

# Stories of Leadership: Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table



**cli Okanagan**  
Collaborative Leadership Initiative



**CIER**  
Centre for Indigenous  
Environmental Resources

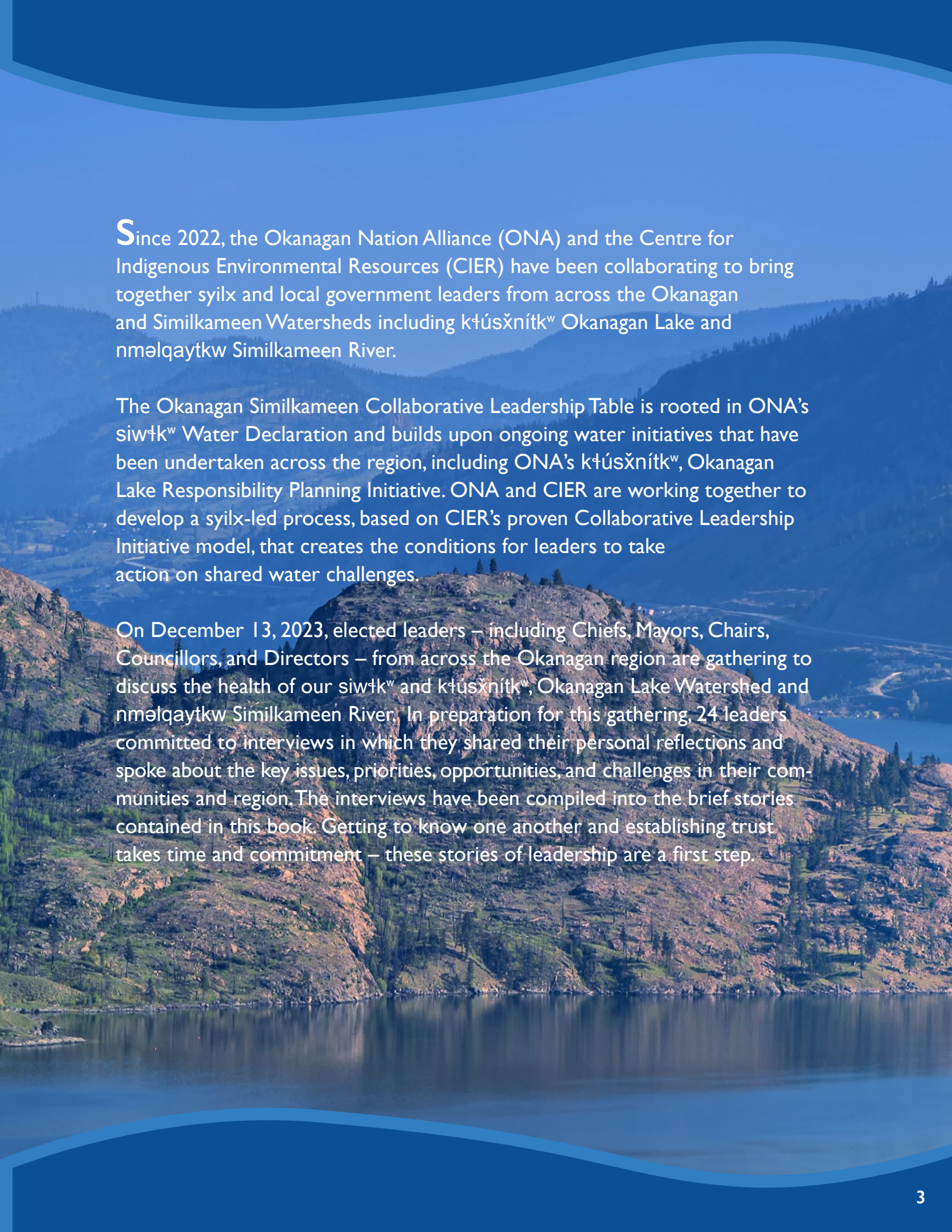


**OCCP**  
OKANAGAN COLLABORATIVE  
CONSERVATION PROGRAM









Since 2022, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) and the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) have been collaborating to bring together syilx and local government leaders from across the Okanagan and Similkameen Watersheds including kłúsxnítkʷ Okanagan Lake and nməlqaytkw Similkameen River.

The Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table is rooted in ONA's siwłkʷ Water Declaration and builds upon ongoing water initiatives that have been undertaken across the region, including ONA's kłúsxnítkʷ, Okanagan Lake Responsibility Planning Initiative. ONA and CIER are working together to develop a syilx-led process, based on CIER's proven Collaborative Leadership Initiative model, that creates the conditions for leaders to take action on shared water challenges.

On December 13, 2023, elected leaders – including Chiefs, Mayors, Chairs, Councillors, and Directors – from across the Okanagan region are gathering to discuss the health of our siwłkʷ and kłúsxnítkʷ, Okanagan Lake Watershed and nməlqaytkw Similkameen River. In preparation for this gathering, 24 leaders committed to interviews in which they shared their personal reflections and spoke about the key issues, priorities, opportunities, and challenges in their communities and region. The interviews have been compiled into the brief stories contained in this book. Getting to know one another and establishing trust takes time and commitment – these stories of leadership are a first step.



## OPENING WORDS

wai' and hello everyone,

It makes me happy to hear that the syilx Nation leaders are welcoming local municipal leaders to start talking about siwʔkʷ, water. Our elders have always told us that water is shared for all living things and we need to work together to ensure it can sustain itself for future generations. It is because of this that I support the Collaborative Leadership Initiative for the klusxnitkʷ, Okanagan Lake Watershed and nməłqaytkw Similkameen River.

The challenges facing siwʔkʷ in the Okanagan continue to proliferate and, as we witnessed this past summer, are only becoming more complex as climate change brings new extremes. It is our responsibility to act with reciprocity to take care of the land and waters for generations to come. As is translated in the syilx Nation siwʔkʷ Declaration, "Water is the lifeblood of our land and our animals and we as syilx people." I encourage everyone to think of their responsibility to siwʔkʷ: from the headwaters, the wetlands, down the creeks, through the valley bottom rivers, and into the lakes.

Syilx practices are steeped in thousands of years of knowledge that teach us how to take care of this landscape. I believe that with our syilx knowledge and history, combined with Western knowledge, we can put our minds and thoughts together and make a difference. One thing I'd like to share with everyone is that we as syilx People see water as a living thing: for us, siwʔkʷ is a relative, not a resource.

