



2025 | 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

k^wu isnəqsilx^wtət

way' xast sxlaxsalt i? p_isnəqsílx^w

Since its establishment in 1981, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) has created a space to unite our member communities to collectively advance and assert Syilx Okanagan Nation Title and Rights throughout Syilx Okanagan Territory. Guided by the leadership of the ONA Chiefs Executive Council (CEC), we continue to uphold our nation declaration and inherent rights and responsibilities while strengthening the Nation through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to future generations.

We are proud to present the Okanagan Nation Alliance Annual Report for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. This report reflects the progress we have made together over the past year and the strong foundation we continue to build upon as we advance the Okanagan Nation Declaration. Through the dedication of our communities, leadership, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, partners, and staff, we are protecting our lands and waters, revitalizing our language and culture, creating opportunities for our people, and ensuring a thriving future for the Syilx Okanagan Nation.



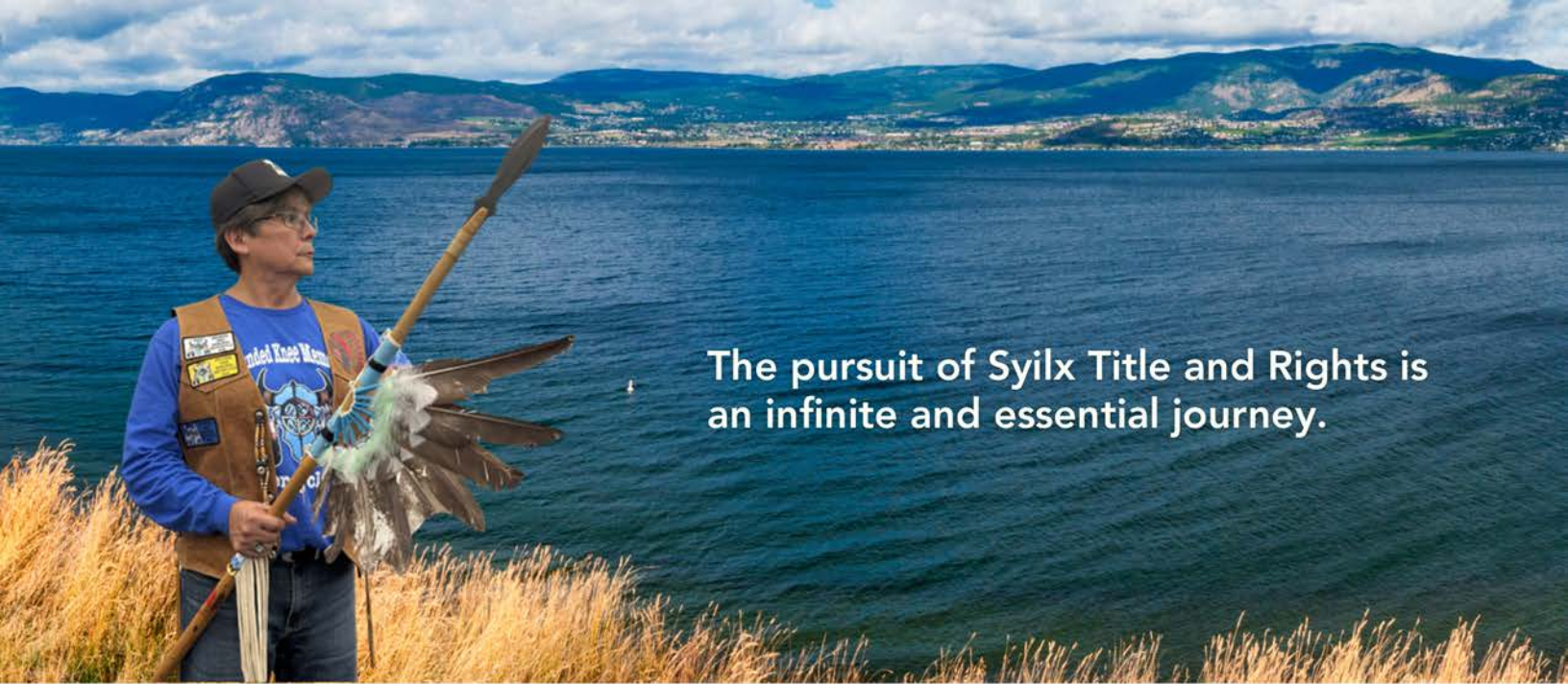
sniktca? tk^wmilx^wsniktca? Jordan Polychroniou and son at the Sockeye ceremony

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

- Grand Chief Stewart Phillip April 2009

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The pursuit of Syilx Title and Rights is an infinite and essential journey.

xaʔtus

yilmixm ki law na, ONA xaʔtus | Chief Clarence Louie, ONA Tribal Chair

As the Chiefs Executive Council (CEC), we lead the collective efforts to uphold, advance, and defend Title and Rights, support Nationhood, and support our individual Bands when asked. As events this past year attest, the challenges are real and yet still we move forward with the undeniable responsibility to care for the tmxʷulaxʷ, siwʷkʷ, and tmixʷ including our future generations across the territory. In facing these threats, the unity of our Nation—an enduring inheritance from our ancestors—is more important than ever.

Reconciliation Under Attack: The BC government's proposal to suspend critical sections of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) is a betrayal of trust that mocks the commitment to reconciliation and creates a climate of uncertainty that impacts everyone. The Syilx Nation stands with the First Nations Leadership Council in opposing this action by Premier Eby. Our Nation continues to uphold the principles of DRIPA on all files and demands the same from industry stakeholders in our territory.

Likewise, the CEC called out Prime Minister Carney for backsliding on reconciliation with his major projects initiative which responds to economic threats at the expense of the inalienable rights of First Nations. The CEC has put both the federal and provincial governments on notice that o project impacting Syilx Okanagan Territory will be fast-tracked without our free, prior, and

informed consent.

Racism on the Rise: The failure of governments to honour their reconciliation commitments is reflected in the emboldened racism and denialism raising its ugly head in the legislature and in our universities. This divisive and deeply disrespectful rhetoric puts at risk the government-to-government relationship with Indigenous Nations on whose lands this province depends. Reconciliation is not about opinions—it's about constitutionally-protected rights affirmed by Canadian and international law. This legal reality and the historical facts are not up for debate. Our nation has called on all levels of government to uphold their responsibilities to truth and reconciliation.

At the Table on Trans-Boundary Claims: It is disappointing to see the legal challenges filed against the BC government by US-based Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. As the CEC, we reaffirm that the interests of Sinixt members are protected and advanced by our Nation in Canada, and we remain committed to protecting our Territory in the Arrow Lakes. As rights and title holders, and as the successor group for Sinixt people in Canada, the Syilx Okanagan Nation has been at the table with the province and the First Nations Leadership Council on the



important work of developing a policy framework that ensures BC First Nations are prioritized on trans-boundary claims consultation.

One Nation: Sinixt have always been part of the Syilx Nation. We are one people with one language, one culture, and one land—and we retain inherent authority to determine our identity, continuity and representation in accordance with Syilx laws and governance. In support of this, the CEC has prioritized ongoing work to gather evidence from historical records, community documents, Knowledge Holders, and relevant experts—with En’owkin Centre and the ac miscut work having a critical role in the Syilx Okanagan research and report writing.

Step by Step: We achieve progress by staying the course. The Solar Project partnership between ONA and Upper Nicola Band continues, if slowly, to move forward—testament to our commitment to build economic capacity within the reality of a changing climate and the need for sustainable growth.

Our perseverance has driven the multi-generational work of restoring Chief ntytyix salmon to our territory. This past summer, we celebrated a new passage giving salmon unimpeded access to Okanagan Lake, enabling

them to journey to ancestral spawning grounds for the first time in almost 100 years. This is aligned with the tri-Nation initiative of the Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative that is working to return fish to the Columbia for Indigenous food, social and ceremonial needs—and to benefit all residents and ecosystems as a whole.

We carry on the fight! The work in which we are engaged will have lasting impacts for generations to come, securing our rights and our lands as is our sacred responsibility. Despite the obstacles, we continue to confront the challenges, take the opportunities, and create a future that we can sustain economically and socially, in step with the legacy of our ancestors who led the fight and endured, just as we must today.



yilmixm ki law na and his granddaughter release salmon fry



Message from the Executive Director

way'— ONA is not your typical organization, I never know what is coming through my door! We think we're into the calm and then something else happens. Yet, amidst all the pressures and chaos, there is the constant of the relationships that sustain us. Of course, with relationships comes the reality of loss. This past year, our beloved Syilx Knowledge Holder twi cewelna Leon Louis left us too soon. He had that humble way of our old people. So powerful. So missed. Even as the warm weather, the ceremonies, and the salmon continue to come, so too grief recurs in all our lives. In all of our communities, amidst our personal triumphs and tragedies, each of us are showing up each day and keeping the work moving forward.

As an organization, we also experience the triumphs and tragedies, the ups and downs. Projects start and end, staff come and go. Currently ONA Operations is focused on the process of creating a Strategic Readiness Roadmap to provide a foundation for the next 3 to 5 years. In tackling this, we were ably facilitated by Dan George with Four Directions Management who brought together the reality of the Governance work with that of Operations and Team Leads for Natural Resources, Fisheries, Wellness, and Core Administration. These four sectors of our operations need the Governance big picture plan in order to go forward, informed

by strategic clarity from CEC about the purpose of the organization and the priorities of our Leaders and Communities. As an organization, we are committed to acting with greater coordination, building for succession, and stepping into the future in alignment with the mandate set by the Chiefs and Communities. This evolution is ongoing with past, present, and future informing what is possible.

Operations continues to play out in the landscape of critics, politics, funding cuts, and Nation vs Band level initiatives. We have our challenges. There is no core sustainable funding for ONA. Our priorities are externally driven with staff time allocated based on what funders prioritize. Then there are HR staff relationships and mounting infrastructure pressures. We balance change management, the politics of our CEC, and the priorities of our communities.

Meanwhile, our teams carry on doing amazing things. For a moment, take the eagle's view and look at what we are doing in our busy-ness. In every Community and on each ONA Team, good people are doing good things. Fighting the power. Protecting the land. Keeping our Indigenous foods alive—because isn't that where sovereignty begins? Our teams keep writing successful proposals. Natural Resources has doubled in size.



Fisheries scientists carry on with their projects. Columbia is bursting at the seams. Each year, there are so many events held with drumming and singing and forums for healing. We continue to focus on our youth—sparking a fire in them for stamina and the courage to make their own choices. This is the continuation of Nation building—holding space for syilx citizens to become active members of our families, communities, and Nation.

ONA has been like a tide that raises all boats. Even with the ebbs and flows, it is constant. It comes with purpose and then recedes and comes back again. All of us know the contrary life of stewarding the land with ceremony, even in a world of AI and resource extraction. We take up the opportunities to connect with the people. We create space to discuss our captik^WI and syilx laws, embed them in the work, and encourage each of us to ask: What do these laws mean to me? Because they must land with meaning in the lives of our youth, our language learners, our cultural knowledge holders, and our leaders. We keep the discussions going as we work together to make meaning within the unity principle that defines us as a Nation.

As I have shared many times, decolonization is messy work. Rebalancing relationships between

the natural world and the social and economic spheres is complex at every turn. ONA may not be your typical tribal organization, but it has made such impact in Syilx Okanagan lives. This is our legacy—lining up the work to support our communities to flourish today while, at the same time, ensuring the survival of the tmix^w in all its glorious diversity, and nourishing the People-to-be. Sometimes the results show up right away. More often, they lie in the future. We help plant the seeds and we don't know when they will sprout. Then we look again and see members rising all around us.

limlāmt

— suikist Pauline Terbasket, Executive Director



Zoë Eyjolfson, ONA Fluvial Geomorphologist, and Pauline Terbasket, ONA Executive Director, celebrate the opening of the Okanagan Lake Dam Fish Passage



TITLE AND RIGHTS

skc'əḥ'əḥwipla?uᑦ steᑦtaᑦ

By working together as a Nation, we are able to share strengths, advocate more effectively, and leverage resources in a way that is only possible through collective capacity.

This past year, the CEC directed Syilx Okanagan Nation's policy and legal team to continue to focus on two critical pillars: advancing the Nation's collective Aboriginal title and rights in various negotiations and Nation-building work, and protecting the Nation's title and rights from outside threats.

