member communities was an early and important step to obtain direction for engagement with each community.

Starting in May, a short video from Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and his wife Joan encouraging Syilx Nation members to join the conversation was shared widely on social media platforms and at Nation rebuilding events. Subsequently, short videos from other Nation members were also released. Other communications materials highlighted the importance of community-driven input and our tradition of consensus building. These included mailouts, posters, social media, fact sheets, updates, and a conversation kit.

Outreach activities were undertaken to ensure that engagement reached across the Nation. One initiative brought Syilx artists together to explore

creative responses. Another initiative recruited members in each of the seven bands and across ONA staff to participate in training to better facilitate the challenging discussions required to create our own laws and responsibilities. Discussion circles targeting different groups including youth, women, men, and Elders were designed to welcome everyone's voices in keeping with the spirit of en'owkin'wixw. In addition, the Project Manager attended Nation and related events to share information and engage in discussions on an informal basis.

Syilx Voices: Nation members were directly engaged at almost 30 events and the following key themes emerged from the discussions:

- Nation members value this process.
- There is power in unity and healing must occur.
- Action is necessary. Time is essential.
- It is important to build on strengths.
- The process must be grounded in language, culture, and land.
- Grassroots is important and diverse perspectives must be honoured.
- Syilx governance practices are being re-invigorated.

SOME OF THE THINGS WE HEARD:

"We need to stand up for our principles so our younger generations find new ways of surviving." - twi George Saddleman

"Help people to understand the Constitution is a living document, we can continue to change and improve it over time." -Syilx member John Kruger

"We have our own Syilx ways and stories. We have to look inside, not outside, for what we need." Syilx Youth Xastitkw Michel

Forward Thinking: Nation Rebuilding encompasses many topics from the cultural values that live at the heart of Syilx identity to the impacts of colonization and today's realities of being made up of seven separate bands, as well as the context of the sema7 economy and colonial government system within which we live. This makes the conversations particularly challenging but also full of opportunity. Nation Rebuilding asks us to move out of a colonized, survival mindset and think within a longer time frame that considers how to optimize the wellbeing of the People-To-Be. As Elder Hazel Squakin said at one of the discussion circles, "We are taking responsibility for the future generations."

To realize Nation Rebuilding, Syilx member bands must continue to be supported to work with members to engage in the ongoing dialogue and to strengthen our Nation's inclusive visioning. This must take whatever forms local members feel most comfortable with and continue for however long is necessary. Syilx Nation Rebuilding has been launched through this initial Year One of the Syilx Nation Rising! project. Now we continue to learn, adapt, and move forward on this important journey.

"In the end, it doesn't matter if you are right or wrong, it's what is best for the People, that's what we are here for." -twi Councillor Leland Wilson

"Everyone needs to understand what a constitution is and why we need one." —Elder Sharon Lindley

This isn't something that can be done overnight or be decided only by Chiefs and Council." Syilx member at Facilitation Training, May 2019





The Enduring Relationship

Joint planning meetings this year between the Nation and BC Hydro have identified new processes, rules and structures that seek to better address the interests and concerns of the Nation within a complex energy corporation and market.

Energy Executive Committee (EEC): Every five years, BC Hydro puts together a long term plan to provide reliable and affordable electricity to BC residents. BC Hydro recently began discussions with the Nation on an Integrated Resource Plan for how we want to be involved in this process and to continue to build the relationship with transparency and collaboration. BC Hydro is also looking at major changes to their Capital Plan and including the Nation in these discussions as a large majority of their infrastructures are in Syilx Territory. Together, BCH and the EEC chaired by Chief Clarence Louie, will look at the future of some projects as the demand for electricity decreases while maintaining safety, reliability, and proper engagement.

Wilsey Dam Fish Passage: The ONA has been working towards fish passage. In fall 2019, BC Hydro finally initiated the Wilsey Dam Fish Passage Project, which is the culmination of the Fish Passage Decision Making Framework for Wilsey. It will look at either decommissioning the dam or refurbishing the dam to allow for fish passage. BC Hydro has been engaging with OKIB and the ONA,

through the tables already established by the Enduring Relationship to discuss the Shuswap Water License Renewal and Water Use Plan Order Review (WUPOR). Given the new project, BC Hydro has asked the Comptroller of Water Rights to place the Water License Renewal Application on hold until decisions on Wilsey Dam are made.

Major Project Updates: Two major energy projects of high priority this year were the West Kelowna Transmission Project (WKTP) and the UNB-ONA Solar Project. For the WKTP, BC Hydro has requested the input of the Nation to determine the leading route. Preliminary work has been done to look at the alternative routes and the Nation has requested that further studies be conducted on some of the routes to provide meaningful comparisons between them. Nation advisors are currently reviewing the Solar Project to then create business development plans and determine financial models and partnership arrangements so the Nation is better informed to make decisions. A confidentiality agreement is currently being drafted and then a purchase price will be determined with BC Hydro.

THREE CONTRACTS WERE AWARDED IN 2019-2020 WORTH OVER \$8.6 MILLION

The Procurement Working Group: meets to discuss procurement opportunities with BC Hydro and how best to help Nation businesses and entrepreneurs successfully obtain work.

Thank you to Stoyoma Mountain Falling and Hi-Trax, (seen above) who donated a portion of their earnings back to the ONA to be used as scholarships and bursaries for Syilx Okanagan students worth over \$10,000.

K^wU ƁC' ULLU?S COMING TOGETHER AS SYILX PEOPLE: CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

Getting to know the land and each other is a time-honored practice in Syilx health and well-being. Gathering is a tradition for our people and the ONA has continued this multi-communal institution of interaction and kinship through the Unity Run, Youth Leadership Gathering, Annual General Assembly, Wellness Forum, and other events that help instill cultural teachings, education, and awareness for the Nation and the public. This past year ONA hosted many events including new gatherings designed to support healing and increase the long-term wellbeing and happiness of our families today and the People-to-Be of tomorrow.

“One of the key values in our Indigenous Syilx approach to learning is that we must create relationships for learning and teaching to occur. We create new understanding by gathering bits of old and current knowledge and engaging in a continual process of dialogue, action and reflection. The steps of this process recur like an upwards spiral, lifting us towards greater understanding and ability.”

—Dr. Bill Cohen in the Foreword to *Returning Children*





kʷu sqilxʷ

April 2019

- 6 Artist Forum Focus (Syilx Nation Rising), Westbank

May 2019

- 1 Syilx Nation Rising: Transformative Community Engagement Facilitation Training Penticton
2 Sockeye Fry Release, Penticton
3 Sturgeon Release Ceremony, Castlegar
9-12 Spirit of Syilx Unity Run, Vernon to Manning Park
15 Fisheries Forum, Penticton
23 Syilx Nation Rising: Transformative Community Engagement Facilitation Training Penticton
24-26 Elders and Youth Gathering, Kelowna

June 2019

- 6-7 Children's First Forum OKIB HOL Hall

- 22-27 cpùtaʔstm iʔ xaʔxʔitət uʔ ck'aʕxtm iʔ ntytyix, Salmon Ceremonies. snłəxʷqynm, Castlegar ska x'äykntn, Revelstoke, s x'wəntikʷ, Kettle Falls, nʕaylintn, McIntyre, senk'lip iskʷants, Enloe

July 2019

- 2-12 Syilx Nation Rising: Building a Syilx Okanagan Constitution Nation Forum: Elders, Youth Men's, Women's.
3-4 Captikwł Stories Forum, Penticton
17-18 Annual General Assembly and Youth Leadership, Vernon
30 LSIB Wellness Fair, Cawston
31 Drug Forum, Cawston