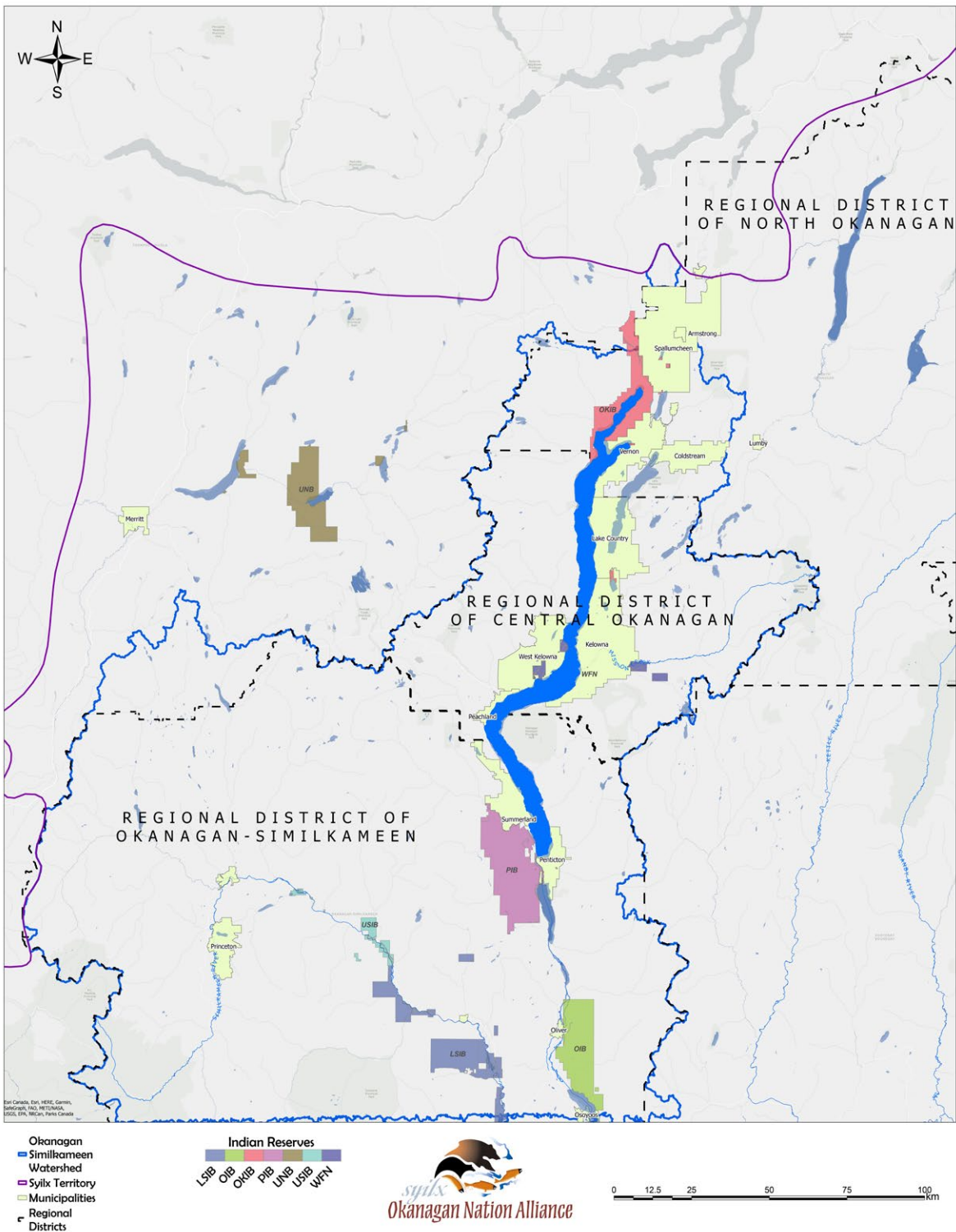
As you move forward in this process, I encourage you to make a commitment to working together for the benefit of the watershed that we all share. Remember that the siwʔkʷ connects us all. This connection flows through our communities and across jurisdictional lines, and it carries with it a responsibility that we should not take lightly. I hold my hands up to each of you for taking the first step in this Collaborative Leadership Initiative.

lim limt and thank you  
caylx | Richard Armstrong

caylx, whose English name is Richard Armstrong, is a syilx elder from snpintktn, Penticton. He is a syilx traditional knowledge and nsyilxcən specialist. As a child, he was immersed in the nsyilxcən language and culture. He aims to assist those who need his help – as his teachers and teachings have helped him. Therefore, he shares who he is and what he has learned with the syilx Nation, its communities, and welcomed guests. He is one of the Nation's fluent speakers and a syilx Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keeper. caylx is currently a teacher of nsyilxcən Language and Culture at the En'owkin Centre.



# Our t'əctǰap tl tqalqaltikn, Watershed





# kʷu syilx



We are the Indigenous People of this land.

We are the syilx Okanagan People, a trans-boundary tribe separated at the 49th parallel by the border between Canada and the United States.

Our syilx (pronounced “see-yeel-x”) Nation is comprised of seven member communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia and one in Northern Washington state. Our territory and home extend over approximately 69,000 square kilometres. It is a unique and beautiful landscape of deserts, alpine forests, endangered grasslands, mountains, rivers, and lakes. This ecologically diverse land is a haven for many species, and it has provided for our people since time immemorial.

We are a distinct and sovereign Nation, sharing the same land, culture, customs and nsyilxcən language. Our common language holds and defines the moral standards, expectations, and teachings for individuals and for the collective. nsyilxcən is the medium whereby we have accumulated our knowledge, governance, caretaking, teaching, and learning since the beginning of time.