To assist with that work, community gatherings were held relating to advancing and protecting the Nation's title and rights: First Speakers / Language Gatherings in August and December of 2025 and an Elders and Knowledge Keepers gathering in March, 2026. These gatherings and other work directly with knowledgeable elders are in relation to protecting the Nation's title and rights, focusing on the eastern part of the Syilx Okanagan Nation's Territory.

Advancing Okanagan Syilx Title and Rights in Columbia River Treaty Negotiations

Despite a challenging political climate with the United States, the Nation continues to work with Canada and British Columbia towards a modernized Columbia River Treaty ("CRT"). Canada entered into the CRT with the United

States in 1964 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, or consent from, the Syilx Okanagan Nation. The CRT resulted in the construction of three major dams in the Upper Columbia Basin that converted the Upper Columbia watershed into a massive reservoir system, resulting in the flooding and devastation of large swaths of Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory, the loss of Nation members' ability to exercise rights in areas of the Territory, and desecration of ancestral burial and cultural sites.

Canada and the United States started renegotiating the CRT in the spring of 2018. The Syilx Okanagan Nation (along with the Ktunaxa and Secwepemc Nations) participate in these international negotiations as an Observer, which is an international precedent and a testament to the strength of a unified approach. Through its role as an Observer, the Nation has been able to advocate for the inclusion of measures in the CRT to protect the ecosystem and support salmon. In July 2024, Canada and the United States reached

an agreement in principle ("AIP") on a modernized CRT. The AIP includes the following provisions:

- dedication of water flows for juvenile salmon migration;
- commitment to work on salmon reintroduction in the Upper Columbia;
- additional flexibility to use specified volumes of water for ecosystem and FN cultural values in BC; and
- a First Nation and Tribe-led ecosystem and Indigenous cultural values body that will undertake adaptive management and make recommendations to the US and Canada on CRT-related operational issues.

Information on the AIP can be found here:



Canada-US negotiations to translate the terms of the AIP in a new, modernized CRT have been paused since the Trump administration came to power. However, the Nation has continued to participate in domestic negotiations with Canada and BC to try to ensure that the Nation's title and rights are reflected under a modernized CRT. These negotiations are focused on three matters:

- new governance processes that involve Syilx Okanagan Nation as a decision maker on key issues under the CRT moving forward;
- long-term revenue-sharing with BC under the CRT to ensure benefits are shared; and
- redress from Canada and BC for past impacts from the CRT and the CRT dams.

Canada and BC have committed to seek the free, prior and informed consent ("FPIC") of the Nation to the modernized CRT. Following direction provided at the 2025 Title and Rights Gathering, communication materials are being prepared to continue to engage with community members on CRT-related matters so that the CEC will be in a stronger position when the time comes to make a decision on whether to provide FPIC to a modernized CRT.

In addition, the CEC Lead on the CRT negotiations, Chief Keith Crow, and the Syilx Okanagan Nation's CRT negotiation team continue to meet quarterly with the CRT Liaison Committee, which is made up of representatives from Syilx Okanagan Nation communities, to share information about negotiations.

The CRT negotiations team presented directly to Councils and at community meetings, when invited to do so.

Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative

The Syilx Okanagan Nation continued its leadership in the CRSRI, working alongside other participating Nations to advance technical and cultural efforts to return salmon to their ancestral spawning grounds above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams. Technical studies on fish passage and habitat conditions progressed with multi-year federal support, while Syilx knowledge holders and staff ensured our Nation's laws and responsibilities remained central. Youth and community engagement was also a priority, with Syilx youth contributing to the Salmon Warriors initiative and participating in the 2025 Bringing the Salmon Home Gatherings held by each Nation, including in September 2025 at the Columbia River Headwaters at Canal Flats, in the East Kootenays. The initiative's award-winning documentary, *Bringing the Salmon Home: The Story of the CRSRI*, was shared widely again this year, offering a powerful tool for public education and cultural revitalization.

The CRSRI Secretariat, hosted by the ONA, expanded its coordination capacity to support inter-Nation collaboration, technical working groups, and engagement with Crown governments. By anchoring the Secretariat within ONA, the Syilx Okanagan Nation maintains strong oversight in this transboundary work. As the initiative transitions from planning to early implementation, the Syilx Nation remains committed to restoring salmon in a way that upholds our Title, legal orders, and responsibilities to tmixw and future generations. For a full report of the CRSRI work:



"You remind us that we have to get back and not forget those times," he told her with gratitude. "To remember those times, and to acknowledge where we come from, not just as a band but as a people and a nation."

- ḡilmixʷm ki law na Clarence Louie



Protecting the Syilx Okanagan Nation's Territory

The CEC continues to prioritize legal and communications work to respond to threats to the Syilx Okanagan Nation's Territory in the Columbia region following the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. Desautel*. The Desautel case involved a member of the Lakes Tribe of the Colville Confederated Tribes in the US who claimed an Aboriginal right to hunt elk in the Castlegar area. In that case, the Court confirmed that people of Sinixt ancestry are not extinct. The ONA intervened in that case, to protect and advance Syilx Okanagan Nation's Title and rights in the Arrow Lakes, as the representative of people of Sinixt ancestry in Canada. As a result of that intervention, the Court was very careful to note that it was not making a finding that the Lakes Tribe is the only successor and that there may be other successor groups, including in Canada. We hold up our two Syilx Okanagan members, elders Richard Armstrong and Hazel Squakin, who were able to share their knowledge as Sinixt descendants.

Relationship Building

We met the Pacific Salmon Treaty Commissioners in a greater role in the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) and representatives from the Yakama Nation to Syilx territory as part of our salmon restoration and transboundary relationship-building efforts. These visits offered an opportunity to deepen mutual understanding and showcase the strength of Syilx-led stewardship. Guests observed Syilx youth involved in the CRSRI Salmon Warriors program assisting with broodstock collection—demonstrating intergenerational commitment to salmon recovery. The tours also included a visit to the Nation's hatchery in Penticton, where guests learned about our conservation-based hatchery practices rooted in Syilx values. These exchanges strengthened relationships and advanced collaborative momentum toward restoring salmon throughout the Columbia Basin.

Upper Nicola Band- ONA 15 MW Solar Project

The ONA and UNB successfully negotiated a 15 MW Energy Purchase agreement with BC Hydro as a part of the final ILM Transmission Line agreement concluded in 2011. Since then the energy purchase price, project location, designs, financing and interconnection requirements and project implementation parameters have formulated. UNB and ONA have been working with renewable energy partners to design a 3- way partnership that will be finalized in a partnership and management agreement. The 15MW solar project will be located UNB reserve will need to be fully constructed and operational by December 2028. The CEC and the EEC is overseeing the project and at UNB and their Chief and council and Business Development Corporation are responsible for project implementation. It is expected to generate significant revenue for all the partners for over 25 years.

BC Hydro - Enduring Relationship

In 2011, BC Hydro and the ONA and UNB committed to develop an Enduring Relationship built on the principles of recognition and respect, transparency and early engagement. Since that

time, the relationship has grown and transformed, but more work remains ahead of us. Under the Energy Executive Committee Chaired by Chief Robert Louie and reporting back to the CEC, two new sub-agreements were reached under the umbrella of the Enduring Relationship with the Nation to support the Nation and Band's joint work together. Some Key accomplishments and benefits achieved with BC Hydro:

- +\$50 million in contracts have now been awarded to syilx Okanagan Designated Businesses and partnerships since 2011
- +\$3.7 million in contracts awarded to syilx Okanagan Designated Businesses this year
- There is an initial annual amount \$30k funding available to each syilx Okanagan community to support business development aligned to growing capacity to undertake BCH contract work management services
- BC Hydro has contributed +\$60k to syilx Okanagan community events

Collaborative work continues on policy development aimed at ensuring that the Nation and its communities have increased role and involvement in new projects and on-going initiatives aimed at protecting the territory and improving opportunities where acceptable activities occur.

BC Put out a Clean Energy Call requesting independent Alternative Power producers submit bids for developing new energy sources in the Province. The EEC wrote a policy report and advocated successfully for these project to have a required participation level of 25%- 51% ownership by First Nations whose territory the project reside on. BC has now developed a second energy call for new project in the coming months.

"We are committed to ensuring the principles of the Enduring Relationship are maintained and that the relationship continues to get better. This work is for the land, the water and for the people."

- Enduring Relationship Booklet

Building Economic Opportunities

Through collaboration with utility partners and ongoing advocacy, this work focuses on improving communication, advancing meaningful procurement opportunities, and negotiating agreements that recognize and support Syilx interests within our traditional territory.

The Procurement and Contracting portfolio continues to strengthen strategic relationships that create economic opportunities and long-term benefits for ONA member communities.

This year has been focused on strengthening the administrative processes that support the Enduring Relationship (ER) and improving the flow of information between BC Hydro and ONA member communities. As Community and Business Liaison, Raf Deguevara has continued to advance procurement and contracting opportunities that benefit the Nation while supporting collaborative engagement across the ER. Several Procurement Working Group (PWG) meetings were held throughout the year, providing member representatives with early information on upcoming BC Hydro projects and opportunities. Work will continue with BC Hydro to identify creative approaches that increase meaningful procurement and business opportunities for ONA communities.

BC Hydro also underwent a significant leadership transition with the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and Vice President. In response, ONA has coordinated a relationship-building meeting between the new BC Hydro executive team, key senior staff, the Chiefs Executive Council (CEC), and ONA senior staff. This meeting

will serve as the foundation for the annual ER Oversight Meeting, scheduled for this fall, where ONA Chiefs and BC Hydro senior leadership will continue to strengthen the relationship, review ER commitments, and advance procurement, contracting, and community benefit opportunities.

In addition to the work with BC Hydro, ONA has begun formal negotiations with FortisBC toward the development of a Nation-wide Relationship Agreement. While FortisBC has operated within Syilx territory for many years, existing arrangements have been limited and inconsistent across communities. Working alongside a long-term consultant, negotiations are focused on establishing a meaningful agreement that recognizes the Syilx Nation as the original occupants of the territory, provides fair accommodation for FortisBC infrastructure, and creates long-term economic and community benefits for ONA member bands.

Collaborative work continues to strengthen relationships with utility partners while ensuring that procurement, contracting, and infrastructure development within Syilx territory are guided by respectful engagement, recognition of Syilx rights and title, and meaningful opportunities for ONA communities.



"Reconciliation means we need to build a better future together and recognize the harms so that it never ever happens again."

- ýilmix^wm sil-teekin
Greg Gabriel



Walk for the Children

Child and Family Governance Representative's advocacy work on behalf of our children. Despite new legislation intended to increase decision-making for communities, Syilx Nation members still report that their experiences with MCFD include discriminatory practices, delays, lack of follow-through, reduced financial supports, and decisions made without consent.

The Governance Representative met with multiple provincial Ministers in Vancouver in November 2025 to address issues with MCFD, including the dismissal of Syilx autonomy, the lack of cooperation in family planning, and the inconsistent application of policy that results in direct harms to our families. Demands were made for MCFD to comply with legislative and policy changes. This includes a Nation MCFD Strategy to support community access to information and assertion of authority.

A focus at the Nation and regional level has been advocating for the funding needed to build capacity for implementing nəqsílt family services in Syilx Communities. The federal government has been more restrictive with funding commitments lately, so the ONA and the Governance Representative continue to push for the resources the Nation needs, as well as speaking up about the continued restrictions on access to Jordan's Principle supports. Work with Dr. Cindy Blackstock and the First Nations Caring Society is underway to bring these issues before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Indian Residential School Denialism

There can be no reconciliation until all Canadians understand the horrific realities of Indian residential schools and the impact they continue to have on Syilx people today. Our leadership remains undeniably strong and unanimous on the condemnation of the racist propaganda being spread by a small number of elected officials in British Columbia whose hateful words minimize, deny the harms of Indian residential schools, mislead the public, and fan the flames of Indigenous-specific racism. These words are abhorrent, insulting and traumatizing to our Elders, Survivors, and families. These public officials are using residential schools as a direct means of leveraging potential power. Shame on them.

CEC has formally responded to the Government, bringing to attention the "hate" that exists and the threat it brings to the safety of all citizens. Commitments to enact the TRC Calls to Action require more immediate action and a call to all Canadian citizens to hold public officials accountable. Denialism has no place on our shared path to truth and reconciliation. The dignity of our people, our ways, and that of the memory of our children deserve the utmost respect and protection if we are ever to move forward in a just society.



Data Sovereignty and Planning

The Syilx Nation and communities maintain responsibility for how our knowledge and data is protected, governed, and shared – Data Sovereignty. The approach that ONA has undertaken is Syilx data caretaking which prioritizes the best interests and well-being of *siwłk^w*, *tnıx^wúla?x^w*, *tmix^w*, and people.

