

ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

kʔulluʔsməntm
In this together



ǰəli kʷu sqilxʷ

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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 **nx'wəlx'wəltantət, that which gives us life.**



We are pleased to present to you the Okanagan Nation Alliance Annual Report for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which reports on initiatives, activities and progress as we work to uphold the Okanagan Nation Declaration.

for the good of all
for all time

XAʔTUS TRIBAL CHAIR MESSAGE

YILMIXM KI LAW NA | CHIEF CLARENCE LOUIE

Way'

First, I want to convey my respect to ʔaʔswt Grand Chief Stewart Phillip for his 16 years of leadership as ONA Chair while maintaining, for some years, his role as Chief of Penticton Indian Band and serving also, for the last 8 years, as President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). His wellbeing was a serious consideration when we, as Chiefs Executive Council (CEC), took it upon ourselves to replace his chairmanship. Please know this was not an easy decision. The CEC agreed to appoint me as Interim Tribal Chair on July 28, 2021 while the Grand Chief was preparing for a kidney transplant even as business and politics were carrying on and as we were all navigating COVID-19. Our prayers remain with the Grand Chief for a full and strong recovery and we look forward to the time when we can again gather to honour and celebrate his years of service and life's work for the betterment of all Indigenous peoples.

As most of you know, I have been involved with the ONA since it was called the Okanagan Tribal Council and a signatory to the 1987 Okanagan Nation Declaration. I have been around this table since 1985 and have sat with over 100 different ONA chiefs and councils over those years, many of whom are no longer with us. I am a business leader and proud Syilx member and, as recently shared with the CEC, my style of shared leadership practice has supported how we have organized over the years. For example, it is no surprise I supported Stewart as our Chair because he is knowledgeable of Title and Rights and, for myself, I have a "Just get things done" attitude. This is my style and I make no bones about it and I am not about to change as Tribal Chair.

We have a lot at stake in our work to keep advancing our inherent rights as Indian people—safeguarding and asserting those rights for our future generations. There continues to be politics that we must confront, manage, and overcome. This is a life of an Indian. Our youth need to be inspired with dreams of serving our Nation. They must see that we are all from here and not let colonial thinking keep us divided. These are not our ways. Colonialism and historic injustices keep us apart. We must work hard to keep open dialogue so that we move forward together as stated in our Unity Declaration of 2009. We know that we did not say Sinixt were extinct—just as we did not say that was the 49th parallel was our border. The Desautel case brings up complex legal issues. Whether we like it or not, our Nation members in Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) are US citizens and we are Canadian citizens. The CEC have sent to CCT a letter requesting to meet as soon as the pandemic restrictions are lifted because, even as the border and other foreign constructs have divided us, we are still all one people.

As First Nations, we have both numerous challenges and numerous opportunities. It is known that our own politics often get in the way. We have lands, resources, and peoples to protect and we cannot do it alone nor can we accomplish much of anything if we are fighting



“ We have a lot at stake in our work to keep advancing our inherent rights as Indian people

each other with the only beneficiaries from our divisive actions being the government. I agreed to take on this position during internal political infighting—as we have from time to time at the Tribal Council level—nothing new there. I remain committed to advancing wellness for our Nation, both economically and socially. I will pick up where necessary and continue serving the Nation's interests in enhancing governance processes and programs underway. These include the Columbia River Treaty negotiations which require us to work with our neighbouring Nations, as well as the Letter of Agreement in July 2019, in which the same three Nations agreed to work together with BC and Canada to restore salmon to the Upper Columbia. We know that we must find progressive ways to work together. This is important because we all need money and resources to fight governments and pay our legal bills in defense of our Title and Rights. Despite DRIPA legislation and significant efforts by provincial and federal governments to revise policy, the land question remains unresolved. We require a decisive strategy involving legal and policy support. The Title and Rights negotiations will go on at home and at the Nation level because we are up against policies and laws that are not of our own making. Regardless, we will uphold our *stet'at*. I don't intend to have anything stop us from accessing what we rightfully deserve in terms of benefits that flow directly to our member communities with the return of one of our food chiefs, our *ntytyix*, to their spawning grounds. We will strengthen our capacity to address food security. These are our responsibilities and we must hold all governments to account for the environmental degradation of our lands, resources and waters. We have a stellar team of lawyers and advisors that support the Syilx Nation and the CEC will continue to seek resolve at the negotiation table when it comes to our rightful place to govern and steward our lands.

We acknowledge that our cultural ways and understandings are a fundamental aspect of bringing home the salmon, protecting our ancestral lands, and keeping our women safe. To uphold these ancient responsibilities, we must support our Elders, language speakers, and cultural knowledge keepers so they can bring their depth of insight into our world. It is a tragedy that most Indigenous languages face extinction and I am committed to fighting for the revitalization of *nsyilxcən*.

Being Tribal Chair for less than a year, I have worked with the ONA team and the CEC to continue to pursue how best to organize and govern our syilx Title and Rights. We need efficient and responsive operations and resources to support our collective governance

mandates. We see how far we've come at ONA and at the member band level. This collaborative work will address the needs of our communities and our members in the long term. We need as much effort on these same matters at home in our local Syilx community organizations. In order to best represent these needs, the CEC has committed to ongoing dialogue which has included hosting an *enowkin'wixw*, working with consultants, and inviting other Indigenous leaders to share their work on constitution development and Nation rebuilding. We started with Miles Richardson from Haida Nation and Sophie Pierre from Ktunaxa. We are pursuing a MOU table with BC on such agreements as Pathfinder. I know we continue to struggle with a government process that everyone can agree on—which is what brought us to this point. It remains a priority. We tackled the same conversation most recently through the Recognition Implementation and Self Determination Tables with the federal government and with the Syilx Rising community engagement process. These federal policy mandates provided resources to organize. At present, the CEC has decided to review that process and restart, taking time to reflect on what will be the preferred strategy to advance our collective interests as the Syilx Nation. This does not dismiss or disregard the work done to date, but will rather build upon it. We know our members are interested in nationhood, just as they are interested in the progress of their own member communities. These are the interconnected relationships that we must build upon to ensure that—whatever model of Nation government evolves into—we still have full inclusion because, as our people say: **"We are stronger together."**

This pandemic has been hard. We have lost members and struggled with not being able to gather in keeping with our strongest traditions that bring us together to support families who are mourning. But moving through this, we continue to find the strength to honour these cultural ways. This is self-determination, to want better for our families and our members, and to carry on as proud Syilx peoples knowing always that: **"We are still here."**

Photo: Chief and Council *enowkin'wixw*



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

SUIKI?ST | PAULINE TERBASKET

The World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 and we started our new fiscal year in uncertain times as an organization and a global community. A year later, we remain in a Covid-19 environment, but starting to see movement to relaxed restrictions and by September 2021 our ONA offices may be formally opened. Throughout this time, the carrying out of CEC mandates persisted with staff working from home and virtual meetings as we revised workplans and reconfigured field projects. In-person community engagement stopped, but innovation with technology and alternative program delivery continued. The CEC members pushed through on their ONA organizational review, the election of a new Tribal Chair, and new approaches to advance the conversation about moving forward as a unified Nation.

It is important to acknowledge that I served under renowned and stalwart Syilx leader Grand Chief Stewart Phillip for the past 23 years, the last 16 in his capacity as ONA Chair. As escalating health and family conditions became his priority, the CEC unanimously elected Chief Clarence Louie, also a veteran to Syilx Nation politics, as our new Tribal Chair. Since then, without skipping a beat about the amount of work, Chief Louie has stepped up to contribute. This is so important with all the Nation-based activities and ongoing governance dialogue on Title and Rights and mandates that are currently being supported by the ONA. As evidenced throughout this Annual Report, there are numerous highlights of the Syilx Nation and ONA carrying on the work, even within a pandemic, and coming together to care for one another.

One of our new Chair's earliest tasks was signing off on the *ali axa? i? tmx^wulax^w*: "Because Our Land is Beautiful" Enduring Relationship with BC Hydro Progress Report to all our communities. This report is a testimony to the cumulative Syilx Nations governance work advancing Title and Rights and establishing partnerships and agreements that directly benefit our communities, as well as the legacy opportunities that these agreements provide. This Annual Report touches on opportunities including the Columbia River Treaty negotiations, Revelstoke #6, Mica 5 Benefit Agreement, and others we continue to pursue so there can be local and Nation-based financial benefits and socio-economic changes.

The mandate or mission of ONA as set out by the CEC Business Plan of 2017 is "Land, Resources, and People." It is our social and cultural lives and the health and welfare of our families that is the underpinning of any society. It is through the Syilx worldviews of our *capitkwł* that our relationships thrive. Our creation stories set out the sacred responsibilities. Our 4 Food Chiefs speak to our Indigenous food sovereignty together with stewarding our lands and waters so that we can care for each other and for the People-to-be. The time of Covid-19 brings us to consider how we can decolonize the speed and greed of capitalism and assert our own slower, more sustainable culture and envision change in line with what our *tmix^w* requires more than ever with climate change at our doorsteps.



“

ali axa?

i? tmx^wulax^w:

*Because our
land is Beautiful*

This has been a hard year for everyone. For me, I wish to share my sorrow at the passing of two very spirited, compassionate women who saved my life in so many ways: Mollie Bono, and Assunta Rosal. I always imagined that these matriarchs and I would grow old together. Mollie was a warrior, a principled leader whose life's work was the betterment of Syilx peoples with a focus on empowering women and youth. She knew inherently the importance of cultural identity and the values that our people once collectively understood. Many of you know her reputation and what a loss to our Nation this is. Then my ally and dearest of friend, Assunta Rosal: a strong and intelligent social justice advocate with the bravery to stay the course even when the work was uncomfortable. Both these women were fierce in their commitment to change and they made the world a better place. It was their leadership styles, their faith and confidence, which inspired and challenged me to do better. They showed us how to take responsibility for our actions and be true to our word: "For the people."

For us as a Syilx Nation, the Chiefs have embarked on pausing, reflecting, and discussing a strategic path forward. There are now fewer elders to remind us of our purpose as Syilx people. Many of those elders who used to remind leadership of our purpose as a Syilx Nation have passed on. There has been dialogue around new ideas about what our Nation represents, including the Colville Confederated Tribes and the current colonial divisions that remain. Our people are courageous enough to speak to the issues, to seek resolve instead of remaining divided, and create strategies in keeping with the reality that "we are truly all one." This year's Annual Report calls on us to resolve conflicts, create partnerships, and foster transparency by our dialogues at every level, as we seek resources for new opportunities to build our communities with the collective understanding that we are stronger together.

On the provincial and federal stage, government policy and new legislation keep everyone active even as the real movement is slow. Bill C-92, An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families was passed in 2019, finally enshrining into law what Syilx and other Indigenous peoples have asked for decades: to affirm our jurisdiction over our children. Working through how we make this real in our Nation and communities is an ongoing and complex endeavor. In BC, we have the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Act (DRIPA) and now Canada has passed Bill C-15: An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to establish a process for implementation. Likewise, we have completed the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

and Girls (MMIWG) Inquiry and yet we are still waiting for the action plans. This is the grind. Even as leadership responds to the daily needs and priorities of our communities, our advocacy must be proactive, putting the people first and taking the long view. These government processes will persist and we must remain diligent. We need to be united at the table, finding ways to build capacity, and resources in our communities.

We must ensure we are able to sustain our own Tribal operations. This is one of my key financial responsibilities - to ensure fiscal accountability and transparency. ONA has always supported the governance and technical work to the best of our abilities. We have a stellar, resilient team of staff and contractors. As the financial graphics in this report illustrate, ONA takes multiple approaches to sustain operations. We remain proposal and grant driven, which is why our strategic direction of building partnerships between member Bands and other groups contribute to the Nation being able to support CEC mandates.

Our Syilx Nation has struggled with many challenges this year: the crisis with opioid deaths, fears for our children going to school in a pandemic, not being able to gather, and sadness for those we mourn, but each of us have persevered and done our best with trust in the knowledge—as our parents, grandparents, and ancestors continue to remind of us that —



life is precious and our lands, our waters, and our peoples are beautiful. Let us not forget, we have a culture and a language to embrace, learn, and practice. This is how we continue to survive and thrive in the Syilx way.

lim limpt

Lim limpt ʔaʔsiwł



Dr. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip for
16 years of leadership as ONA Chair



“ The birthright of our children is not simply the wealth
and benefits that flow from our land rights.
Rather, the birthright of our children is their
inherent right of Nationhood!

skc'əḥ wəḥ wipla? uḥ steḥtaḥ GOVERNANCE

TO ADVANCE, ASSERT, SUPPORT AND PRESERVE
SYILX OKANAGAN NATION SOVEREIGNTY.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance's Chiefs Executive Council remains committed to ensuring that our suxʷtxtem responsibilities are upheld by carefully considering the cultural, environmental, social and economic interests of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. The groundwork that is set up now will have an impact on moving the Nation forward for generations to come.



DECLARING UNITY TOGETHER: TITLE, RIGHTS AND DECISION-MAKING

Central to these commitments, the Chiefs Executive Council (CEC) advances Syilx Okanagan Title and Rights with the Government of Canada and the Province of BC. Both levels of government have adopted and are looking to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which will include the passing of the federal Bill C-15 later in 2021. The CEC's strategic direction includes pursuing several opportunities that are emerging due to the changing Canadian and International legal and political landscapes, while remaining steadfast that both federal and provincial governments move beyond words and put their commitments into action.

Over the past year, the Policy and Legal Team, as directed by the CEC, has been working on several key files to advance the Nation's Title and Rights strategy. These specific files have been taken on in addition to providing policy and legal support on several other issues at the direction of the CEC.

Supreme Court of Canada's Decision in Desautel

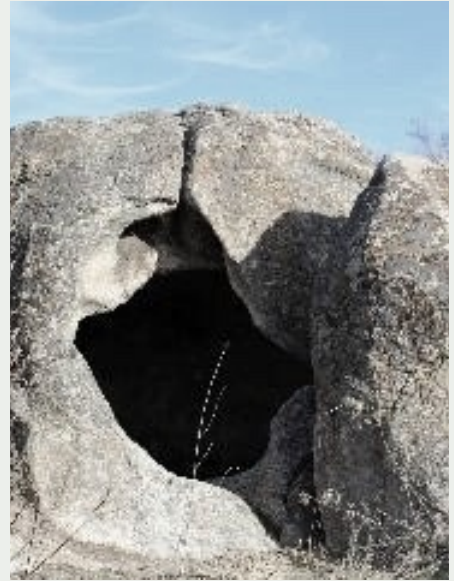
On April 23, 2021, the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in R. v. Desautel. The case was an appeal of the BC Court of Appeal's affirmation of the lower courts' decisions that found that Mr. Desautel, a member of the Lakes Tribe of the Confederated Colville Tribes (CCT) and a United States citizen, has an Aboriginal right to hunt in the traditional territory of Sinixt people in British Columbia.