Having emerged from this land, nsyilxcən is expressive of the land and is a virtual storehouse of information about all living things, reflecting the web of life found in syilx Okanagan ecology.

nsyilxcən language is embedded in the tmxʷúlaxʷ, land and siwtʷ, water and carries thousands of years of deep intergenerational knowledge. Our language is complex; one word means many things. Take the word for land: tmxʷúlaxʷ. When you break this word down, it means the sphere of living things that turn and rotate always creating a living future. The word tmixʷ, which is the word that translates closely to ecology, includes everything alive – the land, water, insects, people, animals, plants and medicine.



# THE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The Collaborative Leadership Initiative (CLI) is a facilitated process that provides resources and expertise to support Indigenous and municipal elected leaders by creating the conditions to take action on shared water challenges. CLI focuses on working with Indigenous and municipal communities because they know their watershed best. CLI leverages a proven process to build trust, strengthen relationships, advance ongoing efforts, and develop new initiatives.

The CLI model was developed by the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) based on decades of experience in Canada and internationally. CIER first implemented the CLI process in Manitoba beginning in 2017. The CLI Manitoba process gathered elected leaders from 11 Indigenous governments and 16 municipalities for the first time in over 150 years. This led to the signing of a historic intergovernmental MOU that has encouraged numerous joint initiatives across the Manitoba landscape. Over three years, CLI Manitoba advanced the development of a reconciliation framework while building a co-governance table where government-to-government decisions are made. Having elected decision-makers at the table was a critical factor in its success.

Based on the success of the CLI Manitoba process, CIER was funded by a private foundation to work with partners across Canada to adapt the CLI model to other regions. In 2022, CIER began working with the Okanagan Nation Alliance to determine how CLI could support and build on ongoing water initiatives that have been undertaken across the region.

CIER and ONA are working together to develop a syilx-led CLI process that provides an opportunity for regional collaboration across the Okanagan and Similkameen.





# **Stories of Leadership**



## ȳilmix<sup>w</sup>m, Chief Byron Louis

Chief Byron Louis has committed his life to the service of his people and the protection of the landscapes upon which they depend. After serving as a band councillor for six years, Chief Louis took a break from local politics and moved to Ottawa, where he worked as a senior researcher and policy advisor for the Assembly of First Nations. He has since returned to his community and has served as Chief of the Okanagan Indian Band for the last 13 years.



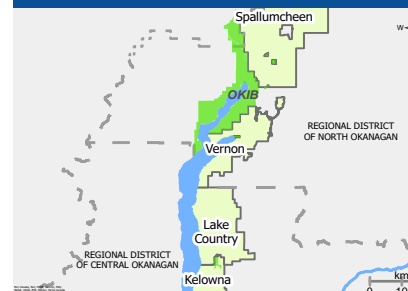
When asked about the key priorities in his community and region that keep him up at night, Chief Louis responded that one of the things he would like to see is a change in perception relating to where and how people live in the Okanagan. He would like to see residents perceive themselves as living less in regional districts and more in a shared ecosystem, beginning with the northern tip of the great Sonoran Desert in the south and a highly biodiverse transition to the north. The reintroduction of salmon to the basin must be a central element of this rethinking, as well as a thorough reassessment of water and related land rights. We have gone beyond the age of consultation and accommodation in our relations with one another, he said. While local collaboration is important, Chief Louis emphasized the need to include all levels of government. If we are to create a coherent community, our actions must be consistent with decades of Supreme Court rulings on Indigenous treaty claims that require engagement with both provincial and national governments.

With respect to the Collaborative Leadership Initiative, Chief Louis believes it is an opportunity to work more effectively together in the Okanagan. When one looks at the amount of financial investment that has been made in the region, how, he asked, can this investment be sustained if there is no water? As much as possible, Chief Louis believes we all need to work together to restore the natural hydrograph.

## Okanagan Indian Band

The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) is located at the head of Okanagan Lake near the City of Vernon.