Data Planning and Management

Over the past few years, ONA has led a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to strengthening the Nation's data sovereignty, governance, and management. A roadmap has been developed to guide this work, outlining shared priorities and the supports needed to advance five core foundations: Data Rights and Responsibilities, Data Governance, Data and Research, Protective Data Tools, and Data Sharing and Communication.

The Nation also continues to advance its Data Values and Principles as the foundation for Nation-level data governance. Grounded in *sqilx^wca^wtət*, *nqilx^wcən*, *cəpcaptik^wł* teachings, and rights-based practices, this work has received strong support, with the Wellness Committee and Natural Resources Committee actively guiding its development.

Points of Transformation Indicator Framework

This framework reflects years of Nation-level learning about the importance of data ownership, jurisdiction, and self-determination. It was shaped by community concerns about cultural appropriation, intellectual property, and information sharing, leading to a *sqilx^w*-defined approach to understanding and measuring well-being. Grounded in *sqilx^włcawtət* and self-determination, the draft framework requires further community engagement to strengthen shared understanding and ownership.

Nation Data Committee

The CEC has supported the establishment of a Nation Data Committee as an advisory body. The Committee will guide the development of the road map embedded by understanding the need for ethical use, protection, and caretakership of data. Further engagement with members of Chiefs and Councils is planned to confirm membership, scope, and alignment with Data Values and Principles.

The Nation continues to engage in data governance activities to uphold Syilx data sovereignty. This is no easy feat and will continue to evolve. This includes concurrent developmental work ONA is involved in such as, the Tripartite Data Quality Sharing Agreement, which shapes how Nation member health data is accessed and used across provincial and federal systems. Nation representation on the FNHA Data and Information Planning Committee supports the advancement of Syilx priorities and interests.

There are many other Government driven initiatives underway in which we must remain diligent such as the Anti-Racism Data Act, where analysis identified misalignment with Syilx data sovereignty. The Data Policy Team continues to support leadership by monitoring and advancing positions that uphold data rights and responsibilities.

The Natural Resource Committee

The Natural Resource Committee (NRC) continues to provide leadership and strategic direction for natural resource initiatives across the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

Through collaboration and strong partnerships, the NRC advances initiatives that strengthen Syilx stewardship, build community capacity, and uphold Syilx values across the territory.

Under the leadership of Councillor Jordan Coble, the NRC maintained strong political and technical participation throughout the year. Councillor Coble also recognizes Ron Hall and Colleen Marchand for their many years of dedicated service as founding members of the NRC, whose leadership and expertise have helped shape the committee's work.

The NRC provides direction through its technical working groups, supporting collaborative efforts in *tmix^w*, *siwtk^w*, and *tmx^wulax^w* stewardship to advance shared priorities across the territory. The re-establishment of the Emergency Management Working Group began this year, laying the foundation for strengthened emergency preparedness and coordination.

NRC Working Group Highlights:

tmix^w

The *tmix^w* Working Group met monthly to guide stewardship priorities and program planning. Key activities included identifying priorities for aerial ungulate inventories, providing input on mule deer monitoring, and supporting the continued development of the Syilx Harvest Survey to strengthen Syilx-led decision-making.

siwtk^w

The *siwtk^w* Working Group advanced coordinated action on drought and watershed pressures across Syilx territory. Work included supporting the Syilx-BC Water Scarcity Setting Process with community input to define values, indicators, thresholds, and responses for water management. The group also strengthened engagement and collaboration on water licensing, monitoring, environmental flows, and drought planning.

tmx^wulax^w

The *tmx^wulax^w* Working Group (TWG) made significant strides by completing a draft and live version of the Syilx Forestry Principles and Standards. They represented Syilx communities in Forest Landscape Planning, contributing to the *tmix^w* *naqscn* and Thompson Rivers Forest Landscape Plans. Additionally, the TWG supported initiatives like fire risk modeling, land use planning, wildlife habitat assessments, road rehabilitation, Timber Supply Review, and engagement in provincial forestry processes.



səx^wk^winmaʔm Cris Jordan Coble, NRC Chair
2026 siwtk^w Water and Climate Forum

*Photo Courtesy of Aaron Hemens, 2026
siwtk^w Water and Climate Forum*

The committee acknowledges the late Mike Allison, a dedicated NRC member whose commitment, contributions, and friendship will be dearly missed.

Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table

Transforming Watershed Governance

Convened by the ONA siwtk^w - Water Program, the Collaborative Leadership Table (CLT) represents a milestone in regional cooperation. The CLT brings together more than 130 elected leaders from Syilx communities and local governments across the Okanagan and Similkameen watersheds.

At its heart is a shared recognition that no single government can address growing water scarcity, climate change, ecosystem decline, or increasing demands on water alone. What makes the CLT unique is that it is rooted in Syilx leadership and authority while creating an Ethical Space where governments work together as partners. Rather than asking governments to set aside their differences, the CLT provides a forum where different laws, knowledge systems, and responsibilities can be brought together for a common purpose: ensuring healthy watersheds for generations to come.

Building on the historic MOA signed in 2024, this year the CLT held three Leadership Table meetings, established Governance and Watersheds & Ecosystem Working Groups, and launched the development of an ambitious 250 Year Watershed Responsibility Plan



Looking beyond election cycles and short-term planning horizons, the plan embraces the Syilx responsibility to care for siwtk^w across generations while identifying practical actions that governments can take together today. This work is creating a shared roadmap for watershed health that benefits all communities and all tmix^w throughout Syilx territory.

The CLT was also featured prominently at the 2026 siwtk^w Water and Climate Forum, where leaders and international experts recognized the collaborative model emerging in the Okanagan and Similkameen as an example of how Indigenous authority and intergovernmental collaboration can transform watershed governance. The growing momentum reflects a shared understanding that the future of our watersheds depends not only on better management, but on building enduring relationships founded on trust, shared responsibility, and a commitment to steward siwtk^w for the next 250 years.

This growing recognition has also been reflected in media coverage, including a five-part feature series by IndigiNews that highlighted the CLT's innovative approach to watershed governance and Indigenous-led collaboration.

SCAN HERE



Photo Courtesy of Aaron Hemens, 2026 siwtk^w Water and Climate Forum

"We are going to need every government involved. We all have that equal responsibility."

- ýílmix^wm simo Chief Robert Louie, CLT Co-chair



FISHERIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

naqsmi?st ǵəl tmix^w

The relationship we have with this land and these waters is older than us, older than our Elders, and older than our ancestors. It is a connection that has carried through generations and continues to guide our responsibilities, our decisions, and our commitment to caring for nx^wəl x^wəltantət.

This year marked an important period of growth for the ONA as the Fisheries and Natural Resources departments undertook organizational restructuring to strengthen collaboration, improve program efficiency, foster a more unified approach to stewardship, and support the continued advancement of sux^wtxtem. These changes have created new opportunities to further embed Syilx cultural knowledge, strengthen technical expertise, and maximize our collective capacity in service of tmx^wulax^w, siw^{tk}w, and tmix^w.

At the heart of Fisheries and Natural Resources is a commitment to Syilx laws, values, and responsibilities. These principles guide our work to protect, restore, and enhance the natural ecosystems that sustain us.

Further, as our operations continue to grow, we remain committed to ensuring that Syilx cultural knowledge is foundational to our approach to technical support, guides how we advance important stewardship initiatives, and strengthens our collective relationship with tmx^wulax^w.

Across our communities, significant work continues to advance under the guidance of the NRC. This year marked another period of meaningful progress and achievement. We launched the Syilx Forestry Principles and Standards, establishing a framework that reflects Syilx values and stewardship. We celebrated the historic opening of the Okanagan Fish Dam, a landmark achievement that has since received international recognition.

This year was not only defined by the work completed, but by the pathways and important partnerships created for the future. Each initiative – from restoring salmon pathways, defending water, strengthening habitat, advancing forestry standards, and safeguarding Syilx knowledge – represents a step toward rebuilding and reaffirming our relationship with tmx^wulax^w. As Fisheries and Natural Resources continues to grow, we remain focused on creating lasting change rooted in Syilx leadership, so future generations inherit a Territory where relationships, reciprocity, and the natural world continue to thrive.

ks_kəʔqayx^wntim iʔ siwʔk^w naʔʔ tmx^wulax^w

As Fisheries and Natural Resources continues to grow, we remain focused on creating lasting change rooted in Syilx leadership, so future generations inherit a territory where relationships, reciprocity, and the natural world continue to thrive.

Driven by collaboration, technical expertise, and stewardship, we dedicated ourselves to building partnerships throughout 2025-2026 to deliver impactful projects that align with the Nation's priorities and commitments.

píluʔaʔx^w: Planting and Preservation Project

Launched in 2023 in Syilx eastern territory, this initiative was established to propagate native riparian plants for the Lower Columbia Ecosystem Enhancement Project. In 2025, the focus shifted to preparing for large-scale propagation by expanding the herbarium and developing native seed collection, storage, and preservation systems. This work lays the foundation for future restoration efforts and supports the ongoing healing of the tmx^wulax^w for generations to come.

Evaluating Speckled Dace Critical Habitat

In Canada, the endangered Speckled Dace is found only in the Kettle River watershed. This year, population surveys in the Kettle, West Kettle, and Granby rivers assessed whether federally designated Critical Habitat Areas are supporting species recovery. Surveys estimated 4,392-6,905 fish in the Kettle River, 1,300-7,963 in the West Kettle River, and 1-71 in the Granby River. Preliminary results suggest only the West Kettle Critical Habitat Area may currently meet Fisheries and Oceans Canada's recovery target, with additional surveys planned to confirm these findings.

Wildlife Habitat Monitoring Post Burn

As part of a collaborative project with the Province of BC and Syilx communities, ONA supported the protection of Blotched Tiger Salamanders in the Shrike Hill Wildlife Habitat Area. This year, surveys and eDNA analysis found no evidence of invasive goldfish, indicating the wetland is recovering.

Waterloo Eddy Regional Park

ONA continued restoration work at Waterloo Eddy Regional Park with RDCK to improve habitat resilience. Restoration included planting 226 native plants from 13 species and removing invasive species from more than 2,300 square metres with the support of 26 volunteers. Early monitoring indicates the plantings are establishing well and contributing to long-term ecosystem recovery.

Endangered Sturgeon Recovery

Recovery efforts for White Sturgeon in the Arrow Lakes achieved encouraging results this year. Near Revelstoke, 32 eggs and 3 larvae were collected to support the conservation hatchery program. Surveys also documented 24 juvenile White Sturgeon between Shelter Bay Provincial Park and Blanket Creek Provincial Park—the highest annual count since monitoring began in 2007, tied with one previous year.



Dove Hill Ecosystem Enhancement Project

ONA is leading a 5-year project at Dove Hill, sn̓uxw̓qnm - Castlegar, to enhance brush land health, protect native plant diversity and restore fire resiliency. Impacted by fire exclusion and invasive species, the project will plant fire-adapted species, manage invasive species and re-introduce low intensity fire. ONA's nursery based in sn̓uxw̓qnm is currently growing 9,000 bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue and Junegrass to support project needs, and plant at Dove Hill in the fall. 2025 work crews on Dove Hill:

- Manually removed invasive plants over an area of more than 21,000 square meters along the trail network
- Planted 681 plants from 21 different native species at two planting sites
- Spread more than 40 kg of native grass seed mix along the trail network
- Installed temporary plant identification signs with ns̓ilxc̓ən, English and scientific names
- Installed permanent project signs to inform trail users of restoration goals and activities.
- Collected data to help plan further restoration activities

To date, the project has planted approximately 1,100 native grass plugs, with an additional 15,000 (9,000 grown by our team and 6,000 provided by partners) scheduled for planting in fall of 2026. Partner crews have manually removed invasive species from approximately 35,000 m², and work is underway to install permanent cultural and ecological interpretive signage.

Emergency Management

Since 2020, the emerging ONA Emergency Management program demonstrates the CEC commitments to support the critical role our Nation must have to be directly involved BC and Federal Governments planning, policy development and program delivery regarding all aspects of Emergency management services. This year focused on rebuilding and establishing a strong foundation for a coordinated, Nation-led Emergency Management program.

Key accomplishments included strengthening governance, re-establishing the Emergency Management Working Group under the NRC, building relationships with communities and external partners, and supporting emergency coordination during response events. Efforts also focused on identifying funding and training opportunities and engaging leadership and community members to inform the development of a Syilx Emergency Management Plan.