August

- 9 Healthy Relationships, LSIB
27-28 Syilx Purple Ribbon Caravan, Syilx Territory
29-30 Syilx Parenting Training, Penticton



September 2019

- 10 Healthy Boundaries, LSIB
- 11 Consent. LSIB
- 17 MMIWG & Personal Safety, LSIB
- 18 Online Safety, LSIB
- 20-22 Salmon Feast OK Falls
- 26 UBC TRC

October 2019

- 1-2 River Restoration Workshop, Penticton
- 5-6 Beaver Creek Sign Unveiling, Trail
- 17 MMIGW & National Inquiry, Personal Safety, OIB
- 25 SafeTALK training, Westbank
- 28-29 Bears Wallow Healing Gathering, Penticton

November 2019

- 6 PIB Wellness Fair, Penticton
- 14 Healthy Relationships, OIB
- 20-21 Wellness Forum PTCC, Penticton

December

- 12 Sexting & Online Safety, OIB
- 4 Sexual Health, LSIB

January 2020

- 9-10 MMIWG Gathering, Penticton
- 26 Winter Wellness Gathering, Westbank
- 28 Family Declaration, Westbank
- 30 What is Violence & Abuse?, OIB

February 2020

- 20-21 Grandmothers Gathering, Kelowna
- 21 Syilx Parenting

March 2020

- 6-8 Men's Wellness Gathering, Princeton
- 9-11 Women's Wellness Gathering, Osoyoos



Wellness Resources for Our People, by Our People

To further enrich our path forward the ONA continues to develop resources that rejuvenate our connection to traditional knowledge, culture, language and connection to the land.

As part of the expanding youth mental health initiatives, ONA added new Syilx created resources for youth and families. Through project funding ONA was able to commission qwʕay snk̓lip Blue Coyote, a beautiful book by Syilx writer and artist Billie Kruger. The book was published by ONA and launched at the Nation Wellness Forum.

This contemporary Syilx captikw̓t tells the story of what happens when snk̓lip, exhausted by the weighty responsibility of his many battles with monsters, falls into anxiety and depression. For a time, even his family are unable to help him, but eventually through ceremony, connecting to the land, and sharing his fears with a good friend, snk̓lip is able to heal and reclaim his power. The book creates greater awareness of mental health issues while promoting mindfulness of the importance that

culture, land, and community play in our well-being. Geared to youth but relevant to everyone, the book was well received and is now in regular use in workshops and schools.

The nʔickntns iʔ sqaylxw Games of the People traditional games toolkit, was also launched at the annual Wellness Forum. In creating the Toolkit, youth, leaders, and community members were engaged at various events for input, direction, and support. Toolkits were shared with each member band as a means of providing communities with playful land-based activities to promote traditional athletics. The guidance and direction of Syilx Knowledge Keepers throughout the territory informed the project and helped bring these games into active use in our communities once again.

750 + PEOPLE WERE INTRODUCED TO THE GAMES OF THE PEOPLE TOOL KIT.

Some of the events where the games were played:

- 65 + Sockeye Fry Release
- 32 OKIB Wellness Fair
- 100 + Band School Traditional Games
- 28+ OKIB Sqilxw Day
- 26 ONA Men's Gathering
- 118 Kikanee Festival
- 33 Syilx Elder and Youth Gathering

1000 + BOOKS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO NATION MEMBER COMMUNITIES

We are optimistic that this book will bring recognition to mental health issues and the importance cultural identity plays in the well-being of First Nations. We hope this book will serve as a useful tool for those dealing with mental wellness issues and the people that support them.

Building Capacity for Families and Communities to Reduce Crisis

The ONA is dedicated to developing the capacity of our members to ensure that they can take on the realities they face on their own terms, and thrive in the face of challenges

The Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT) supports members from each community to mobilize and respond to crisis situations including violence, accidents, and suicides. The Team Lead, who is based out of ONA, helps communities develop prevention strategies and education on suicide awareness, depression, self-harm, grief and lateral violence. As well as bringing a Syilx Okanagan response to crisis, ONRT has substantially increased the capacity of all Syilx Okanagan communities to prevent and respond to traumatic events by providing annual training opportunities that are inclusive of community members and interested band and Nation staff. This past year, ONRT shared 8 separate crisis response trainings with a total of 92 participants involving members from all Syilx communities. These trainings deal with things that are hard to talk about, helping people to open up and learn new skills. Recently, health and family workers have requested training to increase the ability of families to help members in crisis. One participant shared that the training helped them help several people in their community who were having suicidal thoughts.

- **Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Skills Training (NVCI)** teaches proven strategies for defusing moments of chaos in a way that helps de-escalate behaviors.
- **SafeTALK** is an internationally recognized half-day workshop in suicide awareness that provides tools to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to resources.
- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training** is a 2-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid that teaches how to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. Open to anyone 16 years or older.



illustration by Syilx Artist Billie Kruger

32 EDUCATION AND PREVENTION SESSIONS TO MEMBER COMMUNITIES WERE PROVIDED

These sessions were hosted by the YES Program. Through these sessions 830 + people attended

19 PEOPLE WERE TRAINED IN NVCI

"I learned a lot that I can use in my everyday work and day to day life"
- NVCI participant

10 YOUTH IN UPPER NICOLA RECEIVED HUMAN TRAFFICKING EDUCATION

By the YES Program

12 NATION MEMBERS/STAFF ARE SUICIDE AWARE

By taking SafeTALK.
"it was nice to have steps and knowledge on how to talk to someone about suicide. From past experience I never felt confident and effective when talking and listening to a friend who was having a hard time and was talking about suicide"

38 NATION MEMBERS/STAFF TRAINED TO DO A SUICIDE INTERVENTION

by attending the ASIST program ran by ONRT.

"made my thoughts clear about how to help someone who is at risk of suicide. Thank you for this great opportunity to learn and it will help me better serve our community".



Nneqsilt A Community Approach to Raising Children

“Knowledge is a continuously evolving web of relationships. Our vision for the future is strong and we are committed to rebuilding relationships to ensure our survival. This curriculum is a step towards that goal.” —Dr. Bill Cohen in the Foreword to *Returning Children to the Center*

Syilx Parenting shared a variety of programs specific to the needs of each community with high levels of participation this past year. Two Winter Wellness Gatherings brought children and Elders together through genealogy, traditional games, art, and language. Syilx Parenting also supported the planning and facilitation of two parenting retreats with over 100 participants in attendance and workshops supporting positive parenting practices and the importance of extended families as supports.

This year saw the development of a new edition of the parenting curriculum with a strong Syilx focus emphasizing the trauma of colonial history and the resilience of our people, Elder’s teachings and Syilx values. Focus was placed on interpersonal communication, deepening listening skills as well as attuning with the needs of children to promote positive mental health within families. This new edition *Returning Children to the Center: A Syilx Parenting Curriculum* is a timely resource that brings together captikwł, Syilx values, and an Indigenous approach to parenting in a learning package that will

help our families to flourish for years to come.

Service providers and community champions across the Nation attended interactive training sessions to familiarize themselves with the new curriculum and enhance their capacity to facilitate parenting programs. On-the spot mentoring was also provided to community staff as they rolled parenting programs out in community and parenting presentations were provided at the ONA Men’s and ONA Women’s Gatherings with a total of 125 adults and 73 children involved in these parenting sessions.