Totalling 10,636 hectares of reserve land, OKIB comprises six reserves located in the North Okanagan: Okanagan, Otter Lake, Harris, Swan Lake, Priest Valley, and Duck Lake. There are 2,232 members, with roughly half of them residing on-reserve. Most on-reserve members live on the main reserve near Vernon.



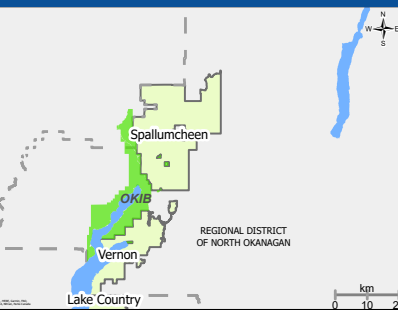
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## Township of Spallumcheen

The Township of Spallumcheen is set in the Spallumcheen Valley in the Regional District of North Okanagan. It is located about seven kilometres north of Vernon and completely encloses the City of Armstrong.

Spallumcheen is the oldest and largest municipality in the southern interior of British Columbia. It has a population of 5,055 and a large rural land base of 26,892 hectares, with the majority of its land located in the Agricultural Land Reserve.



## Mayor Christine Fraser

Christine Fraser is serving her fifth term on Spallumcheen Council, including the last two as Mayor. Mayor Fraser grew up waterskiing on Okanagan Lake and Kalamalka Lake nearly every day early in the morning, which is part of the reason she is passionate about water. She is also a self-proclaimed 'fitness nut' and has competed at Tri-Fitness and Galaxy competitions.



One of Mayor Fraser's big concerns is ensuring an adequate supply of water for agriculture. She noted that over 55% of the land in her jurisdiction is in the Agricultural Land Reserve. In 2018, the region suffered a deep and persistent drought during which some farms lost 75% of their crops. In some cases, farmers planted all their seed and lost everything. Since then, Mayor Fraser and her council have been looking for ways to store more water and improve efficiency, including securing funding for cisterns and exploring different ways to capture rainwater. Spallumcheen also recently completed one of the first aquifer studies in the province to get a clearer picture of how much water will be available for future generations.

Mayor Fraser pointed to a few water projects that she is passionate about, including a partnership on a wastewater facility with the Okanagan Indian Band. She also highlighted the successful rehabilitation of Deep Creek, a local stream that had been channelized in the past and is now being returned to its natural flow. Mayor Fraser wants to build on these existing relationships at the Collaborative Leadership Initiative table. She pointed out that all communities in the region share water and that operating in silos does not work. She wants to continue to explore ways to develop local solutions and partnerships by thinking like a region.



# Mayor Victor Cumming

Victor Cumming was first elected Mayor of Vernon in 2018 and was re-elected in 2022. Mayor Cumming grew up in Naramata and, after high school, earned a masters degree in rural development at the University of Guelph. Over a 40-year career as a rural development specialist, Mayor Cumming worked in nearly every province and territory and with more than 100 First Nations across the country. He has lived in Vernon since 1992 and can often be seen walking in the back hills or swimming in the lake.



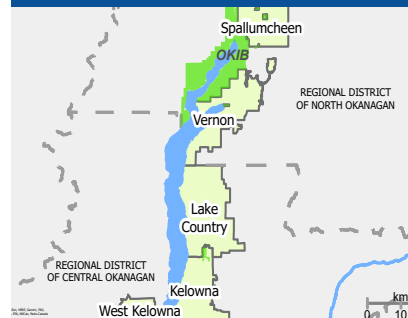
When asked about the biggest challenges he faces as a leader, Mayor Cumming spoke about the systemic barriers created by the recent history of the region. Settlers came to the Okanagan relatively recently and ushered in a rapid period of population growth and land redistribution. Syilx people were largely pushed aside during that time. Mayor Cumming spoke about the work that Vernon and the Okanagan Indian Band have done over the past few years to improve and institutionalize the relationships that should have always existed. Mayor Cumming also explained several major water priorities for his community, the biggest being better management of the headwaters. Vernon gets 60% of its water from a high-level plateau where the management of the forest is in provincial hands. Vernon and the Okanagan Indian Band are working to shift management of their drinking water into local hands. Mayor Cumming also spoke about flood control and salmon habitat restoration as two of his critical water priorities. All these priorities require co-operation and collaboration.