The Supreme Court of Canada dismissed the Province's appeal, which confirms that Sinixt are not extinct. This case asserted that:

- The Lakes Tribe in the US is not the only successor group of Sinixt - the Court noted that determining successorship requires consideration of evidence relating to ancestry, language, culture, law, political institutions, and territory, connecting a modern community to its historical predecessor.
- Aboriginal peoples' laws, customs and practices define who they are, and how they make their decisions.
- There is no requirement for there to be a modern-day community in the area where harvesting activities take place for an Aboriginal right to exist.
- The tests for Aboriginal title and justification of infringements may be different for First Nations located outside Canada, and the scope and content of the duty to consult may also be different.

The ONA was an intervener in the case, providing submissions to both support our relatives in the CCT, as well as to protect the rights of all Syilx Okanagan Nation members, including those who are Sinixt. These submissions are reflected in the final judgment. The Court's confirmation that the rights held by people with Sinixt ancestry is a win not just for Mr. Desautel and the CCT, but for the Syilx Okanagan Nation as a whole. The CEC will continue to represent the interests of people from the Arrow Lakes area of the Syilx Okanagan Territory.

** Due to the profound impact of the case we are providing this update regardless of the reporting period.



Bottom Photo Credit: Shelly Boyd

“protect the rights of all Syilx Okanagan Nation members, including those who are Sinixt”

SYILX UNITY *Declaration*



MEMBERS OF

THE OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE
and COLVILLE CONFEDERATED TRIBES

make this declaration to signify unity between the Syilx Nation

THE PARTIES have owned and occupied their Indigenous homelands since time immemorial; and

WITHOUT consultation or agreement with the Parties, colonizing governments established an international boundary, bisecting the Parties' homelands; and

THE PARTIES never agreed to or acquiesced to the international boundary at the 49th parallel; and

DESPITE the international boundary the Parties remain united through cultural, familial, territorial, economic, and political ties; and

THE PARTIES wish to strengthen this unity politically, culturally, and economically; and

THE PARTIES understand that working together for the Parties rights, title, and claims in unity best serves our collective interests.

The Parties agree as follows:

POLITICAL UNITY: The Parties agree to foster and encourage cooperation through political unity and alliance.

CULTURAL UNITY: The Parties agree to work in unity to protect, preserve, and promote the Parties' common culture, history, and language.

ECONOMIC UNITY: The Parties agree to work in unity to foster and expand economic development within their communities.

TERRITORIAL UNITY: The Parties agree that they will make best efforts to proceed in unity on all claims or assertions to title and/or rights that pertain to the Parties' Indigenous territory or special claims.

DATED JULY 15, 2010



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.

Canada entered into the Columbia River Treaty (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 First Nations impacted by the CRT and its related dams in the Columbia River Basin, and without the First Nations' consent. The Treaty 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.

Canada and the United States started renegotiating the CRT in the spring of 2018, as the flood control provisions otherwise terminate in 2024. As one of the most significant and on-going infringements of Syilx Okanagan Title and Rights, the CRT negotiations between Canada and the United States continues to be a key file in the context of advancing and protecting the Syilx Okanagan Nation's Aboriginal Title and Rights. Through the hard work and dedication of Syilx Okanagan leadership and staff, Global Affairs Canada granted observer status to the Syilx Okanagan Nation (along with the Ktunaxa and Secwepemc Nations) in 2019, which allows the CEC's representatives to participate in these international negotiations - an international precedent and a testament to the strength of a unified approach. The current CRT renegotiation represents the first time any First Nation has ever been at the table in international treaty negotiations. As such, the Syilx Okanagan presence is ground-breaking and is setting a precedent for Aboriginal communities around the world.

Current objectives of the CEC in the CRT process are to ensure: ecosystem values and cultural values are reflected in CRT dam operational decisions (and not just power generation and flood control, which is currently the case); the Syilx Okanagan Nation has a meaningful role in governance under the CRT moving forward; and the Syilx Okanagan Nation receives benefits under the CRT including redress for past impacts.

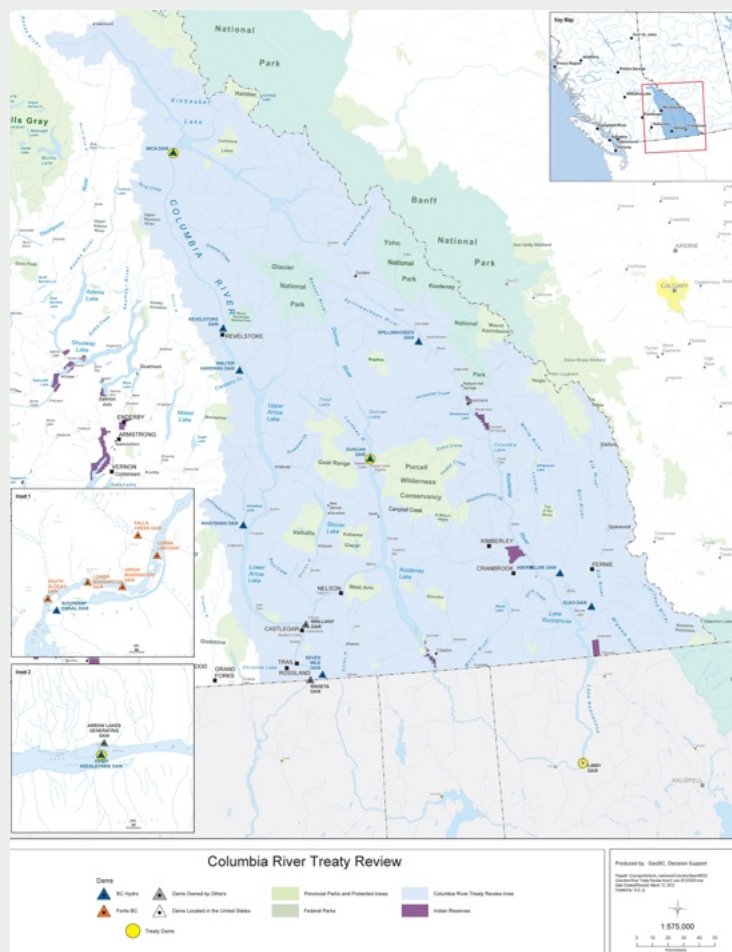


Photo Credit: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty/map/>

CRT Work on the Ground

The ONA is committed to ensuring that Syilx cultural perspectives and values are woven directly into how the CRT is revised. To ensure that cultural values are considered in future CRT operational decisions, it is critical that Syilx Okanagan Nation elders, knowledge keepers, and community members be involved in determining what cultural values need to be considered. ONA staff, through the CRT's Cultural Values Table, have been researching and engaging with Syilx Okanagan members to gather important Syilx places, values, ecosystem knowledge, cultural practices and vision for the Upper Columbia and Arrow Lakes. The ONA is in the process of gathering the necessary information and research data. This will be on-going until the end of the project.

The team is drafting a summary report of the findings from the literature and digital research, along with engagement sessions conducted. This summary report serves as a working draft of the cultural values that are being highlighted and brought forward from research. As part of this process the research team has:

Gathered and started analysis of all related ONA archival information (elder interview transcripts, reports, salmon research, Traditional Use Study mapping etc.)

- Completed 12 community member interviews. Interviews were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the team has a goal to complete more interviews as well as focus group sessions with nsyilxcən speakers, elders, Arrow Lakes knowledge keepers, and Syilx academics.
- As requested, presented to Westbank First Nation Chief and Council on June 15, 2020.
- Joined the WFN Youth Leadership Council on their trip to the Arrow Lakes.
- Over 200 Syilx cultural values mapped and documented based on previous research and current research.
- CRT Informational Webinar was successfully held July 29th, with over 25 nation members in attendance.
- Coordinated Syilx academics to come together in a research gathering to complete the analysis of the Cultural Values research.

Ecosystem Function: Beyond Flood Control and Hydro Production

The Syilx Okanagan Nation has asserted that the Columbia River Treaty negotiations must extend far beyond flood control and hydro-electric production, and that values including the ways ecosystem functions must be considered in CRT dam operations and impacts. To ensure these demands are met, the CRT Ecosystem Function Sub-Committee was established and is made up of representatives from the Syilx Okanagan, Ktunaxa, and Secwepemc Nations, the Province of BC and the Government of Canada, alongside specialized experts. Through this Sub-Committee, First Nations are currently leading several different streams of work regarding how to address ecosystems in a modernized CRT. This work involves developing goals and objectives for what a healthy ecosystem would look like, and ways to measure whether these goals and objectives have been met, incorporating Syilx knowledge.

Over the last year this work has included collaborating to define and scope the technical language related to ecosystem function and performance. Alongside creating common grounds for us to move forward, the ONA is leading the way in developing technical performance metrics related to key themes under the guidance of ONA staff, in particular, related to reservoir productivity, tributary access, and downstream impacts to anadromous salmon. Technically speaking this has included the introduction of the OASIS model platform software as a tool to assess hydro-operations modifications and environmental response as related to salmon, cottonwoods, and wetlands. We have also contributed to literature reviews for key ecosystem themes — including riparian and wetlands, salmon, reservoir productivity. Alongside this work we have diligently contributed to monthly meetings with technical steering committees, developing best practices and communications for cultural and public outreach.

This work has only just been initiated and will evolve over time to ensure that the future CRT agreement recognizes and protects ecosystems for generations to come. It will ensure that Syilx values are incorporated into the best practices and decision-making on a modernized CRT moving forward.



“ensure that Syilx values are incorporated into the best practices and decision-making

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 Nation since the blockage of salmon passage into Canada, due to the construction of Grand Coulee Dam in the 1930s. This and other hydroelectric developments in Canada have impacted fish habitat and effected the Aboriginal Title and Rights and interests of Indigenous Nations.

As such, the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, led by the Syilx Okanagan, Secwepemc, and Ktunaxa 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 (CRSRI) - Bringing the Salmon Home’. This collaborative salmon process is identifying 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.

Under this initiative, the Syilx Okanagan Nation is the host Secretariat. In addition, we have undertaken a considerable amount of work in community engagement within the Columbia Basin including the Columbia River Salmon Festival, which took place from May 10-16, 2021. This included the Syilx Okanagan Nation releasing fry in the Columbia, alongside the launch of its new website at columbiariversalmon.ca. The ONA is leading the way with the other two First Nations to ensure that indigenous knowledge is a key foundation to the work being conducted, and how this knowledge is informing the technical work under this initiative. To view the CRSRI annual report go to: <https://columbiariversalmon.ca/wp-content/uploads/CRSRI-Bringing-the-Salmon-Home-2020-21-Annual-Report.pdf>

s̓x̓wə́x̓nitk̓w Access

As the site of the s̓x̓wə́x̓nitk̓w (Okanagan Falls) Salmon fishery and a former Osoyoos Indian Band reserve, s̓x̓wə́x̓nitk̓w is an important area in Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory. For many years, Nation members have used a 10-meter buffer of “Crown land” between the fishery and private property adjacent to the dam to access the fishery and exercise their Aboriginal fishing rights.

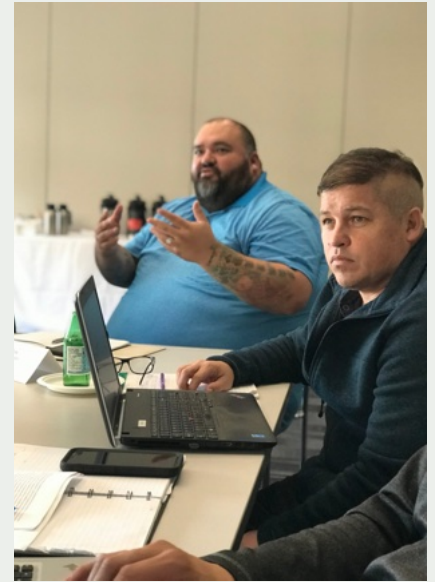
Over the last two years the private landowners have made attempts to have the lands resurveyed to make the buffer part of their private lands. In response, the CEC directed those negotiations be undertaken with the Province of BC to ensure that the buffer area does not become private lands and that safe, long-term access to the fishery is maintained.

In 2020, in response to the CEC’s calls for immediate provincial action, BC removed a fence that had been installed by the private landowners, which allowed the Nation fishery to proceed. This coming year, BC has pledged to remove any barriers to ensure safe access for



SCAN ME

Syilx Okanagan fishers. In the meantime, negotiations continue to find long-term solutions to the access issues at Okanagan Falls, to ensure that Nation members can continue to exercise their Aboriginal rights at this important fishery site.



Top Photo: Chief Keith Crow, CRSRI Executive Working Group with Herb Alex CRSRI Technical Working Group Co-Chair
Bottom Photo Credit: John Kruger

“Support our fishers to be able to access fish and practice what they historically did

nkʷəłtwistmntəm

The Enduring Relationship (ER) is built upon principles of respect, early involvement, greater transparent communications, and meaningful resolution of the concerns of our Nation and member communities. In the past ten years, we have worked collaboratively with BC Hydro (BCH) to identify opportunities for positive outcomes for our Nation, communities, and BCH operations. This agreement has created a venue to discuss Syilx Okanagan Title and Rights.

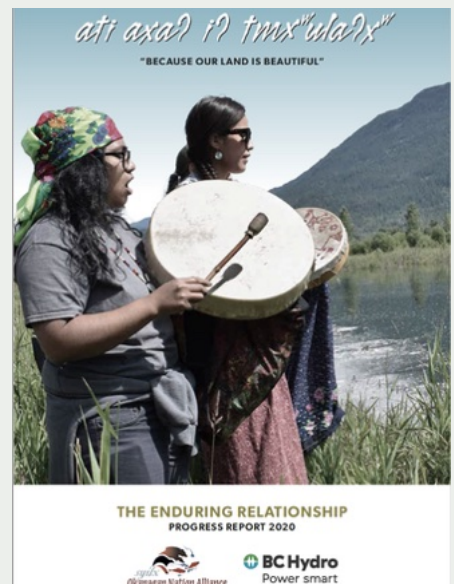
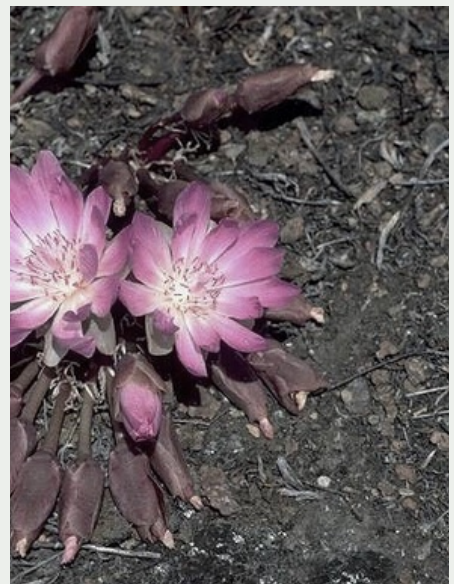
It has benefitted our Nation and communities in many ways. As part of the agreement, the Nation has received lump sum payments, jobs and contract opportunities for band and individual business owners, dedicated training opportunities for community members, regular involvement in project decisions, participation in changes to the mechanisms of interaction and communications with BC Hydro, and clean energy opportunities. To support this work the ONA's Energy Executive Committee (EEC) — made up of Syilx Okanagan Chiefs, council members and technical community members — guide BC Hydro activity in the territory through providing recommendations to the CEC.

