



MEDIA ADVISORY | June 1, 2022

SYILX OKANAGAN NATION MEMBERS CONTINUE TO RUN ON THE LAND TO RAISE AWARENESS ON SUICIDE AND VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY

tkwəłniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) will host the 14th annual Spirit of Syilx Unity Run from June 3-5, 2022. This year participants will be starting at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and finishing at the Syilx Indian Residential School monument on the Penticton Indian Band reserve. This run was initiated in 2008 by Syilx youth to raise awareness about the issues of suicide and violence that our communities continue to face. The event will bring approximately 125 Syilx youth and members from across the Nation together, running through 288 kilometers.

WHY: The Syilx Okanagan Nation faces disproportionate levels of violence and suicide, alongside an opioid overdose crisis. This has been further compacted by severe environmental emergencies that have increased over the years. The Unity Run is one of the most impactful approaches the Nation has to addressing these issues collectively, used to raise awareness and education with all youth members, citizens and the public on issues of suicide and violence that continues to confront Syilx communities.

Beyond these foundational goals, the Unity Run provides youth and members to be out on the land to connect with each other throughout the Nation. It is an innovative and holistic means of promoting land-based learning and wellness to Syilx youth. By engaging a wide range of tools – from physical activity, recognition of connection to land, and implementation of the Syilx teachings, culture and language – the Run provides participants with a deep sense of well-being. It educates on healthy lifestyle alongside facilitating the experience of community, connection and belonging. Syilx youth are also provided connection to their territory together as a Nation, while building relationships with Syilx elders, thus enacting our inherent responsibility to each other, the land and for generations to come.

WHEN: June 3-5, 2022

WHERE: From the Kamloops Indian Residential School to the Syilx Indian Residential School Monument on the Penticton Indian Band.

MORE INFO: More information on the event can be found at www.syilx.org/events/spirit-of-syilx-youth-unity-run/

The Okanagan Nation Response Team, *Səx kənxit əlx* “Those Who Help” is a team of Syilx community members who have extensive training in the areas of suicide education, community mobilization, and critical incident response. The team is comprised of community members trained in responding to community crisis. They receive training at least twice a year to enhance their skills to better serve the communities they respond to.

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