As the leaders come to the table, Mayor Cumming proposes hardening the objectives of what they are trying to achieve together. He wants to clearly define what success looks like and the expectations of working together. Mayor Cumming stressed the importance of a common vision and tangible indicators of success to back up that vision.

## City of Vernon

The City of Vernon is located in the Regional District of North Okanagan and is surrounded by Okanagan Lake to the west, Kalamalka Lake to the south, and Swan Lake to the north.

Vernon is the hub of the North Okanagan and has a population of over 43,000 (with a metro population closer to 70,000). It is surrounded by several small communities including Coldstream, Armstrong, Spallumcheen, Enderby, and Lumby, as well as the Okanagan Indian Band.



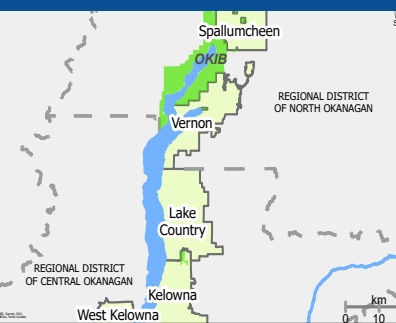
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## City of Vernon

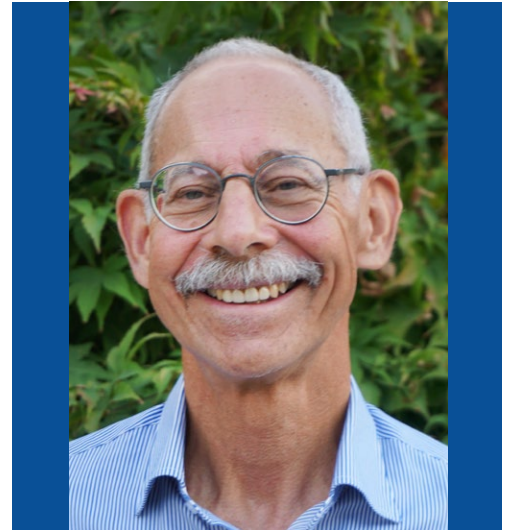
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## Councillor Brian Guy

Formerly the president of Summit Environmental Consultants and Vice President and General Manager at Associated Environmental Consultants, Brian Guy has decades of experience conducting technical studies on water and other environmental issues in the Okanagan and across Canada. As a new councillor in Vernon, he now finds himself on the other side, reading consultants' reports and making decisions on them. Councillor Guy has lived in Vernon since 1994.



When asked about the big issues he now faces as a councillor, Councillor Guy offered that it was hard to focus enough attention on the bigger picture issues because local immediate issues require as much attention as bigger issues. It's also challenging that a municipality can only influence rather than control many significant issues. Challenges like housing, homelessness, mental health, addictions, and opioid overdoses are all front and center, and Vernon is working collaboratively with the province on these issues. Councillor Guy also pointed to the destruction of wetlands and other critical habitat as something that he cares a lot about. He worries about the impacts of climate change, particularly the vulnerability of Vernon's water supply and infrastructure to wildfire, and water quality issues like algal blooms.

Councillor Guy noted that Vernon's current council is very keen to collaborate and to build on their ongoing relationship with the Okanagan Indian Band. He is interested in learning more about the other leaders and communities up and down the valley, and in particular about the syilx worldview. Councillor Guy said there were fundamental understandings about how the world works that are embedded in syilx knowledge that Westerners don't have. Exploring these different worldviews is important, he said, and to do so, we need to take a step back and be willing to learn. Councillor Guy also spoke to the importance of embedding outcomes into policies and procedures to ensure good work continues past the term of any one council.