The work of the EEC continues to be demanding and challenging to ensure that our relationship remains rooted in Syilx Okanagan protocols, principles and interests while advancing a respectful partnership. Joint planning meetings throughout the years have identified a streamlined process, rules and structures that seek to better address the interests and concerns of the Nation. The work this Committee put forward this year has provided oversight on energy developments, while providing Syilx Okanagan Nation communities with opportunities to both network while securing capacity and growth so that all members can succeed and collectively benefit for the long term.

Transforming Energy for a Sustainable Future

The Upper Nicola Band ONA Solar Project is a 15 MW utility-scale solar project located on the UNB Reserve, approximately 18 miles east of Merritt, near the BC Hydro Nicola substation. It is being developed by UNB, the ONA, and FortisBC Alternative Energy Systems. This solar project will be interconnected to the BC Hydro distribution system and will have a BC Hydro Electricity Purchase Agreement (EPA).

Over the course of the 2020-2021, the project was advanced by obtaining a quote for Engineering, Procurement and Construction services from Canadian Solar to design, procure, supply, and install complete solar power equipment for the project. Over the last year this project obtained a grant from BCH to complete final design of the project. The design will be ready in July 2021. There are currently discussions with BCH about an Energy Purchase Agreement for the project, with an aim to finalize these discussions upon completion of the design. Alongside these developments, a \$500,000 grant from BC Indigenous Energy Initiative was also obtained and will assist in the development of this work.



“rooted in Syilx
Okanagan protocols,
principles and interests
while advancing a
respectful partnership

Key Principles of the Enduring Relationship

- Recognition and respect
- Transparency and open, regular communication between our leadership and BC Hydro executives
- Early planning involvement from conceptualization to implementation
- Consistent and meaningful dialogue
- Acknowledge our Syilx Okanagan worldviews and values
- Provide opportunities for Syilx Okanagan community members while improving the efficiency of BC Hydro operations
- Work together on measurable positive outcomes to achieve key mutual objectives
- Collaborative processes and dispute resolution
- A direct relationship through one liaison with BC Hydro on a day-to-day basis, and the ability to speak together at the highest levels regarding the effectiveness of the relationship

Hub and Spoke Procurement Sub-Agreement

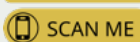
As part of the ER, both parties (ONA and BCH) are collaboratively developing a Relationship Implementation Plan. One focus of the Relationship Implementation Plan is the development of a Procurement Strategy. To this end, an ER Procurement Sub-Agreement between both parties was developed to advance the ER and support specific projects being advanced by BCH on Syilx Okanagan Territory.

The Enduring Relationship Procurement Sub-Agreement between ONA and BC Hydro recognizes that procurement represents a significant near and longer-term opportunity for advancing the ER. The agreement confirms a directed procurement commitment, supports capacity building and business development, and established both a dedicated position at the ONA and a Procurement Working Group to implement it. It is a 5-year agreement, effective April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2023, and sets a minimum targeted value of \$10M in directed procurement. Over \$12M in directed procurement has been awarded to designated Syilx Okanagan Nation contractors. This includes contracts for environmental monitoring and scientific work, janitorial services, fencing, road work, and electrical. Contracts have been awarded ranging in value from approximately \$50k to \$7.5M.

After a formal review of the Procurement Sub-Agreement was conducted in 2020, the EEC has advised that funding be provided directly to ONA member communities to put dedicated part-time capacity in place at the community level to advance local procurement opportunities. On that recommendation, the ONA and BC Hydro worked collaboratively to revisit the Agreement terms to make this possible. Under a new arrangement for 2021, known as the “hub and spoke”, BC Hydro will continue to focus on generating a channel of directed procurement opportunities for Syilx businesses. ONA will play the “hub”, working closely with BC Hydro and member communities to support, identify and advance long-term, territory-wide, and equitably distributed procurement benefits. Member communities will play the “spoke” role, supporting community-owned, member-owned, and designated businesses to capture directed procurement awards and set local targets and procurement strategies. In the coming year, these soon to be created community-based or “spoke” positions, the “hub” position of Development and Procurement Liaison based at the ONA will be actively recruited for. Together, this dedicated capacity at the Nation and community level will successfully advance the agreement and secure long-term benefits for all Syilx Okanagan Nation members and communities.



<https://www.syilx.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Enduring-Relationship-Booklet.pdf>



We are committed to ensuring the principles of the ER are maintained and that the relationship continues to get better. This work is for the land, the water, and for the people. For more information, please visit

STRONGER VOICES AT THE TABLE

In the face of many challenges — and on many fronts — the Nation remains committed to ensuring that not only is our voice heard at government tables, but that our presence is felt.

The value of Nation-level advocacy shows up in many ways. Nation representatives are able to build relationships with partner organizations that give our people a stronger recognition in the region and province. External tables are also an opportunity for the Nation to learn about upcoming federal and provincial initiatives, and to see what other Nations are doing. Approved by the CEC, ONA participates at these tables as collaborative workspaces in order to gather important information to bring back, analyze, and share with bands. A significant portion of this work is focused on ensuring that we have a voice at many of the health and wellness policy and decision-making tables. These tables are significant channels of learning—with a lens to empowering Syilx Okanagan communities.

Such tables include:

- Directors Forum for Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: This forum is a collaborative workspace for Nations that use the delegated approach to child and family services.
- Partnership Forum for Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: Brings Nations with delegated agencies together with MCFD and ISC for strategic initiatives.
- Assembly of First Nations: Regular leadership gatherings provide current, expert information about legislation, promising practices, and new tools to support Syilx children.
- First Nations Leadership Council: This table includes providing Syilx input and advocacy around policy and practice issues.

Over the last year, ONA has also focused on fostering stronger relationships with partners — especially Interior Health, First Nations Health Authority, and BC's Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD). Nation representatives are now at tables, including:

- Regional Overdose Working Group Table
- Regional Alcohol Use Disorder Advisory Committee
- Mental Health Advisory Committee
- Mental Health Working Group formed with IH Aboriginal Team as part of the LOU

- Integrated Child and Youth Team Community Pilot engagement with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
- Child Youth Mental Health regular networking meetings

At these tables Nation representatives are able to escalate the issues identified by bands and influence decision-making at the regional level, advocating for specific community needs including access, cultural competency, changing services, and ensuring service quality. At the same time partners become more attuned, responsive, and better educated about Syilx Okanagan communities. We directly see the results from this work as member communities are more easily able to:

- Get better info on available treatment beds and get people referred more quickly.
- Advocate for switching to therapies that members have identified as being more effective for them and their families.
- Influence process and outcomes of recent IH initiative to create culturally welcoming spaces.
- See that partners develop band-specific navigation tools to support each ONA community to better access to mental health and substance use services.
- Include Syilx Indian Residential School Committee (SIRSC) in development of IH emergency room displays to promote awareness
- Connect Interior Health (IH) and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) with our Syilx network of community workers and create a channel for workers to learn about new resources and trainings and clarify any questions.

“

*build relationships with
partner organizations that
give our people a stronger
recognition*

Natural Resource Committee and the Forestry Working Group

Our efforts to have our voices heard extend beyond the Wellness field. The Natural Resource Committee's (NRC) Terms of Reference (TOR) was most recently updated and ratified by the CEC in June of 2018 (TCR 377, 2018). On November 5th 2020, the NRC recommended a revision of the NRC TOR and structure to meet the growing need for engagement on forestry, wildlife, and water issues. Based on this recommendation, NRC Chair Chief Chris Derickson will be leading the Committee through a strategic planning process to better identify the Syilx Okanagan natural resource goals and priorities in the coming fiscal year.

The NRC continues to provide recommendations to the CEC and direction to the NRC sub-working groups with regard to Natural Resource issues and management within the territory. Engagement on a variety of issues has led to the development of new initiatives requiring structured governance and direction from the CEC.

Existing and active Committees and working groups within the NRC structure include:

- Natural Resource Committee
- Forestry Working Group (FWG)
- Tier 2 Joint Technical Forestry Working Group (Syilx Okanagan and Province)
- Tier 3 Technical Forestry Working Group (Tier 2 and Forestry Licensees)
- Syilx Wildlife and Hunting Working Group

NRC has identified the following as additional working groups or committees to address new opportunities:

- Joint Natural Resource Committee (Syilx Okanagan and Province)
- Tier 2 Wildlife Co-management Working Group (Syilx Okanagan and Province)
- Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees
- Syilx siw4kw (Water) Working Group
- Tier 2 siw4kw Working Group (Syilx Okanagan and Province/Municipalities)
- Syilx Emergency Management Working Group

On July 17th 2020, the FWG submitted a full response to the Okanagan Timber Supply Review (TSR) to the Office of the BC Chief Forester on behalf of the CEC. The Working Group identified 81 specific concerns in their review. The Chief Forester's Office invited the Nation to engage in further discussion regarding both the response provided in the TSR, and next steps with regard to the Annual Allowable Cut decision and the apportionment process. In October 2020 the CEC endorsed the FWG to engage in the Okanagan TSR process on behalf of the Nation. Since January 2021, the FWG has been meeting bi-monthly with BC's Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and Chief Forester's Office staff providing input into the Okanagan TSR. On March 24th, 2021, the FWG presented recommendations on the factors influencing the AAC to the Chief Deputy Forester, Shane Berg, who will hold a determination meeting in April 2021 to determine the AAC for the Okanagan TSA.

The FWG also established the Tier 3 Technical Working Group in June 2020, to include forestry licensees. The purpose of the Tier 3 FWG is to establish operational approaches to improving forestry practices and principles in Syilx Okanagan Territory. Over the fall and winter of 2020-21, the NRC FWG began fulsome support and engagement on what are now being referred to as Syilx Forestry Standards. Several communities have engaged with major licensees to implement Syilx Okanagan standards separately; and have demonstrated compliance and buy-in. The NRC FWG uses the Tier 3 table as a venue for discussing, testing and refining Syilx Okanagan standards for operational application. The NRC has endorsed the FWG's proposal to focus on the Peachland Headwaters as a pilot area for developing and refining the Syilx Forestry Standards.



ASSERTING OUR INHERENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Syilx Okanagan Nation has the sovereign responsibility to ensure that the cultural integrity, safety, and well-being of all our children and families are upheld. Changes in legislation including the adoption of Bill C-92 by the federal government have resulted in new options for re-affirming governance in this priority area. The ONA continues to move this body of work forward in order to ensure that Nation level engagements with partners are directly channeled as benefits to the bands.

Syilx Child and Family Legislation and Governance Strategy

In recent years there have been significant changes to the landscape in terms of legislation with the passage of Bill C-92 as well as changes in the BC Child, Family and Community Services Act and in MCFD policies. There have also been shifts in funding with non-delegated agencies, such as ONA, to now receive child wellbeing jurisdiction initiative funds from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for capacity building.

As directed by the CEC, this strategy is being developed by the Syilx Child and Family Planning Team to support Syilx Okanagan leaders to understand and create space to discuss the Nation's options for our children and families within current legislation. Each of these options has strengths and challenges. The Legislative and Governance Strategy scopes out how Syilx Okanagan bands can navigate their current and evolving relationships with BC and Canada to reach an agreement that recognizes Syilx Okanagan jurisdiction over our children. At the request of CEC, the Planning Team will present these options to Chief and Council of each band for review and discussion (May-June 2021).

Syilx Child and Family Declaration

Proposed at the 2016 Children First Forum, the Declaration rests on principles developed through community consultation. The recommendations were adopted by the CEC and the 1st draft (2017) reflected guiding principles that were based on community engagement that was inclusive of all the bands. The 2nd draft was shared door-to-door in every community before the Syilx Family Declaration Forum (Jan. 28, 2020; West Kelowna) with 1050 copies distributed. Members from each band provided feedback which has been incorporated under the continued guidance of the Wellness Committee. The 3rd draft is being given final edits by the Syilx Indian Residential School Committee and the translation of the Declaration into nsyilxcən is due by the end of 2021.



“ensure that the cultural integrity, safety, and well-being of all our children and families are upheld



Photo Credit: T - Viola Brown B- Ali Butler

Syilx Child and Family Plan

The initial Syilx Child and Family Plan was completed in 2014 in a time when government was putting forward delegated service models for First Nations that came with very restrictive, mainstream policies and procedures. The updated plan being developed has been a community initiative in the broadest sense of the word with everyone from our leaders to our children helping move the process towards completion. The Child and Family Planning Team reviewed existing strategies, other Nation's approaches, and previous Syilx Okanagan community engagements.

This year ONA hosted 4 Child and Family Think Tanks to connect with diverse Nation members and discuss options, consider gaps, provide updates on Planning Team initiatives, included in an updated Child and Family Plan. The Institute of Fiscal and Social Democracy was also brought in to inform the business plan and share with communities the latest recommendations around funding child and family services. In the coming year the Child and Family Planning Team will visit each Chief and Council for review of the Plan and share the current options and their implications. From here communities will determine which option they want to pursue.

As part of this work we are currently developing a partnership strategy with MCFD to strengthen relations including an Letter of Understanding (LOU) (currently in draft form) that formalizes appropriate engagement whereby MCFD engages with the Nation and bands in a regular and meaningful way that respects our input. The LOU ensures that changes in leadership at MCFD do not result in impacts for communities as has occurred in the past. It creates a table for communities to talk about common issues and provide direction for MCFD. For communities to be involved in this LOU they must opt into it. The LOU will be accompanied by a work plan with clear objectives outlining annual priorities including increasing access to funding to develop and implement Syilx Okanagan services, increase access to programs, and ongoing quality assurance.