Syilx Innovation Successfully Supports Our Youth

The BRIDGES program, which ran for 3 years concluding in July 2019, provided culturally-informed, just-in-time supports to Indigenous youth facing barriers to employment. ONA efforts to find new funding for this important project has been bolstered by the research findings of our partners at UBCO which show that this innovative Syilx approach is effective. The research concludes that cultural pride, self-esteem, and resilience impact directly on the capacity of youth to successfully navigate their way to meaningful employment. Publication of the findings will be forthcoming.

“The findings provide empirical support for the basic premise that initiatives that enhance cultural continuity supports the well-being of Indigenous youth, and thus their communities.”

Quote from the final research report "Tradition, Innovation, and Resilience: The impact of incorporating culturally informed training into a program for enhancing labour market engagement among Indigenous youth by Mike Evans, Rachelle Hole, Colin Reid, Laura Mudde, and Aaron Derickson (UBC Okanagan) with the Okanagan Nation Alliance BRIDGES program team.



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE BURSARY RECIPIENTS

Brittany Mullin

Brittany has completed her Bachelor of Dental Science at UBC Vancouver. In September 2019 Brittany started a Master's in Public Health program at The University of Victoria. She wishes to broaden her lens and work more with communities, helping those who may be missed by the system, or do not fit within the framework of the current system. Her long term goals include working to develop a health care system that meets the needs of all Canadians by working with Communities, health authorities, and partaking in research, and advocacy.



"I plan to use my professional designation as my platform by establishing an independent mobile hygienic clinic to work with rural and remote Indigenous communities, offering them oral hygiene services and support that are culturally safe."

Keianna James

Keianna is a current student at Thompson River University. She has chosen a path of passion exploring her interest in science. Upon completing her Bachelor of Science in Biology she is looking towards an additional two years of school in the field of Optometry. Keianna has a dream of starting an indigenized Optometry office on Osoyoos Indian Band land with the intention of making eye care more affordable, and comfortable for her community.



"To create and become a positive change in my community and for all indigenous peoples would be and has always been my absolute goal. I plan on continuing my education to not only improve my life, but also the lives of my community, in the form of health care in optometry."



SNAQSILXW TELLS US THAT EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

We can't talk about mental health without talking about our families. We can't talk about our families without talking about Indian residential school. When it comes to Syilx wellness, the answers are the same whether we are talking about preventing crime, suicide, or chronic disease. The diversity of programs and initiatives within the ONA Wellness Department operate from the belief that these answers lie in continuing to revitalize the practices that support our collective wellbeing: language, land, captikwł, and community.

By working together, the Syilx Nation is able to share strengths, advocate more effectively, and leverage resources in a way that is only possible through collective capacity. Wellness programs and initiatives have been developed in alignment with CEC directives to support communities in meeting the challenges faced by our children and families. ONA Wellness is built on the strengths of our ancestors and the efforts of those who came before us. The work today continues to be guided by the Wellness Committee made up of Health and Social Development Directors from each of the member bands who ensure that programs respond to community needs and build community capacity. The Wellness Committee reviews all funding and determines whether it is best allocated directly to community or should go into staffing Nation programs. The Wellness Department creates annual strategic plans in collaboration with the Wellness Committee and these are reviewed and approved by the CEC.

Supporting Communities in Meeting the Challenges Faced by our Children and Families

“... put a berry for her heart speaks of how healing comes from the land.”

—Sylx Grandmothers Gathering 2020

timxw Shows Us How to Heal: Healing from the widespread intergenerational impacts of Indian residential school is essential for our communities to move forward in a good way. A new annual event bringing Indian residential school Survivors and their families together held for the first time this year has initiated a powerful legacy. Sntxwitkw iskemxist Bear Wallow Healing Gathering was hosted by the Sylx Indian Residential School Committee. The name of the event was chosen to emphasize the way that the timxw teaches us how to heal ourselves.

This was a significant gathering that featured the voices of the people. The event began with a panel of Survivors sharing their stories, many of them speaking publicly about their experiences for the first time. It was emotional for everyone, but people felt good about saying what happened to them and how they felt about it. The second day started with a panel of intergenerational Survivors. Sharing circles rounded out the discussions and there were many self-care supports available. The event collaborated with local service providers to create a safe and holistic healing environment for Survivors and other Nation members impacted by the accumulated trauma inflicted by residential school era.

Meeting the Challenges of Today: Our families continue to face tough challenges. ONA's You Empowered Strong (YES) program is supported by the Sylx Family Violence Network which is made up of social services, health, legal, and protection professionals and crisis specialists from throughout the Nation. In their meetings this year, the Network identified trends in the territory that include increased addictions, sexual assaults, aggression in younger children, and severity of physical abuse; noting also a lack of affordable housing.

Strengthening our families has been the focus of ONA Wellness since its inception, first by the Social Development Committee and now under the direction of the Sylx Nation Wellness Committee. The protection and safety of children and families is at the core of ONA Wellness.

The fatal shooting in 2004 of three young Sylx men with two others seriously injured and one in prison brought our members and leadership together to address the escalation of drugs and gun violence within our Nation. Not one of our communities was untouched by this tragedy. As a result, ONA held the first Sylx Nation Drug Forum with the resulting mandate to lobby governments to acknowledge our jurisdiction to develop our own prevention programs to wrap around Sylx families. The ensuing ONA program development aimed at supporting wellbeing include the Sylx Unity Run, parenting workshops, Elder and youth gatherings, as well as land-based camps. ONA has developed prevention programs based in culture and language that include Okanagan Nation Crisis Response Team (ONRT); R'Native Voice workshops for youth; Kwu Xast program for children; Early Years supports, as well as other youth and mental health programs. **The ONA continues to be responsive to the priorities and needs identified in our Sylx Child and Family Framework and the Sylx Health Plan as we navigate the intergenerational impacts of the past, the uncertainties of the present, and all the possibilities of the future.**

Community Solutions to Violence Against Women:

The YES Program uses strength-based practices and community-based solutions to build the capacity of families dealing with the impacts of violence. The intergenerational effects of colonization have normalized violence in our communities. In 2014, the overall rate of violence in Indigenous communities was more than double that in the rest of the population. YES is working to help families change these cycles.

In the wake of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), YES supported ONA in hosting a gathering that marked the first time that the Sylx Nation came together to talk about how MMIWG have affected our communities. More than 100 participants attended the Sylx Nation MMIWG Gathering to explore what we can do as individuals, families, and communities to change the narrative. Those



assembled heard stories and impacts from Nation members and learned about the global context of violence against Indigenous women. The ONA opened up space and let the people take the lead in laying the foundation for a Syilx strategy that identifies actions that can be taken at every level to stop this tragedy.

Another opportunity for healing hosted by YES brought men together for the second year running at the Syilx Men's Gathering, providing an opportunity for men to share their input around how to address family violence including roles in wellness, empowerment, and connection to culture and language. The event included tough discussions but also self-care, friendly competition, and laughter.

Fighting the People Eaters: The 2019 Nation Drug Forum brought Nation members and partners including First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), the BC Centre on Substance Use, and Interior Health (IH) together to continue the work of responding to the drug and opioid crisis. First Nations are disproportionately impacted by the overdose crisis and the gap is getting wider with three of the opioid crisis hot spots in BC found in Syilx Okanagan territory—Kelowna, Vernon, and Penticton.

In light of the opioid crisis, the CEC has directed ONA Wellness to hold regular Nation Drug Forums. The message is clear that we must pull together and act to keep people alive. The 2019 Nation Drug Forum focused on hearing directly from Nation members who have been impacted by drugs and engaging with participants to identify actions that can be taken to make change.