## Chair Shirley Fowler

Shirley Fowler has served as a Councillor for the City of Armstrong for 19 years and as a Director for the Regional District of North Okanagan for 13 of those years. She was recently elected as the Chair of the RDNO Board. Chair Fowler considers herself more of a community leader than a politician and prefers to have her boots on the ground while serving her community. One of her passions is Communities in Bloom, which is a program that encourages community and environmental wellbeing by evaluating green spaces and heritage conservation. Chair Fowler has been involved in Communities in Bloom since Armstrong entered the program in 2004.



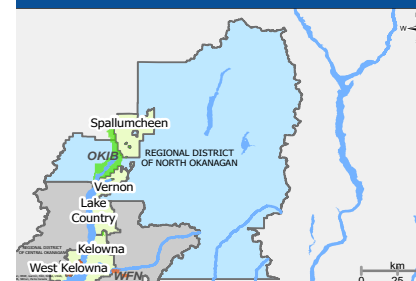
Chair Fowler is concerned about the impacts of climate change on her community and the region. She spoke of the atmospheric rivers and heat domes that have shaken the region in recent years, forcing people to stand up and take notice. That is, she said, at least one silver lining to these events: everybody is now paying attention. One thing each of us can do, Chair Fowler said, is do a better job conserving outside water use. In Armstrong, the average winter water invoice is billed for 83 cubic metres while the average for summer months is 156 cubic meters. She highlighted low-cost solutions such as rain barrels, education and signage encouraging rainwater harvesting, appropriate vegetative choices, and providing solid data so residents can understand the seriousness of water conservation and use.

Chair Fowler noted that communities throughout the valley may have different needs from one another. But she believes that it is critical to get together at the table to discuss challenges and figure out shared solutions. She wants to focus on moving forward and ensuring a sustainable future for future generations. To do that, Chair Fowler said, we need to have frank conversations about our concerns, limitations, and desires.

## Regional District of North Okanagan

The Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) covers 749,723 hectares and includes the northernmost portion of the Okanagan-Similkameen Watershed. The RDNO has a population of 91,610.

The RDNO is comprised of five electoral areas and six municipalities, including the City of Armstrong, the City of Enderby, the District of Coldstream, the Village of Lumby, the City of Vernon, and the Township of Spallumcheen.



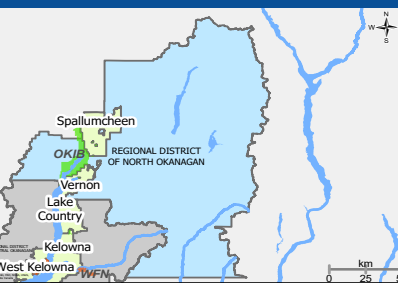
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## Regional District of North Okanagan

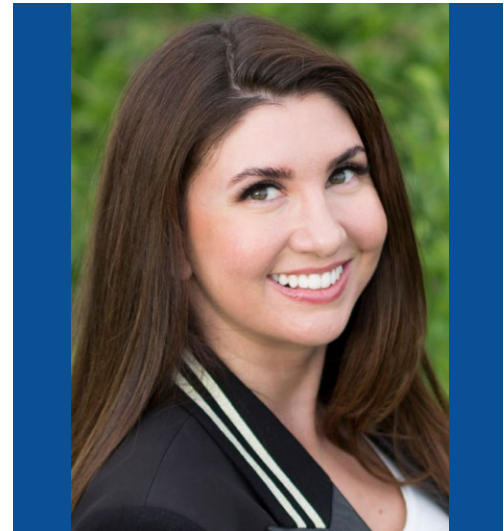
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## Director Amanda Shatzko

Amanda Shatzko is in her second term as the Director for Electoral Area C in the Regional District of North Okanagan. She is also an academic who is currently completing a Ph.D. on the subject of creativity in public policy decision-making at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Director Shatzko was born and raised in the Okanagan Valley.



When invited to identify what she saw as the most important issues in the Okanagan region – the matters that might keep her awake at night – Director Shatzko offered that what troubled her most was the state of the environment. People live here because of the lake, she said. Dealing with the deterioration of the lake and the health of the watershed means that many interconnected natural processes needed to be monitored and rehabilitated simultaneously.