CHIEFS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

April 2020

28-29 FNLC All Chiefs Meeting, Children and Families

May 2020

11 CEC Meeting

June 2020

23-26 Building a Syilx Unified Approach Chief and Council Enowkin'wix^W Session, WFN

July 2020

6 Special CEC Meeting - CRT
22 Special CEC Meeting
28 Annual General Assembly, Hosted by WFN and PIB (no quorum rescheduled to Oct 2020)

August 2020

12 BCAFN Chiefs Assembly
18 Special CEC Meeting

September

23 Special CEC Meeting, Miles Richardson and Sophie Pierre Presentation to Chief and Councils, Spirit Ridge

October

1 Annual General Assembly
30 CEC Meeting

November

17-18 BCAFN Annual General Meeting
23 CEC Meeting, Syilx Family Declaration
27 CEC Meeting, Strategic Planning

December 2020

17 CEC Meeting

January 2021

11-14 capsíw̓s u?lus Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Gathering
13 CEC Wellness Committee, Syilx Child and Family
14 UBCIC Child and Family
22 CEC Meeting

February 2021

9 AFN Bill C-92 Forum
10-11 AFN Bill C-15 Forum
24 CEC Meeting, Strategic Planning
24-25 UBCIC Chiefs Council Meeting

March 2021

3-4 BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly
10-11 ISC/CIRNA, FNLC Gathering



Photos: Chief and Council Enowkin'wix^W

“ensure that the cultural integrity, safety, and well-being of all our children and families are upheld

*All meetings and gatherings were held virtually unless otherwise noted.

ctxə́stím aʔ salt'ik'w̓t WE TAKE CARE OF THE COLUMBIA

COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT NOT ONLY IS OUR VOICE HEARD, BUT THAT OUR PRESENCE IS FELT.

Industrial developments in the Upper Columbia, including damming and flooding of lands, have disrupted our connection to the eastern territory. The flooding desecrated historical Syilx Okanagan villages, sacred sites, burial grounds, and food harvesting areas, breaking many of the cultural and familial connections Syilx Okanagan communities held with the Upper Columbia and n̓x̓wntk'w̓tk'w̓ (Columbia River). The ONA is working to reconnect all Syilx Okanagan people with the territory, while also supporting legal efforts.



ASSERTING OUR PRESENCE

Building on years of concerted efforts in the eastern region of the territory, this last year saw a number of focused efforts that continued to build capacity and assert Syilx Okanagan presence in the Columbia.

Calling Back ki?lawna?

Resource road use, deactivation and access control are issues for ki?lawna? (grizzly bear) conservation within the Kettle-Granby, and a major management priority for population recovery in the North Cascades. In partnership with FLNRORD, range tenure holders, BC Timber Sales (BCTS), minor forestry licensees, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Watershed Planner, and local NGOs including Christina Lake Stewardship Society and the Boundary Invasive Species Society, the ONA contributes to the Boundary Access Management Working Group.

The group is working towards determining a process and methodology for identifying and consulting impacted road users, while also creating a template for making recommendations to the holder of road maintenance obligations. This work is born from the need for process that can identify and prioritize resource roads needing to be deactivated to improve conditions for wildlife habitat values (namely ki?lawna? and mule deer) and water quality within the Boundary region of the Upper Columbia.

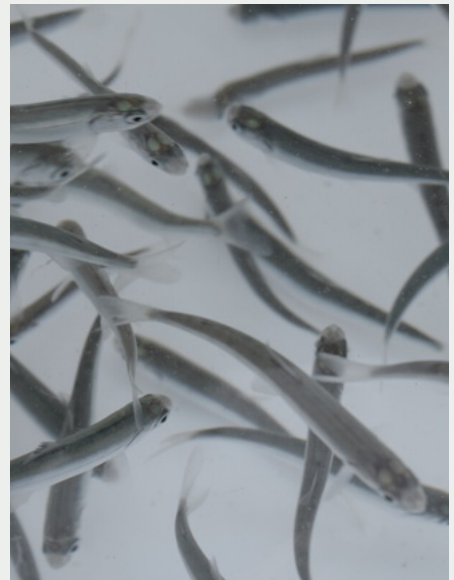
In addition to calling back ki?lawna?, ensuring sustainable food sources for these relatives is also important. To learn more about related Huckleberry Enhancement project go to page 44. The ONA work towards ki?lawna? restoration is far reaching and extends to all parts of the territory. To learn more about other grizzly work visit page 32 of this report.

Fish in Schools Program Continues in the Columbia

Due to Covid-19 restrictions this program has been significantly scaled down compared to last year - from sixteen groups the year previous, to five groups, including four schools. These groups in the Columbia region received salmon eggs, from the kł c̓elk stím Hatchery, as part of the Fish in Schools (FinS) Program in the last year. FinS is a comprehensive fish education program for youth, with a focus on salmon, their lifecycle and the importance of their ecosystems.

It also moves beyond basic ecological education, to also provide students with Syilx cultural perspectives and connections to salmon, which can be seen at the fry releases in the territory at the end of the annual program as well. By creating greater awareness of fish species, the intent is for students to become future advocates for both salmon and their habitat.

A significant milestone for the FinS program in the Columbia this year is that we have provided chinook salmon eggs to the two original pilot schools (Twin Rivers Elementary, Castlegar, and Glenmerry Elementary, Trail).



“ensuring sustainable food sources for these relatives is also important.”

GETTING BACK TO THE TMX^wULAX^w

The ONA is dedicated to ensuring that our presence is felt through the work we do to monitor and restore the tmix[™] in the Upper Columbia, alongside concerted efforts to reconnect our members to the territory.

Celebrating Our Syilx Okanagan Way of Life

We supported Syilx elders, knowledge keepers and community members in annual salmon ceremonies that take place throughout the eastern territory. From June 17-19th, 2020, a series of Salmon Ceremonies took place throughout the territory, including the Columbia Basin. These Salmon Ceremonies empower our people throughout the territory, providing the opportunity to both honour ancestors, while conducting ceremonies for the successful return of the salmon. All locations are historical fishing and harvesting sites of the Syilx Okanagan people from time immemorial, and included s4uxwqaynm (Castlegar) and skx̣̣ kntn (Revelstoke), alongside other ceremonies that also took place throughout the territory including n5aylntn (McIntyre Dam) and sx̣̣ ɬx̣̣nitkẉ̣ (OK Falls).

“Our Salmon Ceremonies are important because they tell the salmon ‘Come up!’ The eagles need to eat. The bears have to eat. The land can be fed, because not only the people depend on the salmon, but the land depends on it. The eagles take the fish to the shore and the Bears carry it further up the mountain and they fertilize the huckleberries and everything else up the mountain. And as long as we perform these ceremonies the salmon knows that we Syilx are still here and we are still carrying out our responsibilities to call them home”. calyx (Richard Armstrong)

Northern Pike Suppression

Currently, we lead a number of projects focused on monitoring and restoring fisheries to the Upper Columbia, to ensure a resilient fishery throughout the eastern territory. This includes the Northern Pike Suppression Program which includes monitoring of invasive Northern Pike in the Columbia. Our suppression efforts focus on pre-spawn adults in spring, and adult, juveniles, and young-of-the-year. Capturing pre-spawn adults is an effective method of suppressing the population. In 2020 at least 144 pike were effectively removed from the Lower Columbia River and Pend d'Oreille River. This work is critical as invasive Northern Pike threaten native fish populations.

Lower Columbia Rare Species and Ecosystems Enhancement Project

This five-year program, initiated this year, is targeting restoration and enhancement work for a minimum of 12 locations supporting rare and threatened ecosystems and wildlife species (Species at Risk Act (SARA) listed). Effectiveness monitoring and site maintenance will be conducted for an additional 3 years.

The project is led by our Columbia team, working in close partnership with the Trail Wildlife Association and FLNRORD. The rare ecosystems identified within the Lower Columbia are riparian areas (containing cottonwood stands), dry fire-maintained forests, and brushland. Eight SARA listed species associated with these rare ecosystems were identified as focal species (but not as exclusive focus) for habitat enhancement; Western screech-owl, Lewis's woodpecker, Yellow-breasted chat, Common nighthawk, Great blue heron, North American racer, Northern rubber boa, and Western skink.

Thus far field investigations have been made into several candidate restoration locations, and restoration was initiated at an upland brushland location and riparian cottonwood community. A report was also drafted, on the historic use and numbers of wildlife species within the Lower Columbia and Pend O'reille Valleys; members from the Trail Wildlife Association were interviewed and their records were also collated and digitized into maps.

Erie Lake Western Painted Turtle Conservation Project

Our Team has been studying the population and behavior (nesting/basking) of Western Painted Turtles (WPT) in the Erie Lake wetlands located near Salmo. Site visits were conducted from April 6 – July 29, 2020. A total of 55 nest sites were located at Erie Lake during 2020 field surveys. The adult turtles observed at Erie Lake and West Erie Wetlands during this survey indicate this is a regional and provincially significant population of WPT.

Prior to the initiation of this project, this population has not been studied or managed. We are aiming for the results of this project to initiate the design and installation of WPT mortality mitigation structures. However, an additional field season of data collection will be required to add to our confidence in the location and success of these potential mitigation measures.

Food Fisheries at qalisuᑦ

In May, 2020, ONA and Syilx community members conducted a food fishery and ceremony at the outlet of qalisuᑦ (Trout Lake) on the Lardeau River. The fishers were catching gerrard trout that spawn in the spring. These trout are known for their unique large size they can grow. After spawn timing, the eggs will incubate in the gravels and fry emerge. They will spend 1-2 years in the river prior to migrating to Kootenay Lake to spend 2-3 years until they reach maturity to spawn. They will then during the springtime migrate up the Lardeau River to spawn. Unlike salmon that die after spawning, the trout can be repeat spawners. The ONA also conducted biosampling during this event to contribute to our monitoring and restoration efforts.

Wellness in the Eastern Territory

The wellness of our citizens extends throughout the territory, as our Okanagan Nation Declaration attests. Wellness activities in various portfolios are making significant contributions to the ongoing involvement of Syilx Okanagan people in our eastern territory. With the success of our participation and advocacy, we ensure the Syilx Okanagan Nation is represented.

Primary Care Network: Kootenay Boundary

As part of the planning for Primary Care Networks in the Kootenay Boundary area, a committee was formed to represent the diverse Aboriginal population. In 2019-20, a collaboration of Syilx, Ktunaxa, Metis, and urban representatives made good strides in learning about the needs of the Indigenous people in this under-represented area.

In 2020-21, the Aboriginal Health Coordinators were hired to continue furthering this work. More of these programs will be available and delivered out of the ONA Castlegar office soon.

School District 8 Representation

The ONA has a seat on School District 8 Indigenous Services Committee in eastern Syilx Okanagan territory. A draft Memorandum of Understanding, with the school district led to the recent inclusion of Syilx Okanagan resources, presentations, and traditional games at their events in 2020-21.

Taking this further, there is the opportunity to initiate similar relationships with other school districts in the eastern region.



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*ensure that the
Nation is
represented*

kʷu ʔast SUPPORTING COMMUNITY TOWARDS SELF- DETERMINATION

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN AND NATION-BASED
IS THE CORE PRINCIPLE FOR HOW ONA INITIATIVES
ARE DEVELOPED.

This principle allows for collaboration and innovation, while continuing to support Nation building and self-determining communities. Integral to this work is community engagement.

These commitments became even further entrenched as Syilx Okanagan communities, and the Nation as a whole, grappled with how to take on the Covid-19 pandemic. Moving online for the most part this past year, ONA staff were innovative and effective in reaching out to Nation members with many virtual events and resources designed to support our bodies, minds, and spirits. Another important role has been connecting with communities on pandemic planning and keeping the communication channels open, providing support and advocating for communities with FNHA and IH when issues arose.



ASSISTING COMMUNITIES TO PLAN FOR A BETTER FUTURE

For numerous years a large part of the Wellness departments efforts - under the direction of the Wellness Committee - is assist in Health and Wellness planning for Nation communities, as we continue to better understand the gaps, support service delivery, and develop community wellness plans as needed. These community-driven priorities continue to inform the overarching 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. The Syilx Wellness Framework has been created as an overarching guide to help Syilx Okanagan families, communities, and as a Nation to develop plans that support our wellness—and the wellness of the People-to-Be. It is designed to support the work of addressing complex root causes and reinforcing our ability to create healthy environments where our people can thrive. The Framework sits at the centre and links together community and Nation plans addressing different aspects of wellness as grounded in community engagement, community values, and community priorities.

The Framework informs a model where the responsibilities of family, extended family, and community in the areas of prevention, early intervention, and post-vention are respected and supported. The model proposes intervention planning and strategies at the Nation level aligned with examples of existing and effective intervention services such as the Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT), Family Decision Making (FDM), and the You Empowered Strong (YES) program operating as Nation Shared Services.

This planning and implementation sits within an ongoing evaluation process driven and supported by data that is generated through the parallel development of a Syilx model for data governance, which will support all areas of further planning. [See below]

In the coming year, the ONA is also working toward completing a multi-year work with Syilx Okanagan bands to support community and Nation planning resulting in linked strategies, action plans, and business proposals in three key areas:

- Child and Family [see pg. 18]
- Mental Wellness
- Data Governance



“ create healthy
environments where our
people can thrive

Mental Wellness

In 2018, the ONA developed a Mental Health Plan. However, this Plan was limited in how it addressed the cultural foundations of mental health for Syilx Okanagan people and the opportunities for prevention, intervention, and therapeutic response afforded by Syilx teachings.

Therefore, we continue to refresh and build a Mental Wellbeing Plan that comes from a Syilx Okanagan wellbeing model that is based in Syilx Okanagan culture, language, and worldview including being centred on the land and in the family for defining roles and responsibilities. The Plan is being developed and is informed by:

- Engagements with communities held over the last year including meetings with individual bands as well as Knowledge Circles and Nation events like the captikwł and other forums hosted by the Mental Wellness Team as well as by other ONA Planning Teams.
- Reports of previous engagements and gap analysis completed with communities by various ONA teams over the past 10 years—respecting the value of past engagements and the contributions of community members to these important discussions over the years.
- Research into wellbeing models and Nation approaches in other First Nation communities.

Data Research and Planning

Data governance is what Syilx Okanagan people have done since time immemorial – gathered, stored, protected, and shared our knowledge. Data governance is being able to tell our own story, with our own information, in a way that is responsible to all our relations. The federal and provincial governments' paternalistic approach to funding, decision making, and data has denied and interfered with our ability to access and govern our own data. In response to this, First Nations have been organizing to find out how we can collect the data that we need, protect, and share it in a good way.

ONA continues to work to create a Data Governance Plan grounded in a Syilx-centred framework that the Nation and communities can use as a roadmap in becoming our own data stewards. The plan is founded on community jurisdiction over data and information sharing.

At the heart of the Syilx Data Governance Plan is nested protections that work to protect the privacy and confidentiality of community members. This will be ratified by each community and then the CEC. The past year has included a number of community engagements and sharing sessions, including a Syilx Scholars Data Governance Think Tank to learn from Syilx Okanagan scholars about what data governance is for Syilx Okanagan people, and Knowledge Circle Gatherings to discuss data sovereignty and the laws and protocols that need to be taken into consideration.