The Forum laid a strong foundation for action. The task now lies in weaving these strands together, identifying steps at every level from individual to Nation within a range of time-frames from immediate to long-term while acknowledging overlaps and developing pathways to optimize coordinated efforts.

One of the actions identified was to hold a Purple Ribbon Campaign Caravan leading up to International Overdose Awareness Day August 31 to counter the stigma that surrounds drug use, and collectively commit to finding ways to make positive changes. The Caravan was also a way to publicly grieve the people we are losing and reach out to those in addiction, those at risk, and their families, shedding the silence that often isolates those most impacted by this crisis. A high point was early the second morning when the Awareness Walk saw more than 40 people join together to walk across the William Bennett Bridge in Kelowna. News cameras were rolling as Nation members in purple shirts and banners flying brought the issue into the bright morning light and onto TV screens across BC, all contributing to wider awareness.

Since the Caravan, the Wellness Team has heard from community that the Caravan started dialogues between families and friends and that recurring awareness campaigns are needed to address the stigma, reduce the shame and blame, and start addressing the core issues of trauma and, instead of placing heavy blame on individuals, to recognize the role of colonization in causing so much suffering and trauma in our Nation.



The Power of Grandmothers

As the Grandmother of Grandmothers, Tupa is a warm reminder of the responsibility that everyone shares to ensure our children grow up in safe, nurturing communities.

Ta Tupa Bear from the Spirit Bear campaign has taken the Sylx Nation by storm and is in high demand. Tupa, whose journey started from a conversation with national advocate Cindy Blackstock, has been picked up by the ONA Sylx Indian Residential School Committee (SIRS) who have identified her birthday as being December 21, 1869 and ensured that ONA follows proper protocol as Tupa visits communities, shares information, and holds space for difficult discussions. Tupa released her own calendar celebrating the beauty of our Sylx territory and will be coming soon to Instagram.

A landmark event this year was the first Gathering of Grandmothers from across the Sylx Okanagan Nation. Between them, the 60 Grandmothers represented 500+ descendants. The gathering was inspired by the Grandmothers of Upper Nicola Band who attended an Interior Region gathering of grandmothers hosted by the Ktunaxa Nation in March 2019. The UNB Grandmothers came back saying it was time for Sylx Grandmothers to gather.

Over two days of discussions, these matriarchs reaffirmed their rightful place as decision makers around issues facing our families and communities. As told within captikwł, Grandmothers are the foundation for healthy Sylx families and responsible for their development through culture and language. The Grandmothers in attendance acknowledged the trauma that Sylx people have experienced—and continue to experience—via colonization. They stated that in order to stop the cycles of violence and despair, the gap in cultural knowledge transfer must be closed, families and children must have access to the land, and language must be revitalized. They indicated they would need capacity building and wellness supports as they embark on more fully reclaiming this role of caring for the children and families. They shared their dreams and discussed priorities for moving forward with their work of helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Sylx children and families. The gathering sparked many grandmothers to want to start organizing and become more active in their communities.



Photo L to R: Tupa, Elder Puddy Cohen and Tupa

Community-Driven Planning for Syilx Wellbeing

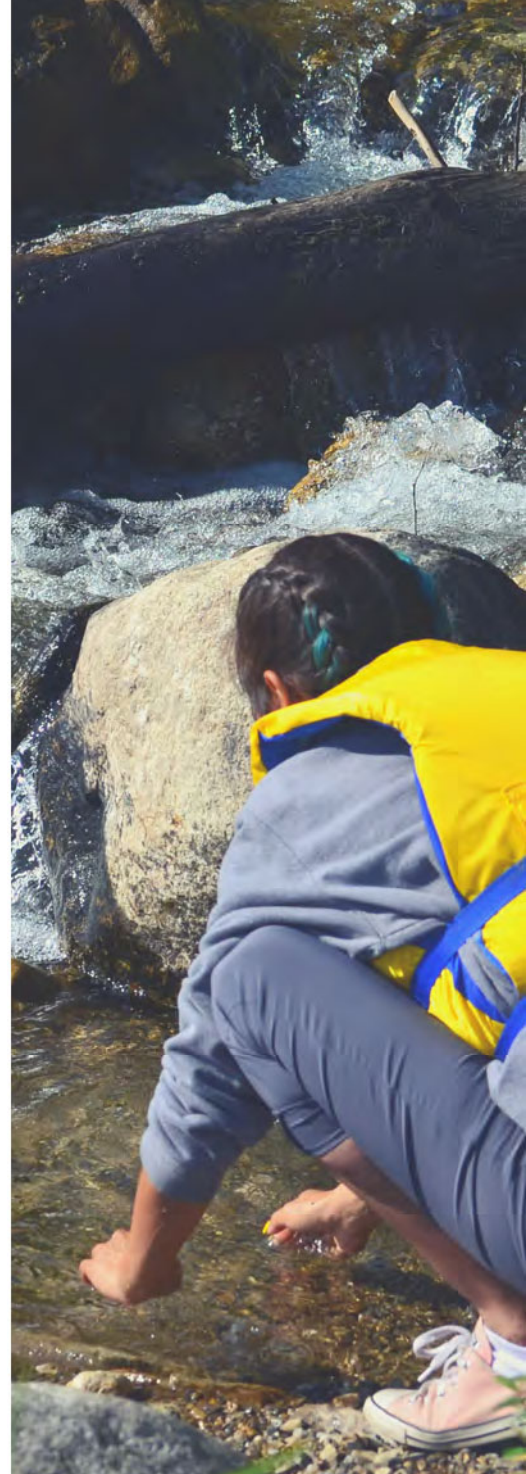
ONA Wellness is completing a multi-year process of working with each Syilx band to support the development of community wellness plans.

These community-driven priorities continue to inform the Syilx Nation Wellness Framework that addresses complex root causes and reinforces our ability to create healthy environments where our people can thrive. The Nation Framework is built on best practices in Indigenous wellness and guided by the self-determination of each member band. The Framework is informed by Syilx culture, the nsyilxcən language, and the enowkin'wixw process. Families are at the center of this work and prevention is the focus.

This community-driven wellness planning process is supported by the tripartite mental wellness funding from Canada, BC, and FNHC announced in 2018 and is focused on defining Syilx Okanagan approaches to mental wellness that are holistic and inclusive. The ONA Nation Policy and Planning Team is working with communities to define wellness from Syilx perspectives instead of through the lens of colonial silos. The Framework links together plans addressing different aspects of wellness with each plan based on Syilx principles, prevention, and early intervention, and including steps to improve access to existing ONA and mainstream services. The Policy and Planning Team grew this past year increasing the ability to create updated Nation plans for Mental Wellness and Children and Families that are grounded in community engagement, community values, and community priorities. An important aspect of this is the Syilx Child and Family Legislation and Governance Strategy that outlines how the Syilx Nation will navigate its current and evolving relationships with the province and Canada to reach an agreement that recognizes Syilx jurisdiction over our children.

“...there is a way to get back what was taken from us.”

—Syilx Grandmothers Gathering 2020



Supporting the Nation During Covid-19

With the start of the province-wide shut down in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-March, ONA Wellness has been working to scope out roles in supporting the Nation during this difficult time. Both the ONRT and Family Decision Making programs were deemed essential services and have continued to operate at full capacity, providing

critical services to families and communities. Another important role played by ONA has been connecting with communities on pandemic planning and keeping the communication channels open, providing support and advocating for communities with partners like FNHA and IH when issues arise.