Next steps will focus on advancing planning, strengthening communications and coordination, and building long-term Emergency Management capacity across the Nation.

Data Management

In 2025, ONA advanced its geospatial data management and mapping capabilities through the deployment of ESRI Enterprise, strengthening secure management of Nation-controlled geospatial data and supporting Syilx data sovereignty. Work continued to support the development of the ONA Geospatial Portal and the creation of data access mechanisms that enable appropriate use of geospatial information by communities, ONA staff, partners, and the public. This included establishing the tools, infrastructure, and custom workflows needed to support different levels of data access, including groundwork for future Nation-based deployments such as the Okanagan Indian Band's geospatial system under ONA licensing.

ONA also partnered with BC Parks to develop a workflow for monitoring grasslands using drone-based multispectral imagery and Earth observation (satellite) near-infrared data. We mapped small grassland parcels in the South Okanagan with a multispectral drone and analyzed the data to explore species identification.

ONA GIS initiatives continued to support the FNRD by providing spatial analysis and mapping for projects such as grizzly bear habitat, watersheds, wildfire urban interface and flood hazard identification which all contributes to highlighting the critical importance of Syilx Data governance.

Syilx Forestry Principles and Standards

A Forestry Stewardship Plan for the Next 7 Generations

A major milestone this year was the completion of the Syilx Forestry Principles & Standards, a Nation-level framework that outlines how forest ecosystems should be managed within Syilx Okanagan territory according to Syilx law, values, and responsibilities.

Designed as a stewardship guide for the next seven generations, the document provides clear direction for forestry practitioners, licensees, tenure holders, and government agencies working within Syilx territory. Its goal is to ensure forest management supports healthy ecosystems, protects biodiversity, reduces wildfire risk, and upholds Syilx Title and Rights.

"Forests need to be recognized as oxygen producers."

– ýilmixʷm naspəpʷsəs Dan Wilson

The Principles & Standards are the result of more than a decade of collaboration among Syilx communities, the Natural Resource Committee, Elders, knowledge holders, forestry professionals, and the ONA tmxʷulaxʷ Working Group. Beginning in 2018, community-based forestry approaches from across the Nation were brought together into a single framework grounded in the Syilx environmental ethic and traditional ecological knowledge.

As forestry and climate-related pressures continue to impact forests across the territory, this living document provides a foundation for collaborative stewardship, clearer expectations for industry and government, and a pathway toward healthier, and more resilient landscapes.





syilx

FORESTRY PRINCIPLES



The syilx Forestry Principles are based on comprehensive syilx teachings passed through oral history and *captik^w* that respect syilx responsibility to the *tmix^w*— all living things, the *siwt^k^w*-water, and the *tmx^wulax^w*— land. These principles have stood the test of time and proven their utility over thousands of years — providing harmony between syilx lands, waters, living things, and the people.

These living and evolving syilx-centric forestry practices are grounded in time-honoured syilx knowledge and also live within the context of contemporary forest management, complemented by western science, and rooted in the community-based perspectives and experiences of each syilx community.

PRINCIPLE 1 Syilx rights, responsibilities, laws and protocols are recognized and upheld.

PRINCIPLE 2 Effective stewardship and restoration of ecosystems is demonstrated for 7 generations.

PRINCIPLE 3 *siwt^k^w*— Water is protected.

PRINCIPLE 4 Ecological integrity and resilience are maintained and enhanced at the landscape level.

PRINCIPLE 5 Ecological integrity and resilience are maintained and enhanced at the stand level.

PRINCIPLE 6 Natural processes are maintained, enhanced, or restored.

PRINCIPLE 7 Healthy and resilient ecosystems foster community well-being.

PRINCIPLE 8 Collaborative processes and accountability are demonstrated.

PRINCIPLE 9 Syilx people receive a fair share of the economic benefits.





Photo Courtesy of Aaron Hemens, Bighorn Sheep Pen Visit in snpink'tn

naqsmiʔst ǰəl tmiᑦw

Syilx people have always cared for and managed wildlife and ecosystems as part of our inherent responsibility to sustain life on our territory.

yilíkʷlxkn Big Horn Sheep Clinical Trial

ONA continues to address Psoroptic Mange in yilíkʷlxkn -bighorn sheep through a 15-18-month clinical trial involving approximately 28 infested sheep to evaluate treatment options.

In 2025, treatment drugs were successfully administered to all sheep, and monitoring is underway to assess treatment effectiveness and duration of protection. To evaluate reinfestation rates, control animals were introduced into treatment pens. Early results show that mange symptoms have largely cleared in sheep from two treatment groups, while the group receiving moxidectin alone did not respond successfully.

The project also reached an important milestone with the birth of ten lambs during the reporting period. Ongoing monitoring will assess treatment longevity, reinfestation, and herd health, providing guidance for future disease management and supporting the long-term conservation and recovery of bighorn sheep.



Explore more clinical trial coverage by CBC

Mule Deer Camera Grid

The 50-camera mule deer monitoring grid continued to support winter range monitoring through a partnership with Penticton Indian Band, the Province of British Columbia, and UBC Okanagan. All cameras were serviced to support ongoing research and management of mule deer and their winter habitat.

Aerial Inventory

Collaborative wildlife inventories provide essential information to support stewardship decisions, protect culturally important species, and uphold food sovereignty. In March 2026, ONA co-led aerial paʔpaʔiʔácaʔ - moose inventories with the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship in the Similkameen Valley and Mabel Lake areas to update population data. ONA also co-led an aerial yilíkʷlxkn - bighorn sheep inventory in the Ashnola-Similkameen population unit, providing updated data to support ongoing monitoring, management, and Psoroptic Mange recovery efforts.

ki?lawna? - Grizzly Bear

ONA continues to be actively involved in the First Nation Grizzly Bear Working Group (FNGBWG) that is referred to as the Joint Nation Grizzly Bear Initiative. ONA supports this Initiative's work which continued in 2025 to advance grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades. Key achievements included expanding community outreach, identifying priority habitat restoration and connectivity areas, developing draft Grizzly Bear Backcountry Protection Zones, and completing recovery, translocation, monitoring, and coexistence plans. Technical work continues and the FNGBWG continues to meet quarterly to support recovery efforts and proposed grizzly relocations.

Okanagan Highlands Monitoring Program

The Okanagan Highlands ki?lawna? - Grizzly Bear Monitoring Program detected 3 ki?lawna? within the camera grid. These efforts continue to support important baseline information and understanding of occupancy, habitat use and connectivity.

Education and Reconciliation

This past year partners participated in a Table Talk, a process developed by kinSHIFT and IndigenEYEZ that supports respectful dialogue and learning around Reconciliation and the 94 Calls to Action. The ONA water cluster delivered its first Table Talk sessions with 6 staff members at the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, creating space for reflection, relationship-building, and increased understanding of the experiences and histories of Syilx communities. Additional sessions are planned to continue strengthening reconciliation efforts and partnership through the Collaborative Leadership Table. To learn more about KinSHIFT visit: kinshift.ca



Species at Risk

ONA continued wildlife monitoring and species-at-risk stewardship across the territory.

- A network of 30 remote trail cameras monitored mesocarnivores and documented a total of 52 wildlife species, including Canadian Lynx, American Marten, American Badger, and North American River Otter.
- Bat monitoring near Peachland recorded 7 bat species, contributing to long-term population monitoring.
- Yellow-breasted Chat surveys in the West Kootenays confirmed a stable breeding population through nest monitoring and banding.
- Western Screech Owl surveys expanded with 5 additional VHF-tagged owls to improve understanding of movement and territory use.
- ONA also strengthened partnerships with Syilx communities and federal and provincial agencies through the Species at Risk Tri-lateral Working Group, highlighting Indigenous-led habitat restoration that supports the recovery of multiple species at risk.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

This year, ONA supported three Syilx-led freezer drop-off locations and facilitated the testing of 22 chronic wasting disease (CWD) samples, all of which returned negative results. Throughout the hunting season, a targeted social media campaign encouraged Syilx hunters to submit samples for testing while raising awareness about the importance of CWD monitoring. ONA also strengthened its role as a trusted partner for Syilx hunters by serving as a liaison with the Province, helping ensure anonymous sample submissions, reducing barriers to participation, and supporting greater involvement in the provincial CWD monitoring program.

Okanagan Lake Fish Dam Passage Achieved

A Historical Milestone

After years of dedication, advocacy, planning and perseverance, August 18th marked a historical milestone. More than 200 people joined to celebrate the opening of the klusxnitk[™] Okanagan Lake Fish Dam Passage in snpink'tn - Penticton. This transformative project restores fish access to Okanagan Lake for the first time in over 100 years, reconnecting over 350 km² of rearing habitat in Okanagan Lake and many tributaries for spawning habitat.



Project Lead Zoë Eyjolfson, ONA Fluvial Geomorphologist seen here with part of her construction project team.

- The Fish Passage has significant positive environmental impacts as supports:
- Reconnection of fish and wildlife access between the Okanagan River and Okanagan Lake, bypassing the Okanagan Lake Outlet Dam
- Passage for all native salmonid species through consistent flows, depths, and fishway design
- An adjustable invasive species barrier to deter upstream movement into Okanagan Lake
- Continued dam operations, including during drought and fluctuating lake levels
- Low-maintenance, operational efficiency in long-term management
- A monitoring station for research and adaptive management
- Enhanced riparian and upland habitat for native wildlife, including species at risk
- No increase in flood risk to infrastructure or public safety

This is more than infrastructure, it is a cultural reconnection to the tmix[™] - all living things.

SCAN HERE



View the opening of the passage documented by Global News.

The Work Continues

Restoration Efforts at the Construction Site

As is common with large construction projects, the site was left with a significant amount of bare soil. With the support of 220 volunteers—including students from four schools, the Penticton Scouts, community groups, the Syilx Nation, and the public—we planted more than 500 native species in November 2025. These included, Saskatoon, Willow, Snowberry, Thimbleberry, Mock Orange, Birchleaf Spirea, Rose, Oregon Grape, Hawthorn, and Chokecherry.

Previously planted willows and cottonwoods have successfully established and are now dormant. Future plantings will be irrigated as needed based on soil moisture and temperature. Participants also learned about ONA-led fish and wildlife enhancement projects along the Okanagan River and toured the fish passage.



During construction, ONA staff tour Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship



View the Okanagan Dam Community Planting Day documented by Aaron Hemens, IndigiNews

Photo Courtesy of Aaron Hemens



Students from Outma Sqilx'w Cultural School planting

"For myself, to know that my kids will see many future generations of salmon coming back to their historic waters, it's a very special day."