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*being able to tell
our own story*

BUILDING CAPACITY AND RESOURCES ON THE GROUND

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. The ONA is grounded in a perspective that wellness is built on the strengths of our ancestors and the efforts of those who came before us. The ONRT, YES, and FDM programs were deemed essential services during the pandemic and have continued to operate at full capacity, providing critical services to families and communities. All other programs moved to virtual delivery and support. As the Provincial Medical Health Officer orders change and communities direct their openness, the programs have responded.

ONRT

The ONRT Team Coordinators worked directly with individual bands to respond to crisis and develop prevention strategies and raise awareness on suicide, depression, self-harm, grief, and lateral violence. The team often shared presentations at other band or Nation events and attends Nation events to provide mental health supports are required. ONRT has substantially increased the capacity of all Syilx Okanagan bands to prevent and respond to traumatic events by providing consultation and training opportunities that are inclusive to community members and interested band and Nation staff. These trainings provide space for people to share their stories about abuse and suicide. They also share both Syilx teachings and mainstream skills to assist families in providing care and intervention to loved ones in crisis, and teach new skills for reaching out to help family and Nation members who are in crisis.

During Covid-19, ONRT has been especially busy with requests to provide culturally appropriate services for mental health, suicide interventions and emotional, grief, and loss supports. Deemed an essential service, the team has operated at full capacity, providing critical services to the Nation. Due to Covid-19, it has been necessary to operate with a smaller team to protect those on the team who have health conditions. The smaller team has pulled together and been able to provide services while navigating the complexities of keeping team members and community safe.

You Empowered Strong - YES

The ONA's YES program assisted families change intergenerational cycles stemming from colonization through strength-based practices that build the capacity of families dealing with violence and sexual assault. Mid-Year the YES Program received funding from the Ending Violence Association of Canada to continue the Program until 2023, with an additional focus on sexual assault response. It continues to grow and fill the communities needs, and this year they have incorporated inclusive language in their programming to reflect all individuals unique identities. YES was able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic quickly and transferred services virtually. It was identified and anticipated through the Syilx Family Violence Network that family violence would increase as individuals would be more isolated and spending a majority of time at home. This resulted in a limited request for direct service, and in response YES provided more space virtually to maintain essential support.

Over the last couple of years YES has recognized the importance of creating safe spaces for all individuals who been dealing with the impacts of family violence and sexual assault through appropriate and cultural education and support. Last year YES hosted twenty-four community sessions to support community and individuals. These sessions included support groups, wellness gatherings, youth sessions, awareness campaigns, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIWG) Gathering, and more. Through these sessions the YES Program had 832 Nation individuals participate.

The Syilx Men's Wellness Gathering that centered around empowerment of men to stand beside our women and children who are experiencing violence with intention for men to gather to feel restored, connected, educated, and inspired to work towards healthier futures for themselves, their families, and communities. Presentations focused on Healing from trauma, strengthening connections through physical activity, anger solutions, and ended with keynote Levi Horn sharing his inspirational journey.

YES aimed to give women skills for self-care, healthy communication, and empowerment during the Women's Wellness Gathering. It opened with keynote speaker Ashley Callingbull, promoting Indigenous Women in leadership roles, and her experience overcoming family violence and sexual assault. Other topics included strengthening connections through physical activity, and healing from trauma.

Family Decision Making

Deemed an essential service, FDM shifted to virtual circles for much of the year, facilitating in-person circles when public health permitted. Within the virtual format, the team was able to maintain the circle process and ensure the priority remained family connection, safety, ceremony, and space where children are at the heart of the conversation.

Covid-19 pushed the Family and Decision-Making Team to think outside the box and launch their first social media campaign (Oct 28-Nov 2) which proved to be a great way to reach a larger audience and empower families at the same time. FDM delivered 200 Family Wellness kits throughout the Nations as a resource for families during the pandemic. Alongside other tools like resource packages and books, 12 info sessions were held to promote the use of FDM in our territory. 200+ people were reached through FDM.

Children First Forum

The annual Children First Forums have served to share information and support discussion of the latest legislation and developments in this area and the pros and cons of possible Syilx responses. This year saw Cindy Blackstock in attendance for an inspiring discussion about the current landscape of child welfare and what Syilx Child and Family Services can look like in the future. Participants from all bands attended including 3 Chiefs and members of Wellness Committee.

Jordan's Principle

In September 2020, after months of negotiations with ISC, our Nation became one of the first in BC to get up and running with the federally funded Enhanced Service Coordinators for Jordan's Principle. Reaching the agreement involved working with each community, holding a think tank, and developing a model that was finally accepted. Each community agreed that these positions be hosted at ONA. Three coordinators serving the North, Central, and South Okanagan (on-reserve and urban) have now been established.

Services can be accessed by families, community staff or any referral source. Enhanced Service Coordinators seek to find families the service they need. If the service isn't offered, then an application is submitted to Jordan's Principle for funding. The Coordinators also provide information to service providers and government about the gaps in service, response times, and appropriateness of service. A wraparound approach is used to ensure the families are supported throughout the journey. Information is shared throughout the process to keep the family apprised of the status of the request.



To learn more visit: www.syilx.org/wellness/our-programs-and-services/jordans-principle-service-coordination/



Coming Together for Reunification

FDM has been working to support a reunification plan following a youth being out-of-home under a Voluntary Care Agreement. FDM supported the family with 5 circles in which many successes, both large and small, were observed. The family made a transition plan for the youth to come home, and extended family stepped in with visits and emotional support for both the youth and the parent. The youth transitioned home and has shown enormous strength in recovery from substance misuse.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the family was dedicated to the process of coming together and continued to show up. The focus of the circle naturally progressed from one of reunification, to one of healing and growth. They are now exploring the option of closing their FDM file with the intention of using the skills they have built to continue their own circles. While some family members were hesitant to include one of the youth's parents, the preparation process of ensuring the circle is a balanced and safe space for everyone allowed for the other parent to share their voice. This has had a positive impact on 2 younger siblings who are currently out-of-home.

Recently, the family came together for an in-person circle which provided space for the two younger siblings to meet several family members that they had not yet met.

“family connection, safety, ceremony, and space where children are at the heart of the conversation.”

COVID-19 SUPPORTS FOR COMMUNITY

With the start of the province-wide shut down in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, ONA scoped out roles to best support the Nation during this time. Moving online for the most part this past year, ONA staff were innovative and effective in reaching out to Nation members with many virtual events and resources designed to support our bodies, minds, and spirits. Another important role has been connecting with communities on pandemic planning and keeping the communication channels open, providing support and advocating for communities with partners when issues arose. Aside what is mentioned throughout the report, here are some key actions that were taken on by the ONA.

Holding Up Our Elders and Youth

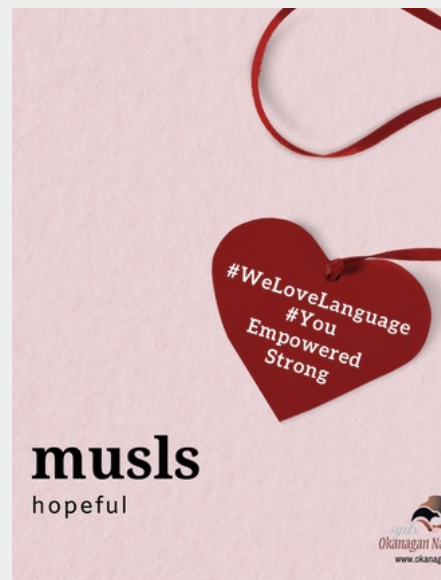
As the pandemic took hold it quickly became apparent that our elders faced heightened levels of isolation. In response those with chronic medical conditions were chosen to participate in a nutrition program with distribution of healthy soup suitable for freezing. Phones were also provided to some elders who had technology barriers to improve their ability to maintain connection with family and increase safety through regular contact with band staff and access to emergency services if needed. Alongside this baking supplies were provided to homes during the holidays for a fun activity that is good for mental health and sense of purpose. We also ensured that ONRT was available throughout the holiday season to offer supports to those isolated from family. As the pandemic moved forward into the spring, 146 Elder care packages ready for spring 2021 distribution to 6 communities on the theme of gardening to promote positive mental health practices and self-care.

At the same time, Syilx youth also struggled with the distribution and distancing created by Covid-19. Unable to gather, ONA made a point of maintaining regular check-ins with youth via phone and text. This included small care packages with gifts to promote wellness. The following were also distributed:

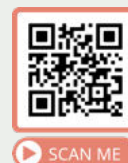
- 59 ONA sweaters shared with high school graduates who were also recognized online. Feedback from parents was that the gift and recognition was really appreciated.
- 200 Youth Wellness Kits have been created for distribution as pandemic restrictions continue.
- 175 traditional games and wellness t-shirts created for distribution to youth.

An Epidemic within a Pandemic

As social distancing measures took hold, a hurdle was faced in how to reach communities also challenged by mental health and addictions. To assist with this, Mental Health and Addictions Support Boxes were prepared and shared with 6 communities (UNB, WFN, OIB, PIB, LSIB, OKIB). Each box was filled with almost 100 resources of various kinds for staff to share with community members on an as-needed basis. Resources included supports for self-care, mental health, harm reduction and overdose supplies. Feedback from communities is very appreciative of the support.



Cewelna, Leon Louis, shares about medicine



“reaching out to help members cope during the pandemic”

sux^wtxtem ASSERTING RESPONSIBILITIES

THE ONA UPHOLDS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO
THE TMIX^w (ALL LIVING THINGS)

Our Syilx Okanagan traditional ecological knowledge systems actively involve our knowledge keepers, which inform our interactions on the land – balanced with the incorporation of western science. Through the integration of these two systems, the ONA has been persistent and a leader in ensuring that we are restoring and rejuvenating the habitats and ecosystems of our territory in the most dynamic way possible. We engage both traditional knowledge and cutting-edge science to contribute to protecting and advancing a biodiverse environment.



RESTORATION FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

This year the ONA managed over 37 projects and contracts aimed to monitor, conserve, protect, restore, and enhance habitats for indigenous fisheries (anadromous and resident) and aquatic resources within the Territory. To achieve this goal, our teams worked in close collaboration with the bands, the municipalities, provincial, federal & US fisheries agencies, as well as, local conservation organizations. The ONA conducted multiple field surveys and monitoring assessments; completed hydraulic modelling and restoration design work; participated in various meetings, Steering Committees & conferences; redacted reports and proposals. The ONA accomplished the following main achievements:

Building Capacity to Monitor Flow Needs in Community

Over the last year the ONA has monitored streamflows and water temperatures at 21 hydrometric stations throughout the territory. Timely streamflow data enables ONA staff and Syilx communities to monitor whether environmental flow needs are met or if flows become critically low. The data feeds directly into annual drought planning processes and is used to set drought levels in the Okanagan and in specific streams. Monitoring streamflows empowers Okanagan communities as stewards and protectors of aquatic resources in the territory. In addition, the flow information is used to inform flood emergency response in the communities, allowing for timely implementation of emergency mitigation measures.

As part of our commitment to uphold communities, ONA met with Syilx communities to communicate and discuss implementation of EFN in 18 local streams. 6 meetings were held where recommended EFN flows were presented and watershed-specific issues were discussed, followed by a discussion on how communities could use the information to support environmental stewardship and decision making. Further, additional data needs and monitoring actions were identified by the communities.

“

*conserve, protect, restore,
and enhance habitats*

RESTORED AND RECONNECTED

8,800 m2 of k'emcmtkw floodplain restored and reconnected to the Okanagan River

EVALUATE HABITAT CONDITIONS

10 creeks monitored by Okanagan Basin Monitoring Evaluation Program to evaluate habitat conditions and threats

ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW NEEDS (EFN)

Monitored streamflows and water temperatures at 21 hydrometric stations throughout the territory to assist water managers in the Okanagan in meeting EFN.

RESTORED RIPARIAN HABITAT

Planted 250 plants at Upper Vernon Creek to restore riparian habitat at the mouth

SUPPORT WATER FLOW MANAGEMENT

Continued on-going Fish Water Management Tools monitoring to support flow management decisions

ASSESSMENTS

Completed 5 habitat assessments in the Columbia region

SPAWNING AREA ASSESSMENT

Assessed Sockeye and Chinook spawning areas in the entire Okanagan River

MONITORED

Monitored the effectiveness of previously restored areas in Okanagan River and Mission Creek

HABITAT RESTORATION DESIGNS

Completed stream habitat restoration designs for Trout Creek, Mill Creek, Bessette Creek, and Eagle Creek, and the Okanagan River in Okanagan Falls

INCLUSION OF TEK

Hosted 4 meetings with Syilx elders and TEKK to gather direction and guidance

PROVIDED COMMUNITY TRAINING

Hosted 1 river restoration workshop training 16 band members and youth

COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Lead or participated in 7 Steering committees aimed at restoring the Okanagan River and 6 tributaries

SECURED FUNDING

Submitted 30 proposal requests to secure funding for future habitat projects



ALL OUR RELATIONS

Williamson's Sapsucker Habitat Enhancement Project

Funding for this project comes from an agreement between BC Hydro, UNB and ONA that provided an amount for mitigation for Williamson's Sapsucker lost breeding habitat due to clearing for the Interior Lower Mainland BC Hydro transmission line (ILM). This project focuses on the Merritt area and is year one of five. The overall project objective is to enhance Williamson's Sapsucker habitat by increasing the density of potential nest trees. The project team identified potential locations with foraging habitat and created 90 wildlife nest trees using fungal inoculation and mechanical scarring. The project was done in collaboration with Upper Nicola Band, Strategic Resource Solutions, and Okanagan Wildlife Consulting.

yilikʷlxkn and s̓xʷʼi? Management and Planning in the South Okanagan

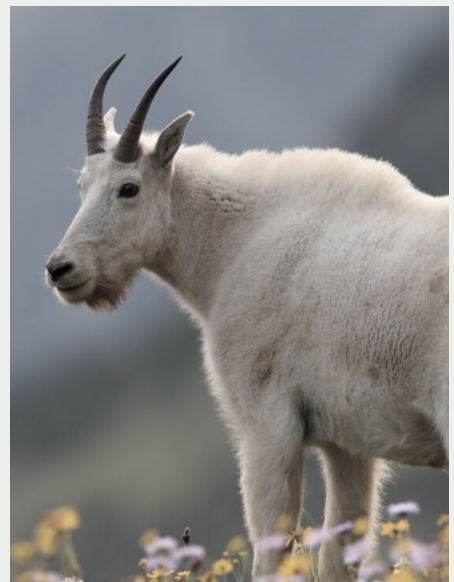
The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) collaborates with FLNRORD to monitor yilikʷlxkn (Bighorn sheep) and s̓xʷʼi? (mountain goat) health, and to develop disease response plan and stewardship strategies for herds in the South Okanagan Valley. As part of the preliminary work towards developing this strategy, members from the ONA's Natural Resources Department have worked with provincial biologists in 2020/21 towards:

- Gathering information from Syilx Okanagan community members on wild sheep and goat herds and their habitat within the south Okanagan to improve our understanding of the issues impacting the health of herds and population recovery.
- Supporting a field program designed by FLNRORD biologists to document, assess and monitor the distribution of animals showing signs of disease associated with *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M.ovi) or *Psoroptes ovis*.
- Drafting the elements of a strategy for a health management, monitoring and disease response plan for M. ovi and *Psoroptes*, as a collaborative initiative between the Syilx Okanagan Nation and FLNRORD.