A person wearing a white hat and a blue and red patterned shirt is reaching into a river. The person's hand is submerged in the water, and they appear to be holding a small object, possibly a fish or a piece of food. The background shows the river and some rocks. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent blue box on the left side of the image.

SUX^wTXTEM (CARETAKER) RESPONSIBILITIES

The Natural Resources and Fisheries teams strive to support the Syilx Nation assert their inherent sux^wtxtem (caretaker) responsibilities for the tmx^wulax^w (land), siwłk^w (water), and tmix^w (all living things) in perpetuity. Through initiatives, projects and partnerships the ONA aims to protect, restore and connect to the tmx^wulax^w, siwłk^w, Syilx culture, traditions and world view.

There are many challenges that the Nation and its member communities face such as changing climate, growing population and many external jurisdictions. Syilx first food sources and habitat are continuing to be disrespected and the unique biodiversity in the territory is at risk. The health and vitality of Syilx Okanagan People is directly tied to the health of their Territory and the staple foods that they access on their land. Our culture is inseparable from the responsibility of caring for the land and water. This is the basis for all Syilx stłtatt (Okanagan law). The work ahead to protect the bio-diversity including cultural water, land and food systems will require both Syilx traditional ecological knowledge and western science. Although the challenges we face are complex, the opportunities are many, including collaboration, evolution of Title and Rights and youth empowerment. We are in a time of critical transformation and change.

kł c'pəlk stím

The ONA Habitat team has become well known for their success in river and creek restoration. They continue to lead numerous habitat projects and have seen great results. These projects contribute to increasing fish spawning and rearing habitat, which then increases the return of Okanagan Sockeye, kəkni?, and rainbow trout. They also contribute to bird, amphibian and other species habitat.

These projects are part of the larger vision of healing the watershed and kł c'pəlk stím - 'cause to come back'.

The **Mission Creek Restoration Initiative** (MCRI) is a multi-stakeholder partnership formed in 2008 to address declining fish stocks and restore natural function to the lower reaches of n̄x'waqwa?stn (Mission Creek area). Mission Creek provides almost one-third of flows into the kłuxənítkw (Okanagan Lake) and habitat for multiple important aquatic and terrestrial species, notably stream spawning populations of kəkni? (kokanee) of the upper Okanagan Basin.

ONA has been conducting post-restoration monitoring on fish use, fish habitat, vegetation, and amphibians at the Phase I restoration site between Casorso and the Mission Creek dog park. Adaptive management occurred in 2018 in the floodplain to improve flows, and in 2019 to install additional boulder formations. Monitoring has taken place every fall for the past 4 years to document changes to the site and there is funding to continue monitoring for the next 3 yrs.

k'əmcnítkw Floodplain Re-engagement project is a collaboration between the Penticton Indian Band, Enowkin Centre and ONA. This past year we were able to re-connect the Penticton Channel to the floodplain, allowing for backwater flooding as per the hydro-logic cycle. By doing so, this will provide seasonal foraging habitat and protection from high

flows, for native fish, especially sk'lwist and ntitiyx (Chinook salmon) juveniles; provide diverse fish-free wetland and riparian habitat for others such as amphibians, and retain and enhance grassland habitat for dryland and burrowing species such as snakes and pocket gophers

The Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) is entering into the fourth year of knowledge, Phase I of this EFN project identified two methods to determine stream specific Okanagan EFNs: the desktop "Okanagan Tennant method" and the site-specific fish and fish habitat "Okanagan Weighted Useable Width (WUW) method".

Building on Phase I, the goal of the EFN project was to collaboratively establish the water levels that are needed by fish and fish habitat in our major tributary streams. The EFNs identified through this work will support water license allocation decisions by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations.

The ONA applied the Okanagan Tennant method to all 18 priority streams and collected the required data to determine stream specific EFNs in 11 Okanagan streams using the WUW method. EFNs and critical flow needs were developed for all study streams along with recommendations for implementation. The technical portion is now complete and the project is now moving into the communications phase.



Photo L to R: k'əmcnítkw Floodplain re-connection to the Penticton Channel, Okanagan River Penticton lake outlet 1910 DHilton_rowboat Photo Credit: Penticton Museum

Okanagan ntytyix and sklwis (Chinook) Recovery



The Okanagan ntytyix and sklwis re-introduction project is a long term experiment designed to assess the feasibility of reintroducing Chinook Salmon into their historic range, which includes mainstem summer run and tributary spring run populations.

The main objective of the project is to stabilize and rebuild the declining wild Okanagan Chinook population, to return Chinook to their former habitat and migration range, and to revitalize the Okanagan Nation salmon fishery. ONA has been monitoring live adults and carcass for over 15 years. This year the program saw these various outcomes:

- Released 8,229 Chinook Smolts from the kt c̓p̓alk stírn Hatchery into Okanagan River in Oliver downstream of McIntyre Dam. They were pit tagged to determine, survival and travel timing enroute to Rocky Reach Dam, WA, USA.
- 2019 Chinook monitoring saw the highest number of Spring Chinook observed in Okanagan up to Penticton Channel.
- Operated a partial weir and digital counter during spawner migration to Shingle Creek from mid August to mid September. Goal was to determine run timing, and escapement, plus feasibility of broodstock collection for future years.
- 40,000 eyed Chinook eggs were provided by Colville Tribe for incubation, rearing and ceremonial releases in spring 2020 (fry), and spring 2021 (yearlings).
- A pilot modular hatcheries was designed, assembled and is being testing for member communities to operate for salmon recovery. They will have a capacity for 100,000 salmon eggs.



kt c̓p̓alk stírn Hatchery and Lab

4,107,296 SOCKEYE FRY WERE RELEASED

1,409,652 into Trout Creek,
1,257,844 into Powers Creek,
1,214,990 into Six Mile Creek,
170,044 into Mission Creek and
52,983 into Penticton Channel and
1,000 into Columbia River (Castlegar)

158,068 SOCKEYE FRY RELEASED

March 2020 into Shingle Creek

OBTAINED FUNDING TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT BC FIRST NATIONS' GENOMIC LAB

at the Nations kt c̓p̓alk stírn Hatchery

856,844 SOCKEYE EGGS WERE COLLECTED

Eggs were collected from Okanagan River in Oliver, the Penticton Channel and Shingle Creek

TESTED OVER 10, 000 SAMPLES

testing included: necropsies, aging, hatchery thermal marks, DNA extractions, disease testing, stomach contents and tag reading.

27 NORTHERN PIKE HEAD DISECTIONS COMPLETED

To determine the growth rate

OVER 10,000 BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES WERE COLLECTED

Fish and mysid from 8 lakes including monitoring of harvest, brood stock, dead pitch, fry emergence, hatchery production, juveniles in lake and smolt surveys.

OVER 1500 TISSUES DISEASE TESTED

For Broughton First Nations as part of the Indigenous Monitoring and Inspection Plan to establish oversight of the Broughton area Fish Farms

678 PEOPLE WERE PROVIDED HATCHERY TOURS

siwtk^w and cikilxwm

Flooding and fire have always been a part of the natural landscape throughout our territory. In recent years, large flood and debris flows events have become an increasing concern across Syilx Okanagan territory. Similarly, colonial fire suppression has led to higher risks of destructive wildfires. The ONA is working with communities, local, Provincial and Federal government partners and other agencies to protect our watersheds from extreme flood and fire risks, and to re-establish natural disturbance regimes in order to support flourishing ecosystems.

siwtk^w water responsibility planning can be summarized as a strong foundation of Syilx knowledge (i.e. Syilx Water Declaration, nsyilxcən) and is the starting point for shaping watershed planning processes that align with Syilx water laws, principles and practices; for assertion and practice of Syilx title, rights and authority. The foundation of Syilx water knowledge can be imagined as threads that are interwoven amongst activities, tools, processes, solutions, partnerships, and dialogue with external governments and stakeholders.

This past year a **Syilx Okanagan Flood and Debris Flow Risk Assessment** was completed. The goal of this project phase is to understand the risk due to flood and debris flows within the Okanagan Similkameen region to support priority-setting of future work. This is the initial phase of a multi-year flood and debris flow adaptation initiative. This project was a wonderful demonstration of partnerships and wouldn't have been possible without Ebbwater consulting, Syilx communities, and regional districts, and municipalities in the Okanagan Basin.

The **Okanagan Lake Responsibility Planning Initiative** is a multi-year project to develop a visioning and experiential learning process that will create a greater awareness and understanding of the challenges and opportunities of protecting the environmental, cultural, and economic values for kłúsxnítkw (Okanagan Lake). This planning initiative is being co-led with the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program and South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program. The visioning process will lead to the development of a strategy that will enhance the ways of caring for, protecting,

and restoring the values and interests of kłúsxnítkw foreshore and associated tributaries within the watershed.

This past year the first pilot of applying the **Syilx Water Responsibility and Planning Methodology** to the Regional District of Kettle Boundary watershed plan was completed. In this process there was a TEK gathering and watershed tour. The watershed tour was to record the physical experiences of travelling through the Kettle River watershed, journeying along the high mountains to the valley bottom visiting critical tributaries that are significant to the Syilx Okanagan people. The Developing Water Responsibilities Plans Using the Syilx Methodology report has recommended revisions to the methodology and next steps to establish a Syilx Kettle Watershed Responsibility Plan.

cikilxwm (traditional burning of the land for the health of our food chiefs) is a critical Syilx responsibility. Over the past year, ONA has worked with Syilx communities to implement significant work to re-establish fire on the landscape.

The Crater Mountain prescribed fire project is a collaboration between the Lower Similkameen Indian Band, ONA, BC Wildfire Service and the BC Ministry of FLNRORD. The multi-year project aims to restore critical habitat for bighorn sheep on the slopes of Crater Mountain in the Ashnola Valley.

On April 2nd 2019, 190 hectares of habitat was burned, and the project is now slated to support roughly 1200 hectares of prescribed fire in the coming months. Several other prescribed fire projects have been implemented across the Territory, with similar objectives- ultimately to re-vitalize the landscape with the disturbance and care it requires to rejuvenate and thrive.

Ki'lawna Recovery

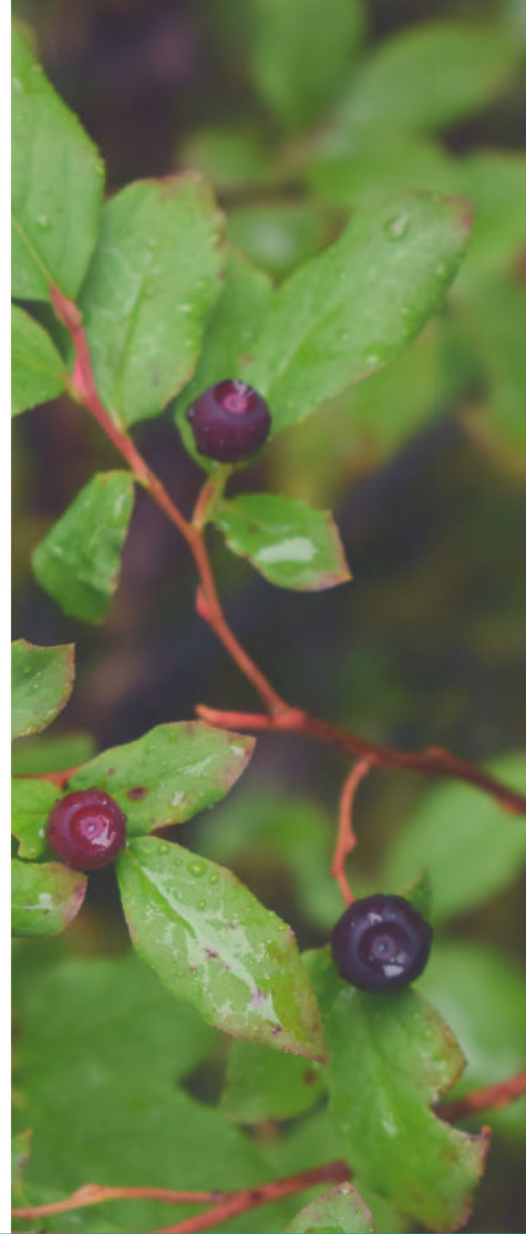


Ki'lawna recovery has been one of ONA's top priorities since declared threatened and protected by the CEC in 2014. Over the last 12 months, ONA has secured partnerships and support for three projects, separate but intertwined, to support ki'lawna recovery across the Territory.

In the North Cascades, we continue to assess habitat as part of the recovery actions to bring ki'lawna back to the ecosystem. In the Okanagan Highlands area, the NR team is working to better understand ki'lawna numbers and distribution. It has been understood for centuries by the Syilx people that grizzly bears occupied the Okanagan, however they are currently listed as extirpated here, making securing funding and partnerships for protection challenging. We are working to disprove this listing, and have successfully documented ki'lawna in several locations within the Okanagan.

In the Arrow-Granby, our team is working with UBCO, the Columbia Basin Trust and others to identify, prioritize and implement enhancements to the quality, availability and connectivity of ki'lawna habitat.

TEK and science have come together on the land to provide important guidance on **stxatq (huckleberry) restoration**, while Syilx, government and industry partners work to develop tools to restore and enhance the availability of this critical food plant for ki'lawna, and for the people.



Technical Highlights

COLLARED 40 MULE DEER FAWNS

As part of the Southern Interior Mule Deer research project, a partnership with UBCO, FLNRORD, and University of Idaho

DEVELOPED A CIKILXWM PLAN FOR DARKE LAKE AREA

Partnered with PIB to prescribe and treat 50 ha Slated for 2022.

SUCCESSFULLY DOCUMENTED 3 INDIVIDUALS GRIZZLY BEARS.

DEVELOPED A CIKILXWM PLAN FOR PEACHLAND WATERSHED

Partnered with PIB to prescribe and treat 90 ha of habitat. Planned for spring 2021.

DOCUMENTED GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT

Documented quality and availability in Manning Provincial Park, Cathedral Provincial Park, and in the Arrow-Granby.

DEPLOYED AND RETRIEVED 22 REMOTE WILDLIFE CAMERAS

As part of the Okanagan highlands Grizzly Bear monitoring project.

JOINED AQUAHACK CHALLENGE

Became a partner and water issue leader in the Aquahack Challenge hosted by the Okanagan Basin Water Board.



Columbia

The ONA has a small but very active team in the Eastern Territory. We're involved, and have a strong voice, while representing Syilx Okanagan Nation priorities on many of the local environmental committees that also include environmental groups, provincial and federal representatives, other Nations, and several large industrial partners.

The snłuxwqnm (Castlegar) team is leading in the implementation of several **environmental monitoring programs** for BC Hydro including wildlife effectiveness monitoring of revegetation efforts within the Arrow Lakes draw down zone, and monitoring erosion around habitat enhancement structures near Revelstoke.

