

# KI?LAWNA? GRIZZLY BEAR

## North Cascades Ecosystem



### Grizzly Bear | *Ursus arctos horribilis*

**This region, once home to a healthy grizzly bear population, is now designated as critically endangered.**

The North Cascades Grizzly Bear Population Unit (N.C. GBPU) spans southwest British Columbia and northern Washington State, encompassing the territories of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, Stó:lō Nation, and Nlaka'pamux Nation. This region, once home to a healthy grizzly bear population, now faces critical endangerment, with fewer than ten bears estimated to remain. The area's rugged terrain extends across the Canada-US border and is highly fragmented from roads and development, which has limited and continues to limit natural movement and genetic diversity, contributing to their imperiled state. Historical factors, including commercial trapping and hunting, have significantly reduced the population. Recovery through natural means is unlikely due to the bears' isolation and the precarious state of neighbouring populations.

Grizzly bears in the North Cascades ecosystem span administrative and political boundaries, requiring cooperative efforts and inter-jurisdictional strategies for effective population stewardship. Since grizzly bears do not acknowledge administrative and political boundaries, the recovery process is transboundary across Canada and the U.S. The ONA and the Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative support the work of U.S. agencies and are committed to cooperative approaches for shared stewardship objectives. The Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative was established to honour the cultural significance of grizzly bears to First Nations in Southwest British Columbia and to steward their recovery in the North Cascades region. Indigenous knowledge systems are central to this initiative, guiding recovery planning through an approach that combines Indigenous and Western knowledge. Collaboration with government, communities, NGOs, and interest holders is critical to developing inclusive processes for grizzly bear recovery, reflecting the Joint Nations' commitment to shared stewardship and cultural values. The Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative is composed of Stó:lō, Nlaka'pamux, St'át'imc, Syilx, Simpcw, Sekw'el'was, Lillooet Tribal Council and Secwepemc Nation leadership, government bodies, Coast to Cascades, Conservation Northwest, and grizzly bear subject matter experts who lead this collaborative effort.

The Syilx Okanagan territory is transboundary, as the North Cascades Ecosystem is transboundary, thus requires coordinated efforts on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border. In 2014, the ONA Chief's Executive Council declared ki?lawna protected across the territory and set a mandate to take action to restore and protect endangered populations, including throughout the North Cascades Ecosystem. ONA has since led recovery and stewardship planning efforts in partnership with our nation communities and neighbouring Nations, including the S'olh Temexw Stewardship Alliance, the Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative and Conservation Northwest.

The ONA is committed to conserve, manage, co-manage the wildlife, lands and waters of the Nation's territory. In doing so, the Nation will be true to its spiritual and environmental values, mindful of the cultural and social needs and aspirations of its individual bands, and strong in its assertion of the Nation's rights and title to its entire area of occupancy and use.

**ki?lawna are an integral part of Syilx Okanagan culture and are an critical indicator of the health and well-being of the land and Syilx Okanagan people since time immemorial.**





## Timeline

- |      |  |      |  |
|------|--|------|--|
| 1975 | Grizzly bears in the lower 48 states are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.  | 2018 | The ONA Chief's Executive Council passed a tribal council resolution collectively endorsed by partnering Nations, calling on a Multi-Nation Approach for ki?lawna? Recovery Efforts in southwest British Columbia. The ONA and partnering Nations, Sto:lo, St'ati'mc, Nlaka'pamux and Secwepemc, sent a renewed collective message to the Provincial Government, offering a partnered approach to grizzly bear recovery, |
| 1980 | Washington state lists Grizzly bears as an endangered species.   |      |  |
| 1982 | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service approved the National Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan; this plan was revised in 1993   |      |  |
| 1983 | Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee est.  | 2018 | E.C. Manning Provincial Park Bear Hazard Assessment conducted to support BC Parks' efforts to make park facilities safer for humans and bears in the NC. An assessment report was completed  |
| 1991 | Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee decides to recover grizzly bears in the North Cascades (NC)   |      |  |
| 2001 | A Recovery Plan for Grizzly Bears in the NC of BC is drafted by the NC Grizzly Bear Recovery Team  | 2019 | ONA began to gather information on syilx Indigenous Knowledge of ki?lawna? populations, habitat, possibility of recovery and threats in the Okanagan and North Cascades regions of BC.   |
| 2004 | A Recovery Plan for Grizzly Bears in the NC is completed for the BC portion of the North Cascades Ecosystem.   |      |  |
| 2014 | U.S. National Parks Service/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service began drafting an Environmental Impact Statement on grizzly bear restoration in the NC ecosystem. The effort was discontinued in 2020.  | 2020 | In 2020, a report was submitted to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee to inform the population status review process for the Western Grizzly Bear Population (in Spring 2023).   |
| 2015 | The ONA passed a Tribal Council Resolution declaring ki?lawna? at risk and in immediate need of recovery, particularly within remnant transboundary populations within Syilx territory.  | 2022 | The U.S. National Parks Service/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reinitiated the process for developing a Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan for the North Cascades Ecosystem.  |
| 2017 | The Office of the Auditor General conducted "An Independent Audit of Grizzly Bear Management," which led to ten recommendations for improving the management of grizzly bears in BC.   | 2023 | The Skagit Valley Provincial Park Bear Hazard Assessment report was completed to support BC Parks' efforts towards making park facilities safer for humans and bears in the North Cascades.  |
| 2018 | NC Grizzly Bear Working Group is est.  |      |  |
| 2018 | ONA began conducting field survey programs for the North Cascade grizzly bear population to assess habitat conditions, develop recommendations for increasing the availability of essential bear foods, and enhance habitat security and connectivity. | 2023 | The U.S. National Parks Service/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service released a Draft Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan/Environmental Impact Statement   |
|      |  | 2024 | The U.S. National Parks Service/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service released their Record of Decision to actively restore grizzly bears to the NC of WA, where the animals once roamed.   |

### For More Information Contact

Cailyn Glasser, ONA Natural Resources Manager

Email: [cglasser@syilx.org](mailto:cglasser@syilx.org)

[www.syilx.org](http://www.syilx.org)