ONA staff started the process for meeting and engaging Syilx Elders and knowledge keeper community members for gathering information and direction on how Syilx Okanagan knowledge and perspectives should inform management of immediate threats (namely disease) and impacts to wild sheep and goats in the South Okanagan. Funding for the project work has been provided by FLNRORD and ONA's Wellness Department.

ki?lawna?

In addition to the Grandby ki?lawna? project [pg 21] the ONA also contributes to the Southern BC Grizzly Clear Recovery Joint Steering Committee, including on the Indigenous Working Group. This group is actively identifying and discussing issues and actions needed for recovery in both the Stein-Nahatlach and North Cascades ki?lawna? grizzly bear population units (GBPU). Membership is comprised of representatives from partnering Nations (Sto:lo, Nlaka'pamux, Sta'timc and Secwépemc), FLNRORD, BC Parks and Coast to Cascades (NGO).



“ Syilx Okanagan knowledge and perspectives should inform management

The Committee drafted a terms of reference that is prepared for review and signing by leadership. As per the ToR, objectives of this collaboration are to:

- Provide habitat of sufficient quantity and quality to support a viable grizzly populations;
- Prevent population fragmentation and maintain genetic diversity;
- Increase the number of grizzly bears in each population;
- Minimize the potential for grizzly bear/human conflicts;
- Minimize the opportunity for human-caused mortality of grizzly bears; and
- Increase public knowledge of, and support for, grizzly bear recovery.

ONA was directed by the Steering Committee to amend the Provincial 2004 recovery plan and develop management recommendations for habitat management, translocation and monitoring work for the Northern Cascades. ONA conducted a field season to gather information on habitat quality, human-bear conflict hazard and motorized access relative to core security habitat for *kiṭlawnaʔ* in areas west of Manning Park and south of Highway 3. Field crews covered areas in both protected (i.e. parks) and non-protected public lands; conducting surveys and drone flights to assess habitat conditions.

ONA conducted interviews with Syilx Elders and Knowledge Keepers to gather information about; historic accounts of and traditional stories of *kiṭlawnaʔ* within and adjacent to North Cascades, Syilx Okanagan knowledge and perspectives on relationships with *kiṭlawnaʔ* and their resource needs. ONA contracted Tony Hamilton (independent biologist, retired provincial carnivore specialist) to conduct analysis on habitat and human footprint metrics for the GBPU and assist with developing mitigation actions for both an initial recovery zone area and the broader land base.

The ONA lead several technical discussions with a subcommittee (comprised of members from local First Nations, BC Parks, FLNRORD agencies, WildSafeBC) to refine our understanding of place-based issues for Grizzly Bear reintroduction. The mitigation actions and stewardship recommendations proposed within draft plan were informed by the Syilx Okanagan knowledge gathered, place-based field data collected and GIS habitat mapping and analysis of applicable metrics.



“actively identifying
and discussing issues
and actions needed
for recovery

WE WILL PROTECT THE WATER

kṣkə́qayxwntim i? siwḷḳw

Syilx Okanagan People have an intrinsic relationship with siwḷḳw(water). Maintaining the integrity of siwḷḳw and respecting its relationship to all life is essential to identity and is entrenched in responsibility to our Territory. The CEC carries this inherent connection and responsibility forward, directing our efforts to ensure that water is protected throughout the territory. The Syilx siwḷḳw Strategy is a call to action that outlines how the Syilx Okanagan Nation intends to care for our territory and work to ensure that siwḷḳw is properly respected and available for all living things. This strategy is designed to protect and manage water in our territory and is built on the understanding that the Syilx Okanagan People have inherent rights and responsibilities to care for siwḷḳw.

Current western water management regimes are missing the Syilx Okanagan worldview, creating devastating impacts on the territory. Extreme flooding and other environmental disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude in Syilx Okanagan Territory, underscoring the need for a cohesive approach to emergency management that emphasizes risk mitigation while continuing to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. This strategy is currently in its final stages of review by the CEC, and will be approved in the early part of the coming year.



SCAN ME

Syilx Nation siwḷḳw Declaration

The Syilx Water Declaration serves as a living document on the Syilx relations and values to water. This document communicates the importance of water and responsibilities we have as Syilx people. The importance of water in Syilx communities and governance is related through captikwl and the natural laws. Syilx governance systems have always sustainably and respectfully managed water.



Read the full water declaration here.

SCAN ME

Protecting ḳúṣx̣ nítkw

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 ḳúṣx̣ nítkw (Okanagan Lake). This planning initiative is being co-led with the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program and South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program.

This year we completed year one of a multi-year planning process to develop a Syilx-led watershed planning process and actions to protect ḳúṣx̣ nítkw foreshore and surrounding watersheds, which included a nawqinwixw process – implementing a pilot Syilx watershed responsibility planning process, with various workshops as well.

Coming Together for siwḷḳw

As part of our continued efforts to raise awareness and foster partnerships, the ONA also hosted the 7th annual Syilx Water Forum on March 22, 2021. With over 90 participants, this virtual event focused on Syilx connections and partnerships surrounding the Columbia River.

Engaging elders, traditional knowledge keepers, and partners in the Columbia, this event was also an opportunity for community to engage in discussions around the future of siwḷḳw on the territory.

“

*Maintaining the integrity
of siwḷḳw and respecting
its relationship to all life*



kʷu əc'ulluʔs COMING TOGETHER AS SYILX PEOPLE

TO CONNECT, TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER, TO
CELEBRATE, TO PRAY— IS PART OF OUR SYILX WAY

Gathering as a People. When we are able to share space and time with one another we are continuing the process of Nation building for ourselves, our families and generations to come. It provides the opportunity to reconnect with culture, language and the land at the same time.

Over the last year the ability to come together was deeply impeded by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the face of this unprecedented challenge, we collectively innovated, finding ways to digitally learn, connect, and support one another through these times.



EVENTS



April 2020

- 1-16 My Kitchen Table to Yours
- 20 Making Connections Women's Group (Group ran until June 8)
- 28 Learn About Online Safety for Youth

May 2020

- 5 Sockeye Fry Release Ceremony Mission Creek, Kelowna
- 7 Sockeye Fry Release Ceremony Shingle Creek, Penticton

June 2020

- 3-7 Spirit of Syilx Unity Run
- 3 Asking the Hard Question
- 4 Life Promotion
- 5 Live Free, Live Resilient
- 9 What is Helpful
- 17-19 cpùta?st̓m i? xa?x?it̓t̓ u? ck'a?st̓m i? ntytyix, Salmon Ceremonies. sn̓t̓x̓wq̓nm, Castlegar, sn̓k̓x̓yk̓nt̓n, Revelstoke, n̓s̓ay̓l̓int̓n, McIntyre
- 23-26 Building a Syilx Unified Approach Chief and Council Enowkinwixw Session, WFN

July 2020

- 21 Syilx Data Governance Vision
- 28 Annual General Assembly, Hosted by WFN and PIB (no quorum, rescheduled to October 2020)
- 29 Syilx Columbia River Treaty Webinar

August 2020

- 18 A New Standard of Care for Alcohol Use Disorder
- 19-21 Community Is Medicine
- 31 Syilx Wellbeing: Nation Drug Forum

September 2020

- 14-16 Supporting Colville Tribe Wildfire Donation Drive
- 18-20 Salmon Feast, s̓x̓wəx̓w̓nit̓k̓w Provincial Park, Okanagan Falls
- 22 Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Skills Training
- 25 Miles Richardson and Sophie Pierre Presentation to Chief and Councils, Spirit Ridge
- 29-30 Community Designated Representative Training

October 2020

- 1 Annual General Assembly
- 6-7 River Restoration Workshop, Penticton
- 16 Train The Trainers Part 1
- 26-30 Four Food Chiefs Gathering

November 2020

- 5 Children's First Forum, Kelowna
- 12 Train The Trainers Part 2

December 2020

- 9 Stories Forum 1: captik̓w̓l as our teacher, Syilx Ways of Living

January 2021

- 1-16 #BellLetsTalk
- 11-14 caps̓iws̓ u?lus Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Gathering
- 15 Stories Forum 2: captik̓w̓l as our teacher, Syilx Family Connection
- 26-28 Youth Wellness: Self Defense with Melissa Moses

February 2021

- 12 Stories Forum 3: captik̓w̓l as our teacher, Syilx Family Roles, Responsibilities, and Rights
- Youth Workshop Series
- 15-18 Circle of Healing: Family and Sexual Violence (Group ran until March 11)
- 16
- 25-26 Syilx Youth and Family Wellness

March 2021

- 10-11 Acting Upon Our Syilx Ways, Grandmothers & Early Years Learning Circle
- 17 Syilx Teachings for Healing
- 19 Stories Forum 4: captik̓w̓l as our teacher, Ensuring The Well-being of Children
- 22 Syilx Water Forum
- 25 Syilx Knowledge Circle: Wellness Data Governance
- 26 Stories Forum 5: captik̓w̓l as our teacher, Connection to Water – Columbia River
- 30 Syilx Men's Wellness Gathering: Reclaiming Self
- 31 Syilx Women's Wellness Gathering: kcnwix̓w̓



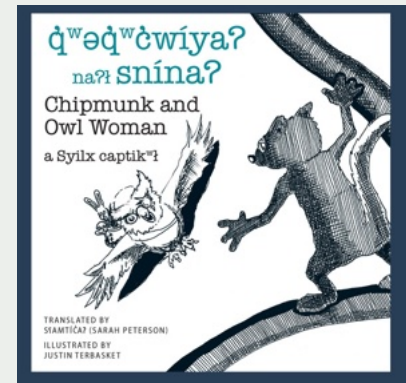
*We're going to make
this nation better,
because this is our
nation*

*All workshops, training, and gatherings were held virtually unless otherwise noted.

SYILX FOUNDATIONS THROUGH CAPTIK^wL

Syilx Okanagan laws and ways of being are taught through captikwł stories and teachings and inform the way that we as a People interact with and relate to each other. These stories, alongside the guidance of Knowledge Keepers and language speakers, inform the way that the Syilx Okanagan Nation continues to practice their culture, teachings and protocols.

The ONA, in partnership with En'owkin Centre, hosted a series of five online captikwł Forums that took on issues as diverse as our connections to the Columbia all the way to mental well-being and family decision making. The format for each forum was a panel of Elders and Knowledge Keepers who shared their perspectives in the morning, with breakout groups held in the afternoon to better understand how the lessons of the captikwł can be put into practice in our lives today. Each forum focused on a specific issue, and were held to gather insights to guide various Policy and Planning Teams and inform Nation programs and services. The knowledge shared helps to integrate Syilx Okanagan values and principles into Policy and Planning work for the Nation to ensure the work directly reflects the voices and the needs of the communities we serve.



To listen to
Chipmunk and
Owl Woman in
nsyilxcen scan and
scroll down.

SCAN ME

MMIWG Gathering



The 2nd capsíws
u?lus: Missing and
Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls
Gathering was held
virtually over 4 days to

highlight systemic issues and empower communities to make change (Jan 11-14, 2021: Online), with over 55 people that attended. MMIWG has been a national tragedy for decades and has affected the Syilx Okanagan Nation directly through the loss of women and girls within our communities. This year's gathering started with a focus on MMIWG Calls to Justice and education about contributing factors and then eased into healing, dialogue, and space to honour Syilx women who have gone missing or been murdered. The gathering featured prominent speakers including lawyer, professor, author and social justice activist Dr. Pam Palmater, and Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, the first Indigenous woman appointed as a provincial judge in BC.

One of the stories forums looked at the Syilx child rights and the roles of family. Syilx centrality is essential to understanding the ways and being of the Syilx Indigenous people. Caregivers and community members' roles and responsibilities in relation to the child are found within Syilx captikwł (oral traditions) and protocols. Syilx governance, and thus child and family care, must be rooted in Syilx culture for Syilx governance to be effective. The community knowledge discussed within the forum generated the Syilx Rights of a Child.

In the captikwł, Chipmunk sought out safe space from Owl-Woman, both in her home with her Grandmother and on the land in the Siya bush. The teachings of Siya integrate safety in the home as well as on the land. Chipmunk's caregiver was her Grandmother, and not her Mom or Dad. Safety rests in the cradle of the extended family and the roles and responsibilities therein. It is important to note that this does not negate the role of parents, but rather affirms the role Grandparents often took as nurturer. They were instructors and caregivers of the young children, or took on parental roles altogether. Parents were either on the land harvesting food, or in more recent times, they were working in local industry. These circumstances created the space for Grandparents to exercise their traditional role. Grandparents also passed down Syilx knowledge while they were on the land with the children, then tasked the children with practicing this knowledge independently. This system of teaching illustrates the cumulative cultural impact embodied in the role of grandparents.

It was an honour to connect directly with community members who have shared the importance of captikwł, traditional values, practices and customs as we continue to support Syilx Okanagan wellbeing.



GRANDMOTHERS GATHER

Starting in 2020, an important development has been the Gathering of Grandmothers from across the Nation. The gathering was inspired by the Grandmothers of Upper Nicola Band who attended a gathering for the 7 Nations of the Interior hosted by the Ktunaxa Nation in March 2019. They came back asking for a Syilx gathering to discuss upholding and supporting each other in their roles in family and community.

As told within captikwł, Grandmothers are the foundation for healthy families and responsible for development through culture and language. The first Syilx gathering was extremely popular and sparked Grandmothers to want to become more active. The Grandmothers have stated that in order to stop the 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.

At a virtual gathering in March 2021, Grandmothers shared insights into how to build resiliency in families. Building on discussions from 2020, the Grandmothers talked about options for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to care for children and families. There were 24 participants on the first day and 30 on the second day.

Grandmothers groups have been meeting in 4 bands (UNB, LSIB, OKIB, PIB) with a total of 32 meetings and ongoing supports as required from ONA Child and Family Team. Some of the discussions have been around what role Grandmothers want to play including creating support systems for young moms, doing their own support homes, and being Grandmothers in residence.

“

*Grandmothers are the foundation
for healthy families and
responsible for development
through culture and language*

The Spirit of Syilx People Branches Out

The Syilx Okanagan Language Declaration has been a longstanding directive of the Syilx Chiefs Executive Council. Language is crucial for Syilx People and the Nation. The i? syilx i? suk^wnaqinx scq^wəlq^wiltət, Syilx Okanagan Language Declaration, endorsed in 2018, has its roots from Syilx leadership since before contemporary Chief and Council. The importance of carrying forward the nsyilxcən language stems directly from captik^wł, oral narrative, and with it the principles of intergenerational communication. These captik^wł narratives show Syilx Okanagan people the very laws, processes, and behaviours in which to act upon. It can be understood on a deeper level through nsyilxcən. nsyilxcən, the language of the Syilx people, is spoken by and provides distinguished break between interior Salish language family. It is distinct from neighbouring Nations and it is spoken in all of the districts of the Syilx Okanagan territory.

The Language Declaration asserts the governance work from the Chiefs Executive Council and is supported by nsyilxcən speakers. The importance of the Declaration re-affirms the Syilx Okanagan Nation Declaration which outlines Syilx nationhood and the collective. It re-affirms the trans-boundary nature of the Syilx Okanagan Nation and the fluidness of nsyilxcən and the broader Salishan language family. The Language Declaration serves as a document filled with Syilx voice and thought. It is a testament to the passion of Syilx language speakers.

In the last year, the Declaration took on another form, as it will be included in a printed collection of Indigenous language policy academic studies published by the McGill-Queen's University Press. This publication will ensure that the work of the Nation reaches a wider audience and is able to not only promote nsyilxcən, but the revitalization of Indigenous languages worldwide.

INCLUSION LANGUAGE AND CULTURE GO ONLINE

As part of the ONA's ongoing dedication to promoting the revitalization of the nsyilxcən language and Syilx Okanagan culture, we also have increasingly used our social media platforms to make sure that our Syilx Okanagan community members are connecting to language, and promoted to take pride in our culture and way of life.

This included the popular #WELoveLanguage campaign, which ran through the month of February and served an invitation to be mindful of the way we speak to others, especially our loved ones. It contributes to the work of changing community norms that support and perpetuate violence, starting with our language. Heart candy packages were distributed to all member communities as a means of promoting the use of positive words. T-shirts were also printed and sent out to promote anti-bullying. Alongside this, both posters and decals were created to raise awareness of the words we use to communicate love and connection.

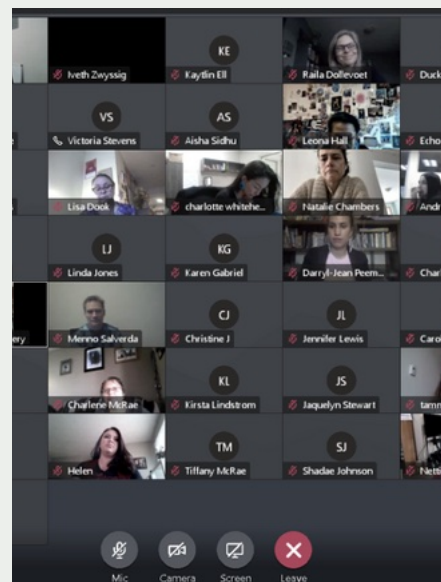
Connecting to Culture and the tmxʷulaxʷ

Another means that the ONA was able to meet mandates is through the production of culturally relevant communication material that help promote the language and our unique cultural lens.

Due to our history of colonization and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, our child-rearing practices have been profoundly disrupted. The aim of the Returning the Child to the Center: Syilx Parenting Curriculum is to draw upon the strengths of our ancestors, the wisdom of our Elders, and the values in our captikwł. This resource is intended to support the people within our Nations and their continuous efforts to strengthen our connection to self, to family, to community, and to our Syilx ways of being and knowing.

The focus is on revitalizing the knowledge that has worked for our people for thousands of years, while also bringing it into the context of our busy and challenging lives today. This last year we updated this curriculum to a second edition, that infused it with more of the language and captikwł to make it more culturally resonant for our audience.

It is imperative that we work to preserve natural landscapes and plants for the benefit of those who are yet to come. Upholding these commitments, the ONA created a series of Syilx Plant Identification Cards that were developed to be an educational tool for Syilx Okanagan Nation members. We aspire to promote getting out on the land and to create awareness of plants utilized. The cards portrayed 47 significant culturally-sustaining plants of the sw kʷnaʔqín part of our territory. They remain vital to our way of life. Included are descriptions of the plants, habitats, medicinal, food, and other uses. In addition, we included an introductory pollinator card and pollinator icons on significant pollinator plant cards. We can thus learn to recognize and protect the bees, butterflies and moths, flower flies and flower wasps, hummingbirds and pollinating beetles that nurture our tmxʷulaxʷ



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revitalizing the knowledge that has worked for our people for thousands of years.

Building a Better Future Bursary

Each year the Okanagan Nation Alliance and Fortis BC provide two awards of \$1200.00 to financially support eligible Syilx Okanagan Nation members enrolled or accepted into a recognized university or college on a full-time basis in a minimum 2 year program.

Due to the generous donation from Hi-Trax, Lance Mclean, Progressive Fence and Stoyoma Mtn. Falling Ltd, Delaney Hall we were able to present an additional two bursaries as part of this year's Building a Better Future Bursary Program.

The 2020 recipients are:



Kyla Shields

"I hope this work may help inspire more teachers to commit to action and incorporate more indigenous methods into their teaching practices"



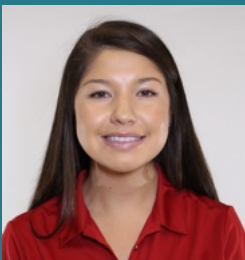
Carrie Terbasket

"I see my professional experiences both past and future as less about a 'career' and more about finding my strengths, building upon them, and sharing them with my community and Nation I see my education as something that will both enhance my professional opportunities and create a meaningful Syilx life".



Danielle Judd

"Attending medical school has been my dream for as long as I can remember, and over the years my various experiences have led to new aspirations that I now have the opportunity to pursue throughout and after my medical school education".



Kylie Jack

"in my undergraduate degree of criminology from Simon Fraser University, I learned about the Indigenous peoples complicated relationship with the criminal justice system and the government. After learning about this relationship, it ignited my vision to pursue a legal career to make a change in the Indigenous legal process and leadership".

i? l pəlstim' LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SYILX FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

PROMOTING OUR CULTURAL CONNECTIONS AND
THE OVERALL CAPACITY TO THRIVE AS A NATION

Revitalizing our Syilx food sovereignty is key, not only to the health of all of our members, but is also key to promoting our cultural connections and the overall capacity to thrive as a Nation. It is a way to affirm who we are as Syilx Okanagan People, while also allowing us to restore our relationship to our world. As such, the ONA is steadfast at supporting communities and members to be able to access our First Foods, for now and for generations to come. We honour those Syilx Okanagan People who quietly go about the work of gathering and sustaining their families through our traditional Syilx foodways despite numerous challenges.



RESILIENCE OF MULTI-SPECIES FISHERY

The rejuvenation of our multi-species fisheries throughout the Nation is a core part of the food sovereignty work that the ONA took on in the past year. To ensure that there is a resilient and thriving fishery on the territory we take on a number of core activities.

A food fisheries occurred in July, 2020, on the Okanagan River with an estimated catch of 10,500 sockeye. We also harvested 50-75 chinook from the Thompson.

The kł c̓p̓əłk̓ stírh Hatchery

The Hatchery is a testament to the perseverance of the Syilx Okanagan people in their dream of restoring salmon back to their rightful place throughout all parts of the territory. This hatchery continues to play a key role in our Nation's restoration efforts and is part of a long-term vision to ensure salmon are brought back to all parts of the territory.

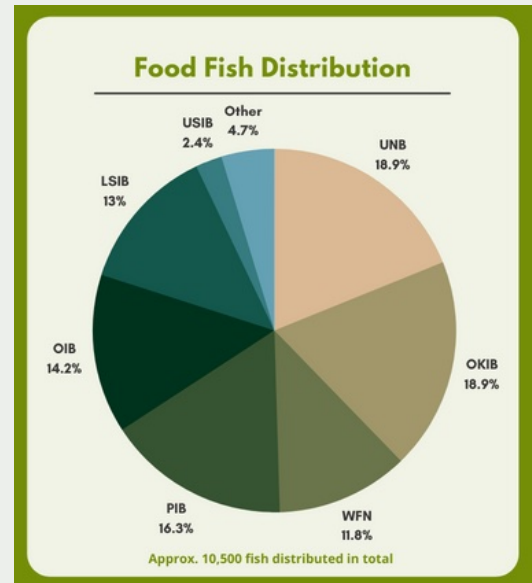
This year saw us reach nearly full capacity from our broodstock collection, with over 4.5 million sc̓wín (Okanagan sockeye) eggs collected and fertilized. The fry raised over the course of this year ensure that our fry releases in 2021 will exceed previous expectations.

The lab also continues to play an important role and the impacts of the pandemic have been felt in every area and the lab is no exception. We had to manage working from home and limit access to ensure that we keep ourselves and our communities safe. Despite all the challenges, we have managed to deliver the testing needed to support the fisheries program. The lab continues to provide sampling, aging and thermal mark recovery to support the Sockeye and Chinook restoration work. We have expanding our environmental DNA testing services and our disease testing capabilities, including implementing our new genomics testing facility in collaboration with the Broughton First Nations Group. The genomics testing includes screen for diseases including PRV in Atlantic salmon. In the coming year we hope to build upon the genomics capabilities within the lab to make use of this new facility.

Alongside this, our laboratory completes monthly water chemistry testing to monitor our hatchery wastewater outflow. The results show that our hatchery waste management is effective at protecting the health of the water downstream. Hatchery Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzUcPx-wloU

Conducting Broodstock for a Conservation Fishery

ONA is committed to salmon restoration efforts throughout the territory, which includes reintroducing sc̓wín back to their historic range — including to t̓iw̓c̓ən (Skaha) Lake and kłus̓ənítkw (Okanagan) Lake. These efforts are part of the ONA ongoing commitment to care for Syilx lands and resources, including responsibility



“restoring salmon back to their rightful place throughout Syilx territory”

to our sacred waters and the food sovereignty that they provide. As part of this initiative we continue to conduct broodstock — which involves beach seining and collecting eggs and milt from adult sc'win for rearing at the kł c'p'alk sti'm Hatchery and release them in the coming year.

In 2004, ONA began stocking t'iwc'ən and in 2017 kłusənitkw with hatchery-reared fry and monitored their growth, survival, and interactions on kokanee populations. From 2014 forward, ONA has been rearing the fry for release at the kł c'p'alk sti'm Hatchery.

Even in the face of Covid-19 restrictions, that challenged how our teams could work together on the land, it was a good year for broodstock collection. In fact, regardless of the adversity, the ONA had one of the strongest broodstock collections to date, with over 4.5 million eggs collected for sc'win restoration.

This year also signaled progression in our continued work to restore chinook salmon back to the territory as well. The ONA documented spring chinook as far as Vernon, with an estimate 50-100 chinook in Okanagan River. Alongside planning for 40,000 chinook eggs from CCT for chinook recovery program, for the first year we took local broodstock of about 7,500 eggs for the chinook recovery program.



Broodstock Video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcX_C2-_Sak



ONA INNOVATOIN - Hatchery in a Box (HIB) Program

The ONA is dedicated to not only ensuring that Syilx Okanagan people have access to our first foods, but are also innovating to ensure that other Nation's are able to access our best practices and technical insights.

The HIB program began with Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative Business Development Source funding with the plan to develop mobile, modular fish hatcheries that could be built at our Hatchery and then moved to their final location as "plug and play" operating salmon hatcheries. We began with 20 foot long steel shipping containers. We had hoped that these would be inexpensive enough to be owned and operated by the local First Nation. We built one and have used it as a showpiece at the kł c'p'alk sti'm Sockeye Hatchery. Initial testing looked very promising as the HIB was able to match the performance of the main hatchery. Over the next two years, with PICFI funding, we worked on equipment selection and modification of the build to be cost effective but not sacrifice performance.

One of our early challenges was that most of the inquiries came from Upper Fraser communities where our HIB would need to operate in a remote location during -35C weather. We made some alterations, searched for solutions and came up with an insulation package and humidity controlling equipment. During a full season of operation at Takla Landing our HIB performed very well. We also had to design custom equipment – these include water aerators and call out alarm systems. The aerator originally designed passed all specifications but cost us \$6750. Another year spent on design and we now have a much smaller aerator that functions just as well and our cost is \$650. In head to head testing or our new aerator against a very expensive DFO unit (Jack Brooks Fish Hatchery) our aerator matched their performance. We have quoted and received positive responses from Fortis, Tsilhqot'in National Government, Carcross, and Gitanyow for this coming year. We have also quoted but not received a commitment from many other FN from BC and the Yukon.

One of the very surprising but pleasant side effects of our production of the HIB units and subsequent sales to First Nations is that it prompts DFO to then meet and discuss their local stocks and concerns. For example, Takla Landing went ahead with their plan in Fall 2020 to collect eggs and use their wholly owned HIB. That brought DFO to the table who are now cooperating with the egg collection and have put additional funds into the HIB to supply cold water. This is a very positive step.

For now the HIB sales are self supporting and showing all signs of becoming a good auxiliary business for the ONA, but the final legacy of this program may be that it brought DFO to the table to talk about local First Nation control of salmon stock enhancement.

BRINGING AWARENESS TO SYILX PERSPECTIVES ON FOOD AND HEALTH

University of Alberta Salmon Health Research Project 2020

The University of Alberta released an Article titled Traditional Food, Health, and Diet Quality in Syilx Okanagan Adults in British Columbia, Canada which conducted research within the Okanagan Nation and analyzes health indicators and diet quality among 265 Syilx Okanagan adults. Due to Covid-19 the Research Team could not present to communities directly as previously planned.

This study is a component of the Okanagan Salmon and Our Health Study, which is a joint project between the Okanagan Nation Alliance, University of Alberta, Université de Montréal, and Syilx Okanagan communities. The objective of the overarching study is to document the health and health equity outcomes of the Syilx Okanagan Nation initiatives that led to the reintroduction of Okanagan sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) in the Okanagan River upstream of Osoyoos Lake. To learn more visit: www.syilx.org/university-of-alberta-salmon-health-research-project-2020/

stxalq (Huckleberry) Enhancement

It is important to remember that many of our original foods were not just for us as people but were also stewarded to ensure that other relations could sustain themselves as well. The Kettle Granby stxalq (Huckleberry) Enhancement Project supports recovery of ki?lawna? subpopulations in the Lower Arrow subregion through enhancing abundance and productivity of bear foods and restoring connectivity of secure grizzly bear habitat. As stxalq (black huckleberries) are an important food source for ki?lawna?, the project is focussed on improving the abundance and accessibility of stxalq for Grizzly Bbears. We are applying Indigenous knowledge, innovative forestry practices and prescribed fire treatments to enhance productivity of stxalq and high-quality forage, and to also increase the availability of core secure habitat for ki?lawna? within the Lower Arrow subregion. The project work is supported by funding from the Columbia Basin Trust and FLNRORD (ER grant).