When asked about the Collaborative Leadership Initiative, Director Shatzko explained that her arts and culture background has shown her how important governance is in figuring out how to work together to make communities better. She identified that the first step towards collaboration should be to get everyone to know each other. When you have conflict or disagreement, you need to find commonality first before resolution becomes possible. Director Shatzko pointed out the importance of finding commonality, then establishing goals based on that commonality. That approach is reflected in her own political journey, in which she was elected to add a different perspective to the decision-making table and to crack open the conversation. What she has learned, she said, is that it is all about getting to know one another better, finding commonalities, and building trust.



## Mayor Blair Ireland

Blair Ireland has been on Lake Country Council for the last nine years, first as a Councillor for eight years and as Mayor for the past year. The impacts of climate change are front-of-mind for Mayor Ireland, as most of his community was evacuated in summer 2023 due to wildfire. He is concerned about both the immediate impacts of fire on his community, as well as the lasting impacts that wildfires have on water quality and overall watershed health. These concerns are part of what motivates him to serve as vice chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.



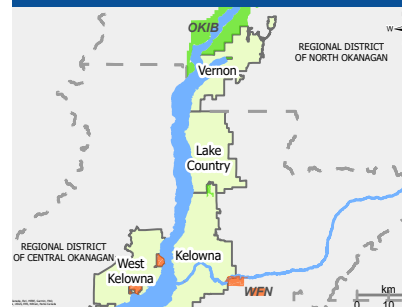
When asked what kept him up at night now the immediate wildfire threat had passed, Mayor Ireland said that what had started him down the political path was an overarching concern about the state of the world he was leaving for his kids and a whole generation of youth. He is deeply concerned about intergenerational legacy. One of his main concerns is foreshore development and the impact that this development has on Okanagan Lake and other lakes in the watershed. Being a paddler and having grown up in the Okanagan, he can see how much damage is being done and it concerns him. For Mayor Ireland, protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the watershed is a priority. He worries that most people do not understand the stress that the lake is under.

Mayor Ireland recognizes that collaboration needs to happen. He pointed out that development in one part of the watershed impacts water quality and quantity in other parts of the watershed, yet governments rarely talk to each other about these issues. First and foremost, Mayor Ireland said, we need to communicate with each other. We need to think macro, he said, and get out of our little boxes.

## District of Lake Country

The District of Lake Country is located in the Regional District of Central Okanagan and is surrounded by Okanagan Lake, Wood Lake, and Kalamalka Lake. Lake Country was incorporated as a District Municipality in May 1995.

Lake Country has a population of approximately 15,800 and was BC's fastest-growing municipality in 2014 and 2021. It is home to four distinct neighbourhood communities: Carr's Landing, Okanagan Centre, Oyama, and Winfield.



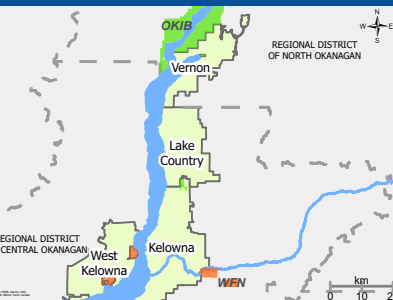
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## Councillor Tricia Brett

Tricia Brett was first elected councillor for the District of Lake Country in 2022. Water has been one of her passions for a very long time; in her day job, she serves as the manager of water quality for the Regional District of North Okanagan. Councillor Brett brings that perspective to council by advocating for the importance of water in every respect: availability, quantity, and quality. She is proud of her community and wants it to be seen as more than a commuter town. Lake Country is, she said, a vibrant community with many lakes and a strong agricultural history.



When asked about the most pressing issues she faces as a councillor, Councillor Brett identified two big challenges: collaboration and multi-generational thinking. There is a lot of talk about addressing water issues across the watershed but ultimately there is a lack of action to really move solutions forward, which she attributes to a lack of collaboration. She spoke not just about collaboration between governments, but also between water groups, the agricultural community, and industry. