



MEDIA RELEASE | July 27, 2021

SYILX OKANAGAN NATION GATHER AND STAND FOR UNITY AT ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

sn̓tux̓qnm (Castlegar), Sylx Territory: From July 27 – 28, 2021, the Okanagan Nation Alliance hosted an Annual General Assembly in sn̓tux̓qnm. This event saw Sylx Okanagan members from across the Nation — including leaders, Elders, youth and community members —gather to celebrate the many successes that have taken place for our people over the last year, and reflect on the persistent challenges that we collectively face together. In particular, this event carried significance as it is one of the first times since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in March, 2020, that many of our Nation members have been able to safely gather. Being able to come together as a Nation is central to affirming our connections with one another, our land and territory.

ki law na (y̓ilmix̓m Clarence Louie), ONA Tribal Chair, stated that: “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 continue to be politics that we must confront, manage, and overcome. 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.”

Alongside pertinent presentations and dialogues, there was also a variety of cultural activities taking place, including on-the-land tours to Sylx ancestral villages, Nation restoration and monitoring projects, alongside in-depth presentations on the Sylx Language Declaration.

This year was also important in that it took place in the eastern part of Sylx territory. The Sylx Okanagan Nation’s connection to the territory has been profoundly affected by the Columbia River Treaty (CRT). It’s dams industrialized the Columbia River system, destroyed thousands of square kilometers of land, permanently disrupted natural ecosystems, and threatened many species that call this territory home. The flooding destroyed historical Sylx Okanagan villages, sacred sites, burial grounds, and food harvesting areas, breaking many of the cultural and familial connections our communities held with the Upper Columbia and n̓x̓ wntkwitkw (Columbia River). By journeying out and being on the land together to share in our Sylx history, stories and perspectives, we are working to ensure that these connections continue to be handed down for generations to come.

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The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was formed in 1981 as the inaugural First Nations government in the Okanagan, which represents the 8 member communities of the Okanagan Nation. The ONA mandate is to work collectively to advance and assert Sylx Okanagan Nation Title and Rights over the Sylx Okanagan Nation Territory.

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