- Okanagan Lake Dam Project Lead Zoë Eyjolfson, ONA Fluvial Geomorphologist

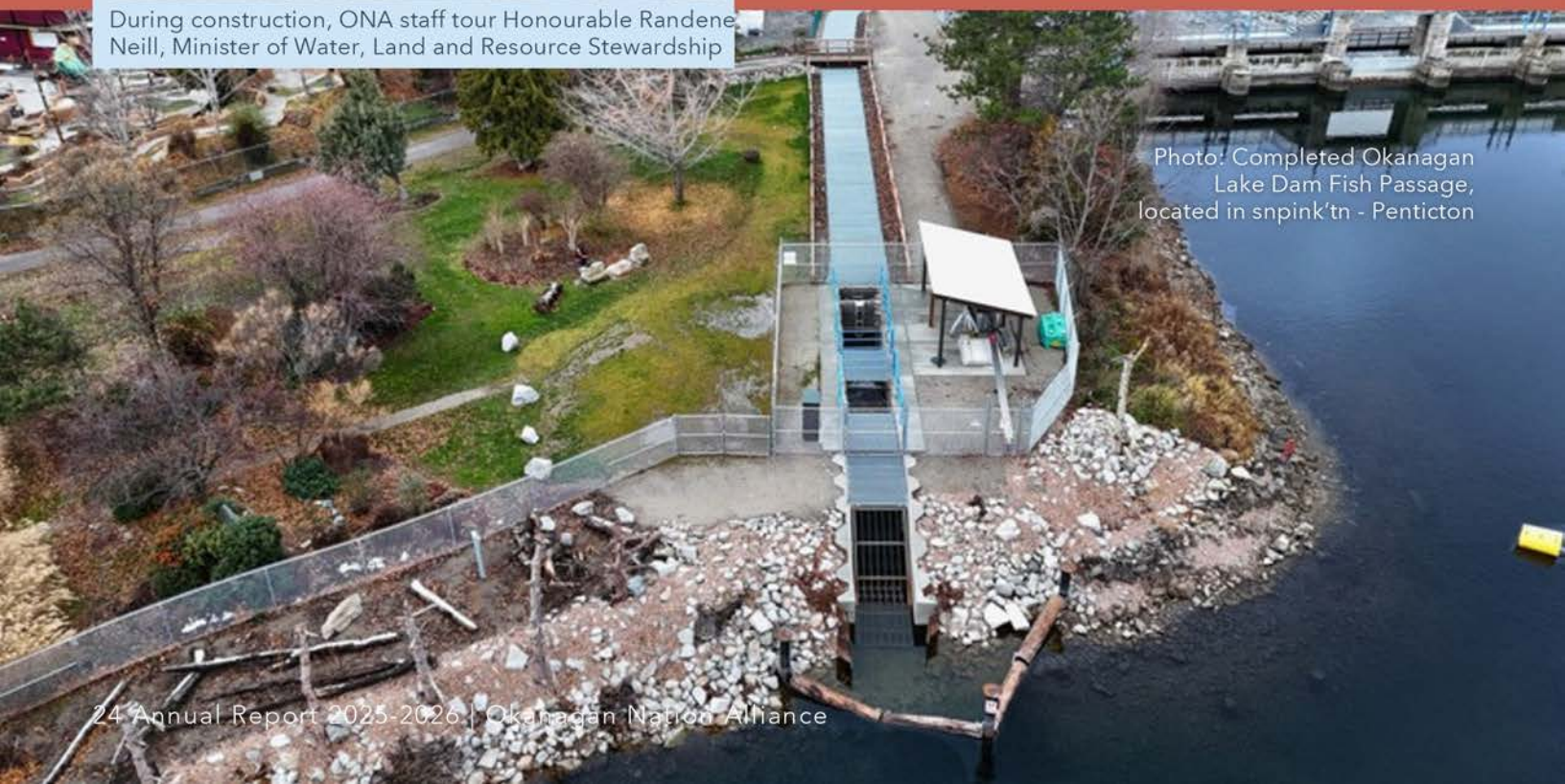


Photo: Completed Okanagan Lake Dam Fish Passage, located in snpink'tn - Penticton



kł cǫǎłk stím

kł cǫǎłk stím is an nsyilxcen term that roughly translates to “cause to come back”.

Broodstock

Despite below-average salmon returns to Okanagan spawning grounds, this year saw the first pilot broodstock collection in the Upper Columbia as part of the Bringing the Salmon Home Initiative.

Hydrometric Monitoring Network

In 2025, we collaborated with the Okanagan Basin Water Board to enhance hydrometric monitoring for water management and fisheries protection in the Okanagan Basin. A significant achievement was the installation of the Shorts Creek station, making ONA one of the first First Nation organizations in Canada to use NOAA GOES satellite telemetry in a hydrometric network. The expanded network now delivers reliable near-real-time data from 23 permanent stations, improving watershed stewardship and informed water management in the region.

Trans-Border Transport

A milestone in Chinook salmon restoration was achieved through the continued partnership between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation’s Chief Joseph Hatchery and the kłcǫǎłk stím Hatchery in snpink’tn. In 2025, permits were obtained for the first time to transport live adult broodstock, allowing 22 adult Chinook and more than 6,200 eyed Chinook salmon eggs to be successfully transferred nearly 200 kilometres north to the ONA hatchery. The transfer required careful planning, coordination, and strict handling protocols, including disease screening and veterinary inspection to ensure the health and survival of the fish. This continued collaboration supports the recovery of ntytyix impacted by dams and other barriers to migration.

nlux^wlux^włcwix - Lower Trout Creek Restoration

In 2025, ONA supported the Penticton Indian Band’s restoration efforts in nlux^wlux^włcwix (Lower Trout Creek) to improve salmonid habitat and watershed function. Phase 2 included channel widening, new riffles, and expanded spawning areas to enhance habitat diversity, reconnect the creek with its floodplain, and support long-term ecosystem recovery.



Salmon Passage: Wilsey Dam

Decommissioning of Wilsey Dam was approved by BC Hydro's Board of Directors as the preferred option to restore fish passage at Wilsey Dam. In 2025, ONA participated in a sediment transfer study and aquatic monitoring as an important step toward dam removal. Work by BC Hydro is now underway to prepare regulatory applications for removal of the dam to proceed. In addition, the Six-Mile Dam in Six Mile/Equesis Creek was fully removed, restoring natural river flow and fish passage to the system.

Fish in Schools (Fins)

The Fish in Schools Program had another successful year, remaining a cornerstone of ONA's salmon restoration education initiatives. The program engaged 41 schools in the Okanagan and approximately 30 in the Columbia region, providing about 3,700 sockeye salmon eggs for classroom learning. Through hands-on education and fry release ceremonies, students deepened their understanding of Syilx salmon culture and salmon stewardship.

Bringing the Salmon Home - Columbia River Salmon Restoration Initiative (CRSRI)

In 2025, the second year of the adult Okanagan River sockeye translocation and spawning study under CRSRI, adult sockeye were again moved to the Arrow Lakes area near Revelstoke to assess their spawning behaviour and potential contribution to salmon restoration efforts.

This year marked a significant milestone for salmon reintroduction in the Upper Columbia. Juvenile sockeye released into Arrow and Slocan lakes successfully migrated to the Columbia River estuary, while returning adults from the 2023 ceremonial releases reached Wells Dam, approaching Chief Joseph Dam. These achievements demonstrate important progress toward restoring salmon to their historic Upper Columbia habitats.

Ensuring Healthy ntytyix

Working primarily behind the scenes, the ONA Fisheries Laboratory provides essential scientific support for Fisheries programs throughout the year.

ONA Biologists conduct a wide range of monitoring, testing, and sample processing to support hatchery operations, fish health, population monitoring, and research initiative.

Statistics

Every sample collected, fish counted, habitat monitored, and project completed contributes to a growing body of knowledge that supports the stewardship of Syilx lands and waters. Behind each statistic is years of planning, fieldwork, technical expertise, partnerships, and community investment.

These figures provide a snapshot of the work undertaken this year, but they also demonstrate something larger: FNRD's capacity to generate, manage, and govern the data needed to make informed decisions. Through successful funding partnerships and project delivery, ONA continues to build and maintain long-term datasets that strengthen fisheries and habitat management, support Syilx food sovereignty, and advance the exercise of Syilx Title and Rights. By leading this work and stewarding the information it produces, ONA ensures that decisions affecting Syilx Territory are increasingly informed by Syilx knowledge, priorities, and evidence.

Columbia	Invasive Monitoring	
	12 Northern Pike removed from the Columbia River	6 Locations tested for invasive mussels (all negative)

Columbia	Acoustic Smolt Releases		
	500 Juvenile Salmon tagged	80% of tagged salmon detected at Canada - U.S boarder	Migration Rates from 5 to 9 km/hour

Hatchery	Sockeye Eggs		Sockeye Fry		Chinook Fry
	449,312 Collected	77.0% Survival	332,169 Released	73.9% Survival	21,027 Released

kł cǰǰǰ stím Labratory

In 2025-2026, the lababratory accomplished the following:

- Sampled 375 Sockeye and 29 Chinook broodstock for biological measurements, hatchery origin, disease screening, tags, and/ or DNA analysis.
- Conducted routine IHN and BKD disease freedom testing on hatchery alevins and fry before ponding and release.
- Completed monthly water quality testing on hatchery inflow and outflow to ensure water quality standards were met. In Addition, Monthly water quality testing at Shingle Creek ensures hatchery operations meet environmental safety standards.
- Took Deadpitch samples from 14 different locations, and collected a total of 2585 Sockeye and Kokanee (majority were Kokanee) and 12 Chinook.
- Sampled 553 smolts from Okanagan, Skaha, and Osoyoos Lakes for biological data, hatchery origin, tags, and DNA.
- Processed 3,045 nerkids through the Acoustic Trawl Survey, including 185 from Okanagan Lake, 845 from Skaha Lake, 1,507 from Osoyoos Lake, and 508 from Wenatchee Lake.
- Completed mysid monitoring in Skaha and Osoyoos Lakes, collecting data on size, maturity, fecundity, and stomach contents.

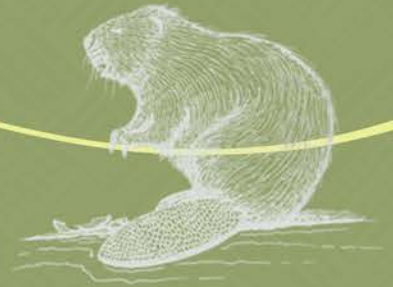
stunx, Beaver Mimicry

Reviving the Wetlands

In 2024, we launched our first beaver mimicry pilot project along Coteay Creek, a tributary of akskwakwant - Inkaneep Creek in the upper watershed above swiws - Osoyoos. Working alongside the Osoyoos Indian Band and the B.C. Wildlife Federation, we set out to restore natural water processes and revitalize an important wetland ecosystem.

The project began after wetland assessments identified 37 former beaver dams spanning five kilometres of Coteay Creek, revealing the lasting impact of beavers on the landscape despite their absence for decades.

In 2025, the project moved into full implementation. This year, we installed eight Beaver Dam Analogues (BDAs) and eight Post-Assisted Log Structures (PALS) along a one-kilometre section of Coteay Creek. Designed to mimic the natural functions of beaver dams, these structures slow water flow, trap sediment, reconnect floodplains, and improve wetland conditions.



Historically, stunx, beavers, were abundant throughout Syilx territory. As a keystone species, their dams stored water, created habitat, and sustained healthy ecosystems. Restoring these natural functions helps strengthen watershed resilience to climate change, drought, and habitat degradation.

The results were visible almost immediately. As the structures were installed, water levels began rising behind them, creating deeper pools and allowing water to spread into adjacent floodplain areas.

Over time, these restored wetland conditions are expected to improve water retention, support cooler stream temperatures, enhance fish habitat, and increase biodiversity throughout the watershed. This work also supports a longer-term vision: creating conditions that encourage stunx to return and once again help maintain these systems naturally.

SCAN HERE



View our Beaver Mimicry project, documented by Aaron Hemens, IndigiNews



Photos Courtesy of Aaron Hemens, Indiginews



AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF TMIX^W

knknxtəwix̱

Through each gathering, printed word, and digital expression, we make space for Syilx presence to be seen, heard, and recognized.

The ONA Communications Team provides strategic communications support to the overall organization. These supports ensure that key audiences are made aware of specific ONA actions – raising awareness of the organization and increasing its profile throughout the territory. Specifically, our strategic communication approach utilizes ONA's programs and projects to demonstrate Syilx governance in action, while also promoting Syilx culture, language and people as a means of affirming Nationhood, enhancing unity and asserting Title and Rights.

The 2025-2026 fiscal year has been a highly productive time for the ONA's Communications Team – with successful actions, new and innovative communication systems put in place, alongside lessons learned. By accounting for the full range of work completed by the team we showcase how capacity development has allowed for the upscaling of ONA communication presence and efforts, while also highlighting potential ways to move forward with further communication goals in the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

sq̓yq̓ays tmix^W Posters and Blankets

The ONA created tmix^W-themed alphabet posters and baby blankets to celebrate new life while strengthening cultural identity from a child's earliest days. Furthering Syilx teachings, the blankets provide families with a meaningful connection to culture and language reinforcing that every new generation is born with an inherent connection to tmix^W and Syilx ways of being.



nsyilxcən Flashcards

To support language revitalization efforts, the ONA developed an updated set of nsyilxcən flashcards designed to make language learning more accessible for children, families, educators, and community members. The resource encourages everyday use of the language while helping strengthen intergenerational learning.

iʔ sqw əsqw asiʔyatt iʔ sncəwɪptt ul
kt'ək'wɪlaʔmsix iʔ nk'wl'mntt

*Our children are our roots and everything we teach
them is their responsibility to carry on.*

Building a Generation of səxʷtxətnitkʷ

Communications materials developed for the 2026 siwʷtkʷ Water and Climate Forum helped create a cohesive visual identity while reinforcing the importance of siwʷtkʷ as a living relative. Through educational signage, banners, and supporting materials, the forum provided opportunities for participants to learn, connect, and discuss collective responsibilities for protecting water throughout Syilx Territory.

n̓xəsitkʷ akl̓ c'ay̓xaʔ

Waters with crayfish are good waters. Educational shirts and decals featuring c'ay̓xaʔ -crayfish were developed to support public awareness of this species-at-risk. By combining engaging design with educational messaging, these resources encouraged community members to recognize the impacts invasive species have on native ecosystems and the role everyone plays in protecting local waterways.