The **monitoring and habitat enhancement of the Intermountain-Rocky Mountain Population of ʔarsikʷ** (Western Painted Turtle). We surveyed Box Lake, near Nakusp, and recorded ʔarsikʷ use of the lakeshore for basking and nesting, and installed six anchored basking logs for both turtle and wildlife use. We received funding for, and are currently monitoring, highway mortality of nesting ʔarsikʷ at Erie Lake near Salmo, and will provide recommendations to the Ministry of Transportation for mitigation measures.

The team led the **wildlife and habitat restoration program at the Fort Shepherd Conservancy lands** south of Trail, an area that has been historically impacted by smelter emissions, off-highway vehicle damage, and logging. This program included cultural surveys, invasive plant treatments, restoration planting with native plants and seeds, install of Lewis' Woodpecker and duck nest boxes, install of bluebird boxes, and creation of habitat ecological

restoration prescriptions to help restore overgrown or decadent shrub and forested areas.

Our **Fish in Schools Program (FinS)** has grown in the Columbia region which demonstrates the success of the program. We now have 16 schools this year from School Districts 20 (Lower Columbia/Trail), 8 (Kootenay Lake/Nelson), 51 (Boundary/Kettle), 19 (Arrow Lakes) and 93 (French Immersion).

FinS is a comprehensive fish education program, with a focus on sc'win (sockeye salmon), their lifecycle and the importance of their ecosystems. In the Columbia, this program further cultivates awareness of salmon's historical runs from the ocean, upstream to the Kettle River, Columbia, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenay Rivers, incl. major tributaries the Salmo and Slocan rivers.

As part of the program students participated on June 24/19 as part of the **cpùtaʔstm iʔ xaʔxʔitət uʔ ck'aʔxtm iʔ ntytyix ceremonial release** into the Columbia River at Millenium Park in Castlegar. On June 25 another ceremony was held in skaʔaykntn Revelstoke.

In takʔyckst (Slocan Lake), the ONA is a partner in the efforts to **re-connect wetlands and tributaries of Bonanza Creek** that were cut off from the main channel during railway construction over 100 years ago. This is a three year program that will provide restoration opportunities to ONA communities.

Northern Pike Suppression and Monitoring

The ONA is recognized as the lead by Canadian agencies for Northern Pike suppression and monitoring in the Columbia River (Pend d'Oreille, Kootenay, Columbia and Kettle Rivers). Our suppression efforts focus on pre-spawn adults in April and May, and adult, juveniles and young-of-the-year through to October.

They are a well-known top-level predator, native to most of Canada and USA east of the Rockies. Detected in 2010 in the Columbia River in Castlegar, they are suspected of migrating downstream through the Pend d'Oreille system, originating from Montana. Now established populations exist in the Robson Reach and Kootenay River confluence areas, as well as downstream throughout Lake Roosevelt. Pike have a diet preference for soft-bodied, soft-rayed fish like trout and salmon. The ONA has caught pike up to 27lbs (female) from the upper Pend d'Oreille. Pike of that size would have no problem consuming a 4 lb rainbow trout or sockeye!

Our major effort is for pre-spawn adults, as pike are known for very high fertility rates, it is most beneficial to remove them before they spawn. A mature female can produce upwards of 9,000 eggs per pound of body weight. The 27lb female mentioned above was capable of producing nearly a 1/4 million eggs!

A key part of the program includes monitoring and rapid-response components. An example response is

Christina Lake, where a report was received of an angler-caught pike. ONA, working closely with Christina Lake Stewardship Society, activated a monitoring crew to the lake to sample likely habitats for pike with netting and electrofishing. No further pike were encountered.

Part of on-going monitoring includes sampling habitats where pike may have access to but have yet to be detected. This type of monitoring will include Environmental-DNA (eDNA). eDNA is a new tool in species detection, where animals are known to continuously slough body cells and which become part of the drift in any water body. We have taken pike tissue samples that are used by the team at the ONA Fish Health and Diagnostics Lab to extract DNA, and validate a pike DNA amplification assay that detects a unique DNA signature for Columbia Northern Pike. With this pike "signature" now known, individual technicians can take special water samples, filter the water, and have fish-Lab staff analyze material on the filter to "search" for pike DNA. This approach enables rapid and cost effective sampling of more locations to detect if pike are present before we activate a large, and more costly suppression crew.

Often invasive species bring other organisms with them that native species cannot adapt to. Such may be the case with certain tapeworms or even viruses that pike are known to carry. We are looking to develop more tools around these questions as our pike suppression and monitoring program continues.



Lim Limpt

Community support is critical for implementing and completing these environmental programs and would not be successful without the support of partners and ONA communities.

Key ONA partners in the Eastern Territory include: Slokan Lake Stewardship Society, Friends of Kootenay Lake, Kootenay Native Plant Society, Trail Wildlife Association, Arrow Lakes Environmental Stewardship Society, Erie Lake community, Kootenay Connect, Columbia Basin Trust, Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, several Provincial agencies, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and DFO



SQ^wƏLQ^wLTULA?X^w (VOICES ON THE LAND)

Elder fluent language speakers share unique knowledge that comes from the nsyilxcən language as it relates to the land and environment. Having emerged from the land, nsyilxcən is expressive of the land, and is a virtual storehouse of information about all living things and the web of life in Syilx ecology.

nsyilxcən carries our ancestors' teachings with thousands of years of knowledge of living in balance with the land in our territory. The laws and the language are taught by sharing stories with youth and adult learners. The land forms and place names in stories are reminders to future generations that the land is at the center of our lives and actions.



Voice Maps: In this project we brought Elder nsyilxcən speakers and youth together on the land for cultural teachings. The Elders guided us to specific places to do video recordings for the purpose of creating a series of story maps, also called “voice maps,” that teach the Syilx perspective on plants, animals, aquatic life, place names, land markers, oral histories, natural laws, protocols, and any other land-based teachings the Elders wanted to share.

Voice maps are a useful tool for exploring the relationship of ourselves, as Syilx Okanagan People, and our territorial lands. The resources and tools created are critical to our legacy of intergenerational knowledge transfer through storytelling connected to place. For the Syilx Okanagan People, the ways of knowing the land, water, animals, and plants are embedded in our language and bequeathed to us by our ancestors. Without our language we cannot fulfil our responsibility to act as caretakers of nxwəxwəltantət (that which gives us life) and pass our cultural knowledge on to our youth and future generations.

Community Knowledge Keeper (CKK): Is a mapping, data management, and integrated consultation tracking and response system. The program is designed and owned by Kwusen Research and Media. The system provides: (1) a comprehensive digital archive for documents, photographs, audio, and video; (2) web-based mapping desktop technology that allows for analysis of potential impacts of

industrial development on traditional use, species habitat, archaeological sites, and any areas of importance; (3) GeoKeeper app that allows users to collect data in the field with customizable survey forms while simultaneously recording GPS tracks in real time; and (4) a Referrals/Consultation Tracking Section.

The Syilx Community Knowledge Keeper program is access restricted. However, there is a public home page that includes some place names, plants, and wildlife species.

