



MEDIA RELEASE | August 27, 2019

OKANGAN NATION ALLIANCE DESTIGMATIZE THE DRUG OVERDOSE CRISIS WITH THE PURPLE RIBBON CAMPAIGN CARAVAN

tkwəłniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: From August 27-28, 2019, the Okanagan Nation hosted the ‘Purple Ribbon Campaign Caravan’ as part of International Overdose Awareness Day. This Caravan saw people from across the Syilx Okanagan territory rally and travel to various communities, sharing resources and bringing awareness to the issue of the pervasive drug and opioid crisis that is gripping Syilx Okanagan communities, and the Okanagan in general. There is an urgent need to address the stigma that surrounds drug use and overdose, while simultaneously increasing culturally appropriate supports and services to decrease the violence and disruption that our communities face.

A highlight of the caravan included an Awareness Walk, where over 40 people, including Syilx Nation members, as well as many others whose lives have been impacted by the tragedies of addiction and overdose, joined together and walked across the William R. Bennett Bridge to City Park, in Kelowna. This initiative brought light to the issue, and was an opportunity to collectively shed the shame and silence that often isolates those most effected by this crisis.

“I continue to affirm that what we are facing is an overdose emergency, both here on Syilx territory and throughout British Columbia. We know that First Nations people are five times more likely than non-First Nations to experience an overdose. Such stats drive home the fact that these issues have their roots in colonization and the impacts of inequality that continue to reverberate through our communities. As a Nation it is imperative that we come together and take on these pervasive inflictions so that we can heal and move forward together, united as one” states Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

The First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health and the Vernon, Kelowna and Penticton Friendship Centres, alongside the Metis Community Services Society, joined the ONA for the Purple Ribbon Campaign Caravan, which showcased the united front and the collaboration needed to successfully address this crisis.

It is important for anyone facing these issues to know that you are not alone, and that there are resources and supports available to see you through challenging times. For more resources visit: www.syilx.org/wellness/our-programs-and-services/purple-ribbon-campaign/

~

ONA recognizes Purple Ribbon Day - and all the efforts globally - that provide a deeper recognition to the issue of drug addiction and overdoses, alongside all of the victims of the current opioid emergency. Efforts like the Purple Ribbon Campaign Caravan are part of a broader range of programs and activities, including the Nation Drug Forum, that the Nation takes on to actively address the current opioid crisis that is devastating communities throughout the territory.

For further information please contact:

Tara Montgomery, ONA Communications Lead
T: 1-250-707-0095 ext. 120 E: tmontgomery@syilx.org

Grand Chief Dr. Stewart Phillip, ONA Chair
T: 1-250-490-5314

Okanagan Nation Alliance

101-3500 Old Okanagan Hwy Westbank, BC V4T 3J6: (250) 707-0095 www.syilx.org