During the 2020 field season (June through September), there were 5 field sessions held, where crews conducted vegetation surveys at possible treatment locations (assessing huckleberry

forest attributes and presence, % cover and vigor of huckleberry bushes), gathered imagery by drone flights, and bear sign observations. Crews participated in the making of a short documentary about biodiversity aspect of the project, produced by the Kootenay Association for Science and Technology's GLOWS BiodiveriTV Program. We also co-hosted a Huckleberry field tour with the Syilx Huckleberry Women's group through the En'owkin Centre, for Syilx Okanagan community members, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to discuss aspects of stewardship for stxalq and ki?lawna?.

Southern Interior Mule Deer Project

The persistent degradation of ecosystems has continued to erode the ability to retain many of our other first foods as well. The Syilx Okanagan Nation has title and rights throughout its territory, which includes the right to be secure in the pursuit of their means of harvesting practices. The Syilx Okanagan people have always cared for the wildlife and wildlife habitat of their territory and have a continuing responsibility to steward these resources for future generations.

Alongside work on protecting yilikwixkn (bighorn sheep) and sɣwɣ'i? (mountain goats) [pg #], we have also assisted with mule deer winter capture for GPS collaring and mortality investigations in the Okanagan and Boundary study areas (in collaboration with University of British Columbia Okanagan and FLNRORD). This work not only protects many of our four-legged relatives, but also ensures that there are sustainable populations for hunting, now and in the future.

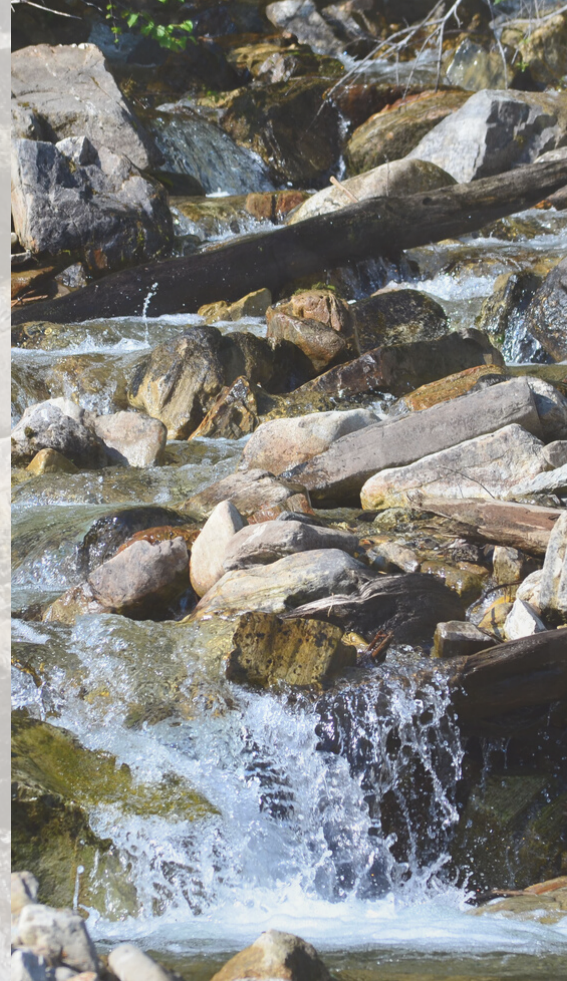


“remember that many of our original foods were not just for us as people

nācīp INNOVATION AND RESTRUCTURING OPERATIONS IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO FIND
SOLUTIONS

The ONA faced immense change and challenge over the last year — with a growing range of responsibility and work — coupled with the intense demand for the organization to respond and adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the face of these hurdles the organization responded with coherent and consistent policies and approaches that allowed us to collectively weather the storm of this pandemic, while coming out stronger and more capable to take on the future.



FINANCES

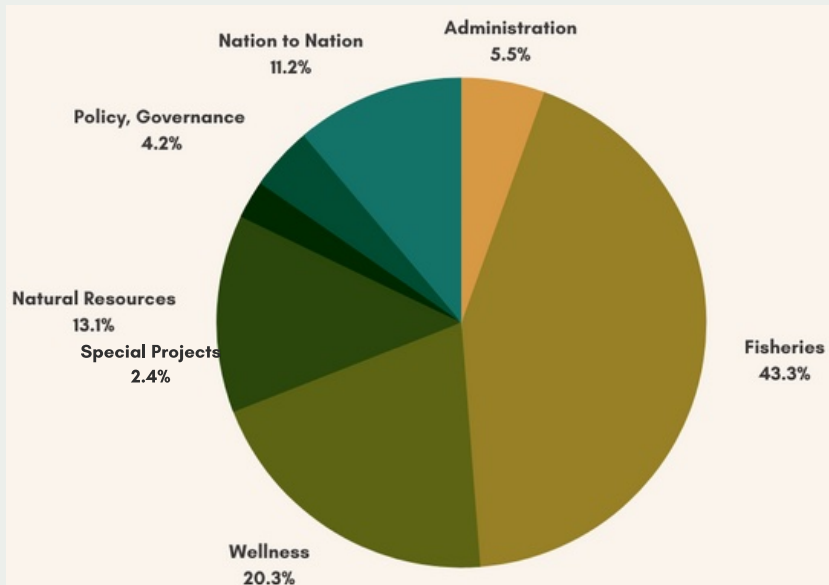
Finances, like much our core operations, demanded that we remain flexible in the face of multiple changes. These challenges were compacted by a reduction in core Tribal Council funding (over 40% or \$150K) for this fiscal, directly impacting the Nations' core capacity.

Our Policy, Governance and Community Engagement project funding also decreased considerably as Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Nation Rebuilding programs were put on hold pending an organizational review within the Nation. Alongside this, our Special Projects initiatives funding dropped with the discontinuation of the Youth Employment Pilot (BRIDGES) project in Fiscal 2021. Finally, there was significant decrease in support and donations to Nation events, mainly due to COVID-19 restraints.

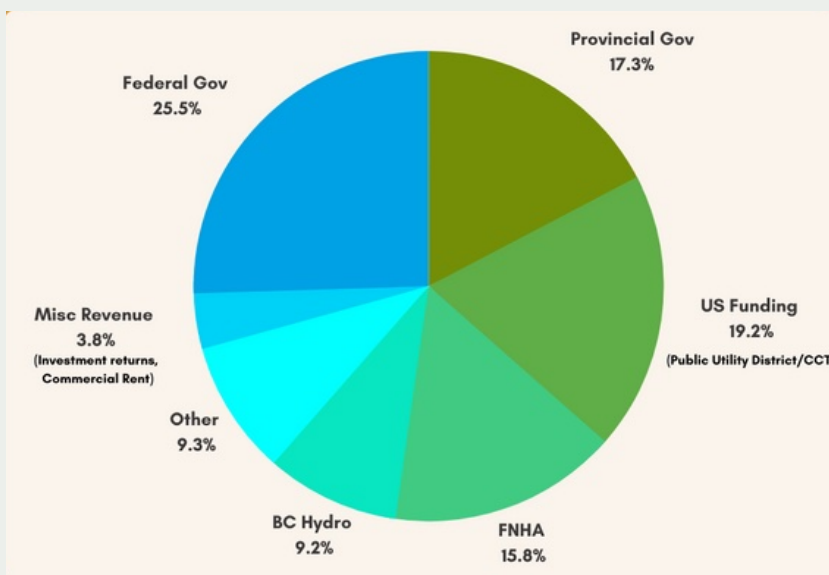
However, there is a wide range of activity and many new project proposals in all of our operational areas. This continued to drive growth and provide increased opportunity for the Syilx Okanagan Nation. Fisheries remained relatively consistent, with additional support received from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for of our economic fisheries business development program. This enabled the ONA to provide more access to our territory for Ceremonial, Food, and Commercial Fishing. In Wellness, the YES Program was restarted with new provincial funding, and the ONA received funding to reinstate the Jordan's Principle Program. Natural Resources saw funding fluctuations, but increasingly we have support for projects like the Wildlife Working Group and Ecosystem restoration that are escalating our capacities and work portfolio.

Revenues from the US are primarily for the hatchery, salmon reintroduction and habitat initiatives. Misc. Revenue is revenue earned through rent and investment returns. Other is primarily project related funding. .

Operations Revenue by Department



Actual Revenues



See audited financial statement under separate cover for a full view of finances.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Central to the ONA's capacity to remain adaptable and respond to challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic, was the continued evolution of our human resources and organizational structures.

As part of these efforts the entire ONA Occupational Health and Safety Program was reviewed and updated. This enabled the ONA to provide a safe and healthy workplace to its staff, contractors and visitors, be in compliance with WorkSafe BC standards, while allowing us to be more competitive in the regional market for contracts in various fields. Specifically in response to the pandemic, the ONA ensured that Covid-19 protocols were strictly adhered to, and constantly amended to be in line with Provincial and Federal health regulations. We were able to empower Syilx Okanagan member communities in these efforts as well. Those who requested shared documents and resources to ensure health and safety during the current pandemic liaised and participated closely with ONA. Specifically, we continued to deliver a one stop support and consultation service to all ONA departments, and participating communities when needed, on day-to-day basis in the areas of Staffing, Employee Relations, Total Compensation, Organizational Growth and Development, Good Governance and Human Resources related Strategic Directions.

Alongside developing these measures and protocols, the ONA held two, day long Introduction to Project Management courses as part of a joint initiative between ONA and Okanagan College. This was delivered by Okanagan College on a virtual platform. The course was open to all participating communities and a total of 39 staff participated, including staff from member bands. The contents of this course was instrumental in instilling a modern day workplace business focus and to maximize the application of available resources while enhancing productivity in the workplace.

At the same time the ONA's Job Description Standardization Project involving all ONA departments, was rolled out to audit contents, and ensured job deliverables were realistic, attainable and in support of the ONA strategic and program direction.

Many of these efforts were made possible through a series of successful funding proposals put forward by ONA.



Top Photo: Shayla Lawrence receives 20 years of service recognition

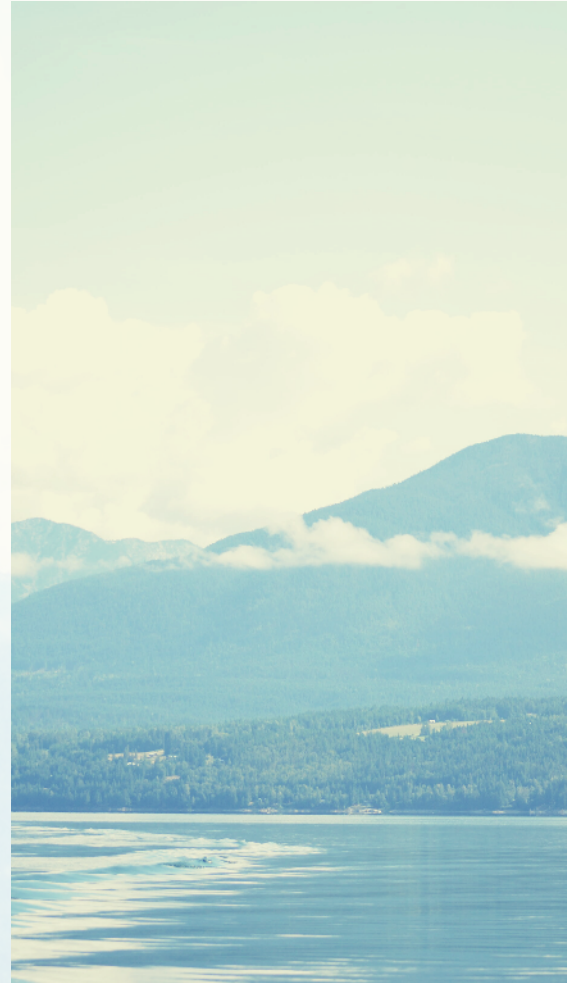
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*Central to the ONA's
capacity to remain adaptable and
respond to challenges*

musí's WE LOOK FORWARD

COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT NOT ONLY IS OUR VOICE HEARD, BUT THAT OUR PRESENCE IS FELT.

As we collectively emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic we sit at precipice, where we are able to take stock of both the organizational success and challenges of the last year, examine the foundational structures that need to evolve, while strategizing how to take advantage of opportunities and move forward in the best way possible. As we take steps forward, we will be continuing to examine the best practices and capacities to restructure the organization to ensure that it reflects lessons learned.



A FEW KEY HIGHLIGHTS TO LOOK FOR IN 2021-2022

The Unity Principle continues to be the keystone that informs all of the work we carry out in the year ahead — ensuring that we come together to continue to regenerate our traditional food systems, uphold our children and families, secure health services, rejuvenate our language, and protect our water.

Launch of the Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative

As part of this initiative we are gearing up to launch the Bringing the Salmon Home: Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative, which will include a week of events, workshops and presentations to promote the work being undertaken to ensure that *ntytyix* (Chief salmon) return to the Upper Columbia. We will be actively working to ensure that community awareness and participation is central to this work.

This initiative is an Indigenous-led collaboration of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, Ktunaxa Nation, Secwépemc Nation, Canada and British Columbia. Salmon have been blocked from returning to the Canadian portion of the upper Columbia River for more than 80 years. The long-term vision is to return salmon stocks for Indigenous food, social and ceremonial needs, and to benefit the region's residents and ecosystems as a whole.

Syilx siw̓kʷ Strategy

In the spring, we will also be releasing the Syilx siw̓kʷ Strategy, which has been years in the making. The release of this Strategy will help to guide future collaborations and work on protecting water throughout the territory.

Calls to Action - Indian Residential School

We will continue to demand that the government on all levels recognize and act on the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. From Indian Residential School survivors to language revitalization, and child welfare, this comprehensive document provides a way forward in terms of reconciliation. For more info visit: http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Coming Together and Raising Awareness

From traditional ceremonies and fry releases — to the Unity Run, the Purple Ribbon campaign and MMIWG awareness — we are looking forward to supporting people to come together as a Nation, especially after over a year of social distancing and isolation. In 2021 – 2022 we will be hosting events and campaigns that both celebrate our culture and shared history, while also uniting to raise awareness of the continued struggles that we collectively face. This year's Unity Run will be a mix of both virtual and in-person participation, and will focus on supporting Indian Residential School survivors.

Natural Resources Strategic Plan

The Natural Resources Committee will be engaged in strategic planning to review the Terms of Reference and structure to meet the growing need for engagement on forestry, wildlife and water issues. This process will assist the group to better identify natural resource goals and priorities.



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for the people



Syilx

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**One Language
One Culture
One Land
One People**



TO LEARN MORE
www.okanagannation.com | Phone: 250.707.0095