<https://syilx.knowledgekeeper.ca/>

Voice Maps added to CKK in 2019-20

Total cultural values:

59	Burial sites
8	Ceremony sites
7	Coyote Landmarks
6	Earthworks (e.g. cairns)
17	Pithouses
37	Pictographs
6	Sweat lodges
21	Teaching places
6	Storytelling places
38	Habitation sites
161	Place Names
60	Cache pits
11	Fishing sites
5	Trails
772	Archaeology sites



A Reminder to Future Generations

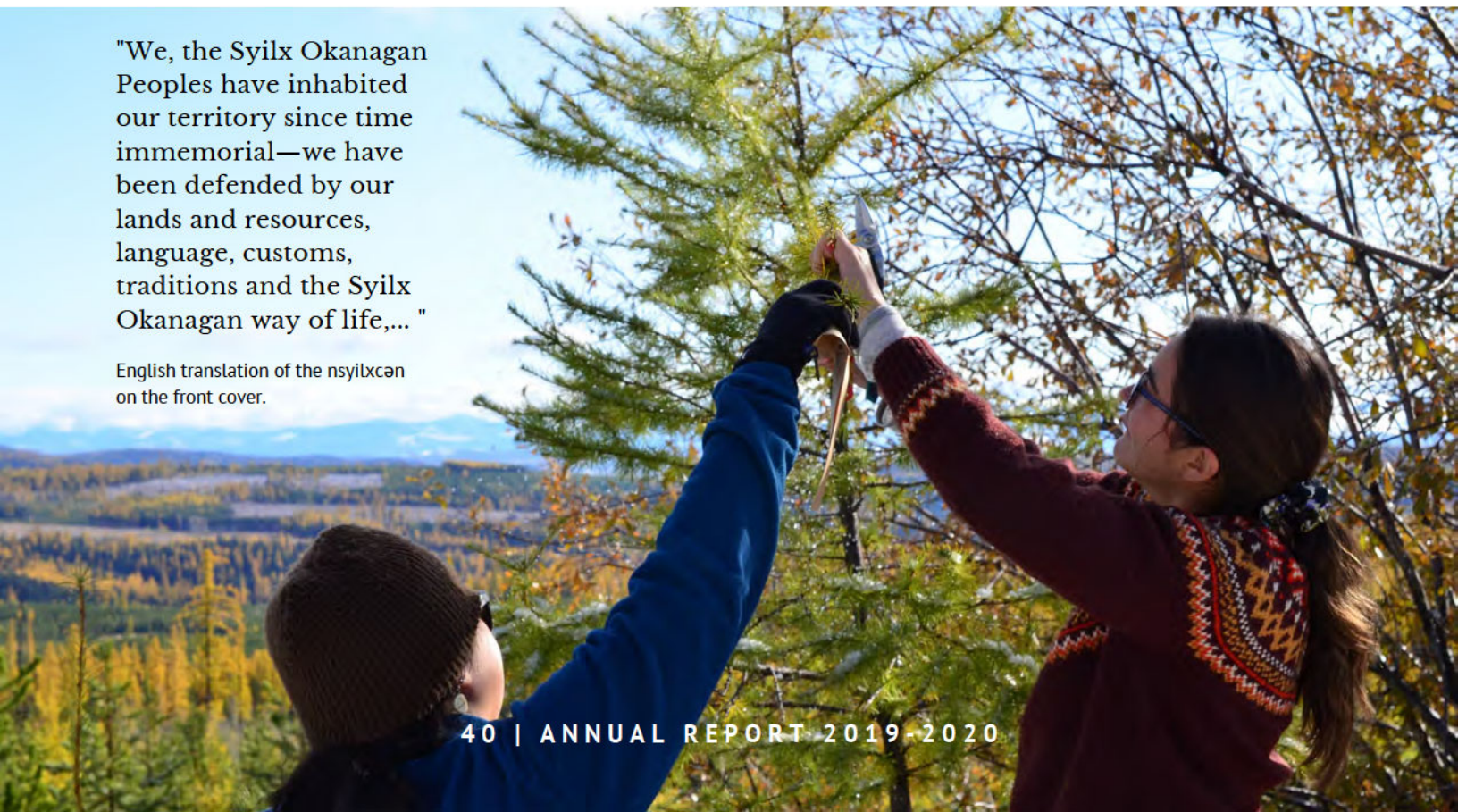
The sʔaltíkʷtx share an oral history that tells of an ongoing connection to and use of the sʔalt'ikʷt (Arrow Lakes area), maintained through the intergenerational sharing of knowledge. This knowledge transfer is carried out by families who continue to take their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to the sʔalt'ikʷt to hunt, harvest and take part in cultural, ceremonial and stewardship practices.

The ONA through a partnership with Columbia Power Trust was able to create a monumental interpretive sign with the insights and help of Elders. An art piece and pole carvings, which were commissioned, were all installed, in a part of our territory, at the Beaver Creek Provincial Park. This project celebrates that Syilx people have been in the area since time immemorial and continue to re-establish Syilx presence in the Eastern part of their Territory.

The art piece, seen in the background of the centre spread of this annual report, created by Spirit Peoples is based on Coyote building Kettle Falls for the people. The original art piece features a Tule Mat background with artwork painted on top with two carved pieces The Eagle Staff is carved from Choke Cherry and Deer Antler, the fish gaff is constructed from Lodgepole Pine, Chokecherry, Elk Bone and handmade Spitsn.

"We, the Syilx Okanagan Peoples have inhabited our territory since time immemorial—we have been defended by our lands and resources, language, customs, traditions and the Syilx Okanagan way of life,..."

English translation of the nsylxcən on the front cover.



Our Collective Challenge Moving Forward.

At ONA this past year held other challenges. One was the Recognition Agreement in regard to the Nation-to-Nation table to further self-determination discussions about Syilx Nation governance. The CEC has established their legal and negotiation team to lead the work under clear directive and mandate. The other initiative was Syilx Nation Rising which was outlined in a statement signed by the CEC in December 2018 directing the ONA to engage members to design our own governance system through developing a Syilx Constitution. Engagement began in March and community members were energized by the conversations and hopeful for this work. There were clearly differences about how to proceed, thus some work related to the development of a Syilx Constitution was suspended by the CEC with ONA staff awaiting CEC direction about how to proceed on these important initiatives.

Subsequently, the CEC contracted consultant Geoff Greenwell with Aboriginal Capacity Builders Ltd. to conduct an organizational review of ONA. The scope of work is to interview sectors of ONA (some staff, Syilx Nation CEC and Councils, select consultants, select past staff), review organizational structure, and review some financial agreements in order to determine any issues with operational efficiencies. This report, when complete, will present findings by review of recommendations. Throughout, ONA staff will continue to ensure that the work of operations moves forward.

Conflict isn't new to ONA. Change is often challenging—and it is necessary to engage and discuss as they arise. These initiatives were a huge opportunity for our Nation to enter into governance discussions especially when the CEC had envisioned this work over many years and the opportunity had come, finally, at a time when we had the human and financial resources to tackle these issues—something that our people have called for time and again. In support of this vision, the ONA had been accessing resources for building capacity that could support a Syilx Constitution that includes the ongoing Nation based restoration of the Food Fisheries, establishment of Family Decision Making, youth mental health initiatives, managing of referrals, and on-the-land actions. There has been some opposition to this approach in the past, but it seems that in the last year this opposition has reached a crescendo.

While we struggle as a people to engage in decolonizing processes, we are caught in a continuous fight to free ourselves from the colonial system that dictates most of our activities. There is a pressing need to engage in real conversation about what we want ONA to accomplish for our Syilx Nation.

We are nowhere without our Unity Principle intact, our foods protected, our children being raised by their own families, our health care accessible, waters being stewarded by our peoples, our language thriving, and our youth being educated in our own history, culture, and heritage. Syilx governance and administration are intertwined and finding the balance will be our collective challenge moving forward.



ǰəli k^wu sqilx^w

For the People



TO LEARN MORE:

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