ONA Project Showcase: Honourable Randene Neill, WLRS Minister, and Honourable Stephen Fuhr, MP

The ONA coordinated site visits for the Provincial Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and Member of Parliament (Kelowna) to experience key conservation and restoration initiatives firsthand, including the Okanagan Mountain – k'nmalka Wildlife Corridor, Bighorn Sheep Pens, and the Okanagan Dam Fish Passage. These visits strengthened relationships with government partners while showcasing the Nation's leadership in wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and collaborative stewardship.

Reaching National Audiences Through The CCMA Awards

As the Canadian Country Music Association (CCMA) Awards came to Kelowna on Syilx Territory, the ONA worked to ensure the Syilx Okanagan Nation was meaningfully represented on one of Canada's largest entertainment stages. By coordinating a Syilx land acknowledgment and cultural performance, the ONA helped welcome thousands of visitors and national audiences—creating space for Indigenous voices, culture, and identity to be recognized and celebrated. The initiative demonstrated the importance of Indigenous representation at major events while strengthening awareness of the Syilx Okanagan Nation's enduring connection to its lands, history, and living culture.



Creating Presence on the Land

Okanagan Dam Fish Passage

New interpretive signage installed at the Okanagan Dam highlights the significance of the fish passage project and the return of salmon to Okanagan Lake. The signage shares Syilx perspectives alongside scientific information, helping visitors better understand the cultural, ecological, and historical importance of salmon restoration within Syilx territory.

Myra Canyon, Giant's Head, and Kettle River Signage

The ONA advanced its presence across Syilx territory through the development of culturally significant interpretive signage at Myra Canyon, ackt̓t'pus (Giant's Head), and Kettle River locations. These installations help reclaim and share Syilx history, language, and connections to the land while educating visitors about the enduring presence and responsibilities of the Syilx People.



ackt̓t'pus -Giant's Head Signage



Myra Canyon Interpretive Signage

sʔaʔʔam tə spaʔaʔt

A path toward reconciliation and decolonization through educational resources and tools.

Enhancing The Fish in Schools Curriculum

A series of educational videos and posters were developed to support the Fish in Schools (FinS) program and classroom learning across Syilx Okanagan territory. The resources introduce students to the salmon life cycle, Syilx connection to ntytyix, and the importance of salmon restoration while inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards.

A Journey Through 13 Moons

The annual 13 Moon Calendar continued to share seasonal knowledge by connecting traditional moon cycles with cultural teachings, language, harvesting practices, and the natural world. The calendar serves as both an educational resource and a reminder of the deep relationships between Syilx people, tmixʷ, and the changing seasons.

Connecting Syilx Families Through Art

Art has connected Syilx people to the land, our captikʷt, and ancestral knowledge, using natural materials and modern mediums to tell stories of identity, history, and reciprocity. With this in mind, a colouring book was created to support the Family Decision Making program by providing children and families with an engaging way to learn about Syilx values, culture and family connections, while reinforcing identity and belonging through creative learning.

ut way təsxʷuy

Preserving and sharing Syilx knowledge through storytelling, interviews, and visual experiences.

Our Connection to siwtkʷ

The release of the ONA's new water video brought Syilx voices, knowledge, and perspectives to a broader audience, emphasizing the sacred relationship between people and siwtkʷ. Featuring Syilx youth and elder knowledge holders, the film encourages collective responsibility for protecting the land and water for future generations.

Promoting Syilx Men's Health

As part of Movember, the ONA shared a series of interviews encouraging open conversations about men's health and wellness. Featuring personal stories and messages from community members, the campaign promoted mental health awareness, help-seeking, and the importance of supporting one another.

Capturing Syilx Knowledge, Voices, and Stories

A series of interviews documenting the knowledge and oral histories of Syilx Elders were recorded to help preserve important oral histories for future generations. The project contributes to the ongoing protection of cultural knowledge while ensuring community stories continue to be shared in the voices of those who lived them.

"As much as it is our territory and it is our land and our right to be a keeper of the land, it should be the responsibility of everyone to take care of this water and the animals and all the things that aren't able to stand up for themselves."

- Kelaya Allison-Squakin

Gathering for Nationhood

Events celebrated achievements, provided updates, strengthened partnerships, and elevated Syilx voices on cultural revitalization, environmental stewardship, and community wellbeing.

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Annual

July 2025

- Border Crossing Canoe Paddle
- Water Webinar - Beaver Mimicry
- WLRS Minister and Kelowna MP On The Land Tours
- Annual General Assembly and Youth Leadership Gathering

August 2025

- First Speakers Gathering
- Okanagan Dam Passage Opening
- Elders Luncheon Picnic

September 2025

- nəqsiltə Family Declaration Presentation, PIB
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission
- Water Webinar - Food Sovereignty
- CRSRI Tri-Nation Gathering
- Salmon Feast
- Walk for the Children

October 2025

- River Restoration Workshop
- Pacific Salmon Treaty Tours
- CRSRI Salmon Warriors
- Syilx Hunting Camp

7

Non-Annual

15

Workshops

April 2025

- Business-to-Business Forum
- Grandmothers Gathering
- River Restoration Workshop
- Elders Spring Luncheon
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month Workshop
- Collaborative Leadership Table

May 2025

- xʷəxʷmínaʔ -Trout Fishery
- Sockeye Fry Release Ceremonies, Skaha Lake, Lower Vernon Creek, Six Mile Creek, Mission Creek
- Family Declaration Presentation, USIB
- Sockeye Fry Release Ceremonies, Castlegar, Slocan, Revelstoke
- Chinook Fry Release Ceremonies, Spallumcheen River, OK Falls

June 2025

- Spirit of Syilx Unity Run, Duncan Dam to snxʷutxstn, Mica Dam
- Chinook Fry Release Ceremonies, Salmon River
- Salmon Calling Ceremonies, Kettle Falls, Castlegar, Slocan, Revelstoke, McIntyre, Enloe

6

Engagements

November 2025

- Elder's Luncheon
- Collaborative Leadership Table
- Water Webinar - Our Ancient Species
- Cultivating Safe Spaces
- Vees Truth & Reconciliation Night
- Suicide Prevention Skills Training

December 2025

- captikʷ Forum 1
- First Speakers Gathering
- YES Specialized Training

January 2026

- YES Digital Safety For Youth

February 2026

- captikʷ Forum 2
- YES Digital Safety For Youth
- Collaborative Leadership Table
- Water Webinar - ntmqtqen Community Garden
- Water Safety Workshops
- Youth-Focused Facilitator Training

March 2026

- ʔəxəxʷap -Elders & Knowledge Keepers Gathering
- Water Safety Workshops
- Youth Winter Wellness
- YES Digital Safety For Youth
- YES Frontline Wellness
- captikʷ Forum 2
- Initial Fry Release Ceremony
- siwʔkʷ Water & Climate Forum



ǰǰli kʷu sqilxʷ

Event Highlights



siwłkʷ Water and Climate Forum

In honour of World Water Day, we hosted the 2026 siwłkʷ Water and Climate Forum, bringing together Syilx Nation leadership, local government representatives, technical experts, Knowledge Holders, and more than 300 community participants from across the Okanagan and Similkameen watersheds to advance dialogue and collaboration on water and climate. Grounded in Syilx law and values, the forum featured keynote presentations from local, regional and international speakers such as Dr. Jeannette Armstrong, Gwen Bridge, Dr. Nuria Hernández-Mora, and Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson, and panels with Collaborative Leadership Table (CLT) members and ONA technical experts. Over two full days, the forum created space for diverse perspectives to strengthen shared understanding of water governance, climate risks, and long-term stewardship through ceremony, storytelling, and dialogue.

The Forum aimed to raise awareness and engagement with the Collaborative Leadership Table and to inform the development of a 250-year Watershed Responsibility Plan. Key objectives included advancing Indigenous food and water sovereignty, strengthening regional co-governance, and identifying practical actions to respond to increasing environmental pressures. Outcomes of the forum included strengthened relationships across jurisdictions, increased alignment around long-term, Syilx-led governance, and the generation of actionable ideas to guide future planning and pilot initiatives and was overall a great success.

The Spirit of the Syilx Unity Run

The Spirit of Syilx Unity Run once again united youth, leadership, and communities across Syilx territory while raising awareness about suicide prevention, violence prevention, and community wellness. Daily video recaps and social media coverage extended the impact of the event, allowing members unable to attend to follow the journey and celebrate participants.

SCAN HERE



Unity Runners heading to snxł'utłxstn, Mica Dam

Photo Courtesy of Aaron Hemens, 2026 siwłkʷ Water and Climate Forum



Amplifying Our Presence

The ONA's social media platforms play a crucial role in engaging our communities, sharing voices of the Syilx Nation, and reaching a variety of audiences.

Throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the ONA continued to grow its digital presence by sharing educational and engaging content across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms. These channels remain vital for connecting with Nation members, partners, and the public by promoting community events, environmental stewardship, cultural education, emergency information, and organizational updates.

Bear Education Reels

A three-part video series on bear education was created in collaboration with Joint Nations, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Hope Mountain Centre. This series combines Syilx knowledge with insights into bear biology, habitat, and safety. Sharing the content across all four platforms significantly enhanced reach, engagement, and audience interactions.

This year, ONA social media gained:

2.8K

Facebook
Followers

757

Instagram
Followers

River Watcher Highlights

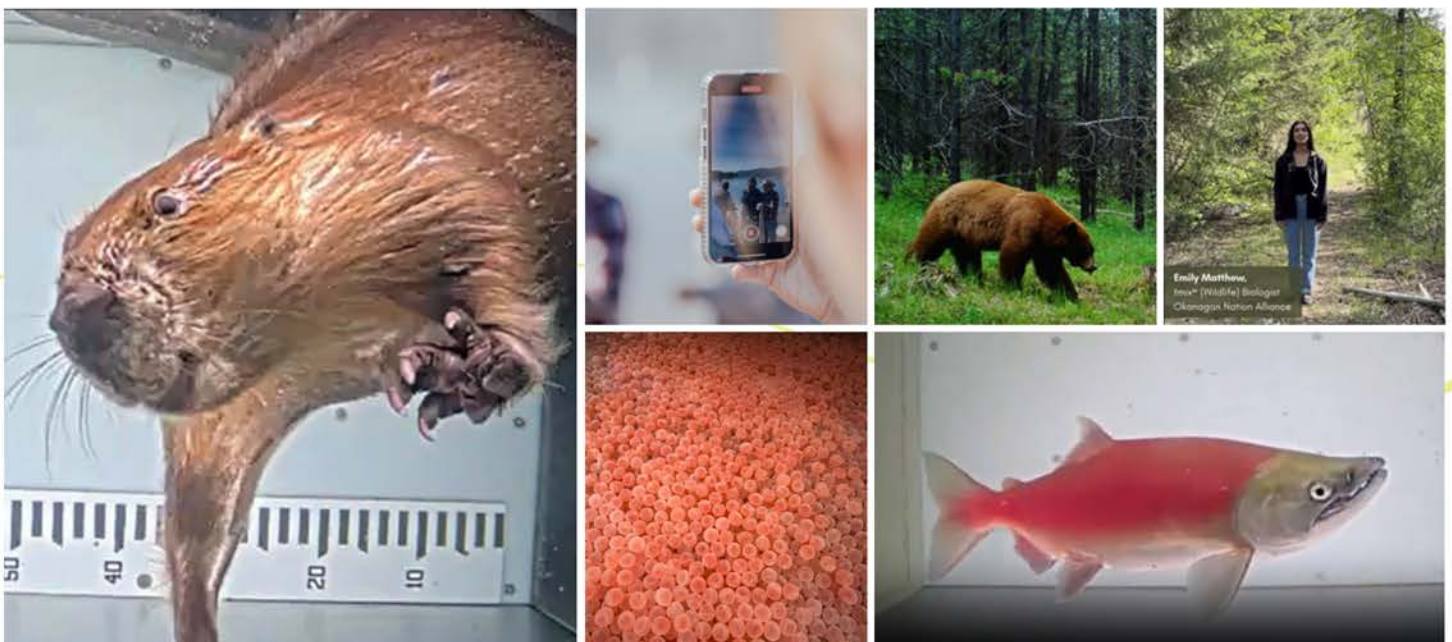
The River Watcher Highlights from the Okanagan Lake Dam Fish Passage continued to educate the public about respectful recreation and environmental stewardship along local waterways. A compilation of clips showcasing aquatic species as they navigate through the Fish Passage encouraged residents and visitors to help protect sensitive habitats, reduce impacts on wildlife, and become active stewards of the rivers that sustain all living things.

SCAN HERE



Trail Cam Tuesdays

Trail Cam Tuesdays continued to engage thousands of people online by sharing wildlife captured through remote monitoring cameras across Syilx Territory. The series not only showcased the incredible diversity of tmix[®] but also increased public understanding of wildlife behaviour, habitat conservation, and the important stewardship work being carried out by the ONA Natural Resources Department.



iscmynwíłn əc xʷəstustn k'l' isnxəʔcinəm

The Building a Better Initiative reflects our dedication to supporting the educational pursuits of Syilx Okanagan Nation Members.

2025 High School Recipients:



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by FortisBC

Abbey Coyne

Princeton Secondary School



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by EMB

Cashanea Holmes

Similkameen Elementary Secondary School



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by EMB

Dempsey Cohen

W.L. Seaton Secondary School



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by Okanagan Nation Alliance

Keanu Manuel

Merritt Secondary School



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by Okanagan Nation Alliance

Tehya Carpenter

Dutchess Park Secondary School



\$1000 Syilx Siya Award for High School
Sponsored by Okanagan Nation Alliance

Yakmaxn Louie

Similkameen Elementary Secondary School

2025 Post-Secondary Recipients:



\$1500 Education for Life
Sponsored by FortisBC

Nikki Marchand

University of British Columbia Okanagan,
MA of Indigenous Knowledges



\$1500 Education for Life
Sponsored by FortisBC

Kristen Pike

University of British Columbia Okanagan,
MA of Indigenous Knowledges



\$3500 Engineering Scholarship
Sponsored by EMB

Keilan Thompson

University of British Columbia Okanagan,
Bachelor of Applied Science



\$1500 Business Scholarship
Sponsored by EMB

skikaycin Peter Waardenburg Jr

Okanagan College,
Bachelors of Buisness



\$1500 Walking My Learning Forward
Sponsored by EMB

Cely-Rae Street

Thompson Rivers University,
Juris Doctor Law



\$1500 Walking My Learning Forward
Sponsored by EMB

Kara Ross

University of British Columbia Okanagan,
Masters of Education



\$1500 Progressive Fence Syilx Bursary
Sponsored by Progressive Fence

Grace Gallicano

University of British Columbia Okanagan,
Bachelor of Arts

These scholarships, bursaries, and awards recognize student perseverance and achievements to encourage our members to continue their educational pursuits.



SYILX WELLNESS

i? scXasəsmiltət

By working together as a Nation, we are able to share strengths, advocate more effectively, and leverage resources in a way that is only possible through collective capacity.

We collectively hold title and rights, carrying our sovereign responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of our people. We know that much of what once kept our Nation strong has been disrupted by colonization, including traditional family systems and self-determining ways.

For us, healing is not just an individual act, but also a collective one. We are working to break cycles and reclaim the strength of our Nation by living our values and revitalizing relationships. This includes reclaiming the concept of being sqilx^w and restoring sqilx^wca^wt teachings to their rightful place at the center of family and community life.

The ONA is committed to improving the wellbeing of Syilx people, both for present community members and for the stəlsqilx^w - the People to Be. The answers are already within us - held in our language, our stories, our relationship with the land, and in those who came before us.

We recognize collective responsibilities to all Syilx people, families, and communities

Community Driven

Community priorities drive ONA workplans. Wellness works under the mandate of the CEC with direction from Syilx Governance Representatives and the ONA Committees for Wellness, Education, and Indian Residential Schools. Annual strategic planning is done with the CEC and with community leads working in health, social development, and education to ensure alignment with needs of the people. ONA programs and services respond to community direction, providing programs and services that are complementary to communities.

Strength In Interdependence

We honour the teachings that have been passed down and are committed to ensuring that collective plans and programs resonate with sqilx^wca^wtət. The Nation's identity is nurtured by the people, for the people. The teachings from the Grandmothers are consistent: We must work together to reclaim our ways, to leave colonial systems of dependency and return to self-determining models of support. This is the focus of our collective efforts as Syilx people at the Nation level.

kʔulluʔsməntm

Syilx wellness is built on the strengths of our ancestors and the efforts of those who came before.

Building Capacity On the Ground

Wellness has responded to requests from communities by offering Syilx-rooted trainings that build capacity among staff and frontline workers in key areas including early years, youth, crisis response, and healing circles. These trainings move vital skills into communities as frontline workers become better able to engage members with greater impact.

Syilx People Gathering

An important part of Wellness activities is bringing families and communities together. These gatherings are more than just events—they contribute to our identity as one people with one language, culture, and history. Nation gatherings enable language speakers to talk to one another and create opportunities for those with cultural knowledge to share it with others. The diverse gatherings, whether forums or open houses or land-based camps, are spaces for reconnection and rebuilding the intertwining unity of our Nation.

ONA Wellness operates from the knowledge that answers lie in revitalizing the practices that support our collective wellbeing: language, land, captikʷł, community.

siʔskcʰwiplaʔtət

Work is underway to develop a Syilx Justice Strategy that is rooted in Syilx laws, language, and community engagement.

Keeping Communities Safe

Colonization, Indian residential schools, and systematic oppression normalized violence within our communities and families. One area of focus in the Nation Justice Strategy is exploring options for enforcing Syilx laws, particularly around keeping communities safe by being able to enforce the banishment of dangerous individuals. This is a complicated legal space, but progress is being made towards practical enforcement processes and reporting protocols. An important element of this work has been supporting individual communities, at their request, to build their own local justice plans. Work is ongoing with PIB, LSIB, and WFN.

Addressing the Justice System

Justice was not served in the recent case of a sex offender who posed as a medicine man and caused ongoing harm to the Syilx Nation. Now, an appeal is looking at how to target systemic harms within the court system and includes a possible Crown pilot project to reduce harm. Broader discussions about the intersection of Syilx jurisdiction and the provincial justice system took place with Attorney General Niki Sharma at a Special Chiefs Assembly on January 14, 2026 resulting in the appointment of Nicole Bresser, Assistant Deputy Minister, to build relations with Syilx communities.



Nationhood Highlight

Standing Ovation for Syilx Youth



In an unexpected moment at the close of the ONA AGA in Merritt last year, Syilx youth were recognized by the Nation with a standing ovation. Discovering themselves as leaders was the focus of the Youth Leadership Gathering, held alongside the AGA.

Over the 2-day gathering, 68 youth participated in learning about leadership including from a personal talk shared by Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, and then by exploring what leadership means in their own lives. Together, they dug deep and created a video about how they are already showing up as leaders in their families and communities.

Behind the scenes, the team worked through the night and the youth were able to present their video to the full AGA. The room erupted in applause. For many of these young people, it was the first time they had been publicly recognized as leaders—and to have it happen at a Nation gathering was powerful. Youth left with a clearer sense of who they are and what they are capable of doing.

Gatherings like this are an important part of the Youth Wellness program. In March 2026, the Winter Gathering brought youth together from 5 Bands for 3-days of culture, connection, and on-the-land activities. The traditional braiding workshop saw all of the youth, including the boys, participating and helping one other, taking pride in their culture, and making each other feel special.

Youth share that the impact of these gatherings include building new friendships and creating cross-community connections. They say they feel more confidence and pride in culture. These are the kinds of experiences that will stay with them as they step into adulthood with a stronger grounding in identity and belonging.

"We're still here. Our language is still here. Our culture is still here, and it's growing stronger. The young people are the face of our future and more and more of our young people are having successful educational outcomes. So, although there are great challenges in front of us, we have the capacity through our young people to meet those challenges - we have a great future in front of us."

- Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Syilx Youth Winter Gathering, March 2026





sk̓t̓r̓árt̓ət

Impacts of colonization, including residential schools and the 60's scoop, continue to be felt within our families and the process of healing is individual, collective, and multi-generational.

The Child and Family Policy Team seeks to support this healing work and the revitalization of our Syilx ways of being. An important aspect of the work includes Nation-level advocacy and Syilx Governance Representative engagement with the provincial and federal governments.

Fighting Poverty with Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle is about getting substantive equality for First Nations children by giving them the health, social, and educational supports they need in order to have an equal chance to grow and thrive. ONA Service Coordinators support families with their submissions and report that requests continue to surge. Caseloads are larger, more complex, and involve urgent health and safety needs. Complex files include autism and developmental supports, mental health and trauma, medical equipment and therapies, and—notably—a growing need for housing and safety supports.

Poverty is playing a larger role, with a quarter of submissions being for basic family supports including food, clothing, childcare fees, and household essentials like furniture and bedding. While health and education services make up the majority of requests, the impact of poverty on Syilx children is likely to increase in the coming year. This underlines the importance of the advocacy work at the BC Jordan's Principle Committee and sub-sector tables to address delays, gaps, and navigation issues with the federal system. It is noteworthy that Service Coordinators opened files for 250 children this past year with \$1.2 million in funding approved for diverse and timely supports for our children.

Le Estcwicwéy

The impact of the Kamloops Indian Residential School on our families has been grievous. Since 2021, with the ground penetrating radar identification of over 200 potential unmarked gravesites on the grounds of the former school, the Syilx Nation has remained steadfast in our commitment to bring truth to light and ensure justice for the missing children and their families.

Those directly impacted by the Kamloops Indian Residential School must take the lead in determining the path forward. Secwépemc Knowledge Keepers have emphasized that the spirits of the missing children are guiding this work to bring our families, communities, and Nations together. In line with this, the Syilx Indian Residential School Committee is nearing completion on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process that is inclusive of the Nations from which the majority of students came: Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, and Syilx Nations.

The MOU addresses rights and responsibilities for the sensitive work of identifying connections with Le Estcwicwéy through DNA analysis of living and willing Survivors and relatives. It creates processes for ensuring each Nation has multiple representatives involved with regular communications channels in place. An advisory body of Knowledge Keeper genealogists will work with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc to contact family members, working collaboratively with families to decide on the best way to honour the children in accordance with Syilx protocols.

Those Who Have Syilx In Their Mouth

Reclaiming the language is reclaiming our way of life. Elders have told us that teaching nsyilxcən and telling captíkʷł are vital ways to ground young people in identity, worldview, and the moral frameworks that define Syilx laws.

As directed by the CEC, the ONA is working with language speakers to bring nsyilxcən into the work of Wellness—these include holding gatherings for First Speakers and using the language to inform planning like the Data Principles and axá i? scountət i? tl ǰaʔxítət ǰl i? nəqsíltət—Family Declaration.

First Speakers Gathering

This year's gathering for language speakers (May 10-12, 2025) was an important space for speakers to reconnect, share concerns, and explore possibilities. Revitalizing nsyilxcən and identifying steps for implementing l? syilx i? sukʷnaqinx scqʷəlqʷilət—Syilx Language Declaration is a goal of the CEC and communities, with the need to protect the language becoming more pressing as our fluent speakers grow older. Building on work begun in previous gatherings, this year's event was an opportunity for speakers to contribute to nsyilxcən curriculum and offer advice on the development of Syilx Declarations and articulating Syilx laws and values.

sqilxʷcaʷtət Framework

Data Governance is a Nation priority and the planning work supporting this is being grounded in nsyilxcən, reflecting the importance of this work in strengthening Nation authority and guiding how data is respected, protected, and used.

Data Values and Principles are being developed, ensuring that all future data initiatives are grounded in cəpcaptikʷł teachings and self-determined practices. nsyilxcən is central to the work of developing a sqilxʷcaʷtət Indicator Framework to express wellness stories at the individual, community, and Nation level.

axá i? scountət i? tl ǰaʔxítət ǰl i? nəqsíltət

Three more communities (WFN, PIB, USIB) made time for presentations of the axá i? scountəti? tl ǰaʔxítət ǰl i? nəqsíltət—Family Declaration, and the final community that hasn't received the Declaration is choosing a date. At these presentations, Community Elders who worked on the Declaration shared the importance of using it today and for future generations.

Going forward, 3 Nation members who worked on the Family Declaration will support development of a curriculum about what the Declaration means to children, youth and adults. Work is ongoing to explore how the Family Declaration can be used as a foundation in the development of a codified syilx Nation Family Law with the working group of Elder Language Speakers and Knowledge Keepers from each community. This work is being done primarily in nsyilxcən to ensure the foundation is built in our language.



nák^wulamntət

At both Community and Nation levels, Syilx people are engaged in collective visioning for the future of our families and communities.

A central thread of this work is the desire to reclaim identity and build strength through the return to traditional systems of mutual support and cultural teachings. The voices of our Elders tell us that this requires patience, humility, and persistence. We honour that relearning is not a weakness—it's a return to strength.

The contemporary landscape of Syilx wellbeing is a complex space that includes multiple partners and challenges ranging from ensuring culturally safe care, responding to crises, and navigating system transformation. The ONA Policy and Planning Team supports community and Nation initiatives to build a collaborative approach to wellbeing that is driven by community voices, as well as being aligned with effective use of resources. Connecting with Nation members is a focus of the work, as is advocating for funding and bringing resources closer to communities. Engagement at regional, provincial, and federal tables with governments and service providers results in their increased accountability to Syilx wellbeing.

stəmtima? & qáqna?

Planning forward in the sqilx^w way brought 30 Grandmothers from all 7 Nation Communities to the annual Syilx Nation Grandmothers Gathering (April 8-9, 2025). Collectively, they brought with them the lived experience of nurturing more than 300 descendants. Their voices carried wisdom and a sense of urgency as they spoke of the need to reclaim ourselves—knowledge, history, territory, lands and waters—and to teach these to the children. Grandmothers emphasized that traditional roles and responsibilities must be taught early and lived daily to restore the interdependence that has always defined Syilx families and communities. This responsibility falls on the whole community, not just on parents and educators. The importance of teaching through doing was emphasized. Community-wide efforts to incorporate traditional foods, stories, and language into Band schools and daily life were encouraged as pathways to ensure that our laws and identity are carried into the future.

Standing strong in their role of offering guidance to the Nation in the crucial work of building Syilx family systems, these Grandmothers spoke for the generations before them and for those yet to come. The insights they shared inform the ongoing work of transforming ONA programs and services.



For Our stəlsqíl̓xʷ

Land Based Healing



nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ: A Syilx Family Wellness Center

The new nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ Ashnola wellness centre will be a shared healing space for the entire Syilx Nation, while recognizing and honouring its location within the Lower Similkameen community. Previously Ashnola at the Crossing, the center will provide culturally grounded services for youth and families, with a focus on mental wellness.

The project has moved into Phase 2—taking community input and applying it to the design of program manual and curriculum. The Advisory Committee, with representation from all communities, is creating a Clinical Cultural Working Group of elders, knowledge keepers and clinical staff from across the Nation that will engage in a participatory process to shape the final program design. Phase 3 will focus on program implementation, staff recruitment, holding open houses and ceremonies, and beginning intake. The project is scheduled to open in 2027.

SCAN HERE



Doctors on the Land Dialogues

Culturally competent health care remains elusive for many Syilx members. To help change this, the ONA Health Team is working on initiatives including engaging with a Cultural Safety and Humility Committee through FNHA and IH to identify education that IH staff and physicians should receive.

Another ongoing initiative, in partnership with the Division of Family Practitioners—South Okanagan Similkameen, brought together health practitioners and staff serving the 4 southern Okanagan Bands (OIB, USIB, PIB, LSIB) to build trust by engaging in discussions to unpack complex issues related to racism and professional practice. Building on the foundation of the previous year, this year saw 3 sessions held on the grounds of Ashnola, supported by Elders. Between 20 to 30 participants attended (June 27, Nov 14, 2025 and Feb 27, 2026) and evaluations showed a keen interest to continue these dialogues.

"The Nation is best positioned to design approaches aimed at improving the mental wellness outcomes for Syilx people."

- Allan Louis, Syilx Health Representative



Doctors on the Land Dialogue at nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ





Serving Our Communities

Guided by elected leadership, the Nation Wellness Committee, and our people, the ONA delivers specialized programs in close partnership with Communities.

These Nation-based programs help Syilx people make the most of collective resources. An important aspect of these programs is meeting with Nation members and community staff in order to identify problems with outside service providers and advocate for better services. The highlights below show how these programs are making a difference for families and communities.

kʔulusmntm iʔ nəqsiltət

Family Decision Making supports the inherent right of Syilx people to make plans of wellbeing for our children—helping families stay connected and keeping children in communities. As well as supporting 39 children and their families this past year, the program advocated with MCFD to address discrimination, to better respect family plans, and improve communication.

Jordan's Principle

Demand for Jordan's Principle requests is high and Service Coordinators continued to support children and their families to ensure access to the health, educational, and social supports that they deserve. An ongoing aspect of the work is escalating systemic issues in order to improve pathways and reduce gaps in the Indigenous Services Canada process.

Early Years

Families and community-based early childhood programs are supported by Early Years with resources including the newly-created nsyilxcən alphabet blankets, posters, and flashcards.

"Our children are our roots and everything we teach them is their responsibility to carry on."

You Empowered Strong (YES)

In response to escalating intimate partner violence in the Nation, YES continued to walk alongside families navigating these impacts. The program helped increase capacity to respond to this troubling trend with a full-day training for 24 community workers that strengthened awareness and skills for culturally grounded responses. Prevention activities featured a Syilx-rooted, digital safety program to address the growth of online exploitation, especially of youth.

Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT)

ONRT built a full team this year that includes members from each community in the Nation. After doing years of capacity building training in our Nation, ONRT noted that families and communities are increasingly able to respond to many issues themselves, leaving ONRT to step in for the bigger crises. The program also supported prevention with suicide training and social media campaigns.

Youth Wellness

Syilx youth involved in this program reported increased confidence, sense of identity, and connection to culture. As well as one-on-one support, activities delivered across the Nation included impactful land-based gatherings, traditional games, updating the RNV program with cultural components, and holding school and community-based circles. An important contribution was hosting a 2-part training for community staff and volunteers who work with youth where participants left feeling better equipped to lead programs.

Syilx Indian Residential School Committee (SIRSC)

SIRSC has a legacy of creating significant projects to commemorate the experiences of former Syilx Indian residential school students, deepen understanding, and promote healing. Committee members support ONA events and contribute to discussions about IRS, which is increasingly important in the current political climate of rising denialism.

Mental Health and Substance Use Advocate (MHSU)

Responding to direction from the CEC and Wellness Committee, this newly-filled position is a shift away from direct service provision to instead bringing a Syilx perspective to building capacity for communities, and supporting Nation members to navigate the mental health system in a good way.

Health Care Advocate

The Health Care Advocate supports Nation members navigating complex health and social service systems by connecting them with culturally safe care, resources, medical equipment, treatment services, and advocacy supports. The role bridges communication between patients, healthcare providers, and community agencies and programs to support good health outcomes. The position also collaborates with Band health teams, healthcare professionals, and agencies to strengthen service coordination.



In honour of the strength and commitment of our ancestors who created the path of healing that we walk today, and for the well-being of the next seven generations—the ONA Wellness Team is committed to excellence in its services to you and your family



Measuring Our Success

kʔulusmntm iʔ nəqsiltət

- 140 Family Day resource backpacks went to communities.
- 38 children and their families were supported.
- 19 new files opened and 18 Family Circles completed.
- 31 Band staff and Nation members attended the FDM-hosted Cultivating Safe Spaces Training with Elaine Alec.

You Empowered Strong (YES)

- 1,000+ community members received prevention education including 32 education sessions delivered to youth, caregivers, frontline workers, community members.
- 5 new families in October marked the highest intake.
- 28 families being supported in April marked the peak.

Jordan's Principle

- 250 children had a file opened in the 2025-26 fiscal year.
- 52% of requests are for health-related services; 26% are for educational services; 22% are for social and family supports.

Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT)

- There were 41 mobilizations of ONRT.
- 26 Nation members attended Suicide Prevention Training.
- Ongoing recruitment and training for crisis response provided throughout the Nation.

Youth Wellness

- 108 youth participated in the Unity Run.
- 38 Youth Workers and Nation members participated in IndigenEYEZ training to deepen skills for leading community programs.

Early Years

- 60 sets of nsyilxcən flashcards, 30 alphabet blankets, and 30 posters were distributed to community daycares and schools.

Health Care Advocate

- Supported 32 individuals across the 7 Syilx communities in accessing healthcare services, culturally appropriate care, medical equipment, medications, specialist referrals, home and community care supports, palliative care services, and system navigation assistance.

Syilx Indian Residential School (SIRS) Committee

- More than 300 people joined the Walk for the Children on September 30, 2025 in remembrance of everyone impacted by Indian residential school.

Child & Family Planning

- 35 Grandmothers attended the Nation Grandmothers Gathering, collectively representing 194 grandchildren, 66 great-grandchildren, and 4 great-great-grandchildren.
- 6 Nation members completed Year 2 of the Human Service Workers program organized with NVIT.

Health Planning

- The Movember campaign to support syilx men's health had 4,328 views of the social media contest and 2,227 views of the video in November 2025.
- 7 health directors, one from each syilx Band, shared their perspectives to guide future work around how to support members who live off reserve.

Data Governance Planning

- 300+ people were engaged on data-related topic over multiple events and gatherings.
- 12 language speakers attended the 5 sessions of the Data Gathering & Working Group.
- 15 participants attended the Special Chiefs and Council Assembly on Data.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

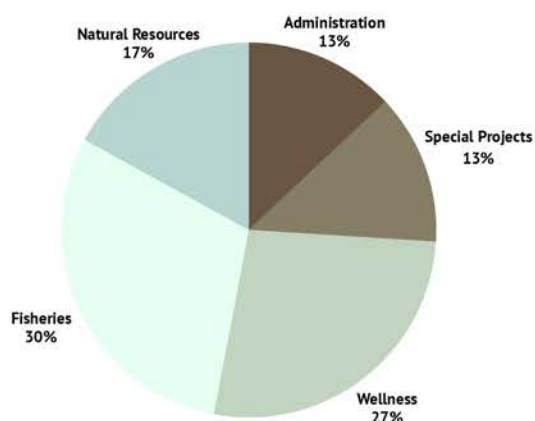
n̓xcip

Staff Day at the Nk'mip Desert Cultural Center

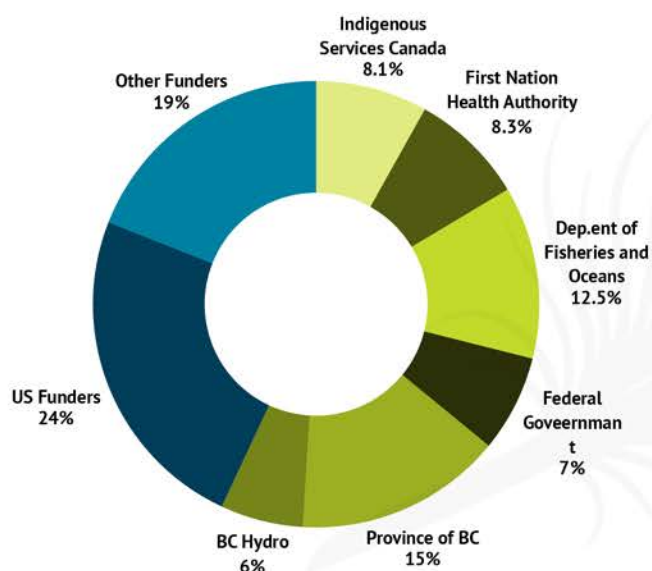
The ONA operates primarily through a project- and proposal-driven model, supported by core funding that sustains essential operations. Over the past several years, the organization has experienced continued growth in projects, funding, and organizational capacity, allowing it to expand its work while consistently delivering meaningful outcomes for the Syilx Nation and surrounding communities.

Fiscal accountability remains a cornerstone of the ONA. As the organization has grown, the Finance Department has expanded its staffing capacity to support an increasing number of projects and provide timely financial services across all departments. The team maintains accurate financial records, supports proposal development and program delivery, ensures compliance with accounting standards, and continues the ONA's strong record of clean audits.

To support continued growth, the ONA is implementing a new accounting software system that will streamline financial processes and improve reporting for funders, partners, and management. During the reporting period, the organization also received increased funding from the US to support the Okanagan Dam Fish Passage project, further strengthening this important cross-border restoration initiative. Continued investments across major programs, combined with ongoing support from governments, corporate sponsors, and community partners, position the ONA for continued success and future growth.



Total Revenues by Department



Total Revenues by Funder

** See the ONA audited financial statements under separate cover



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**"If you say the land belongs to you,
then we are of different opinions"**

- sa?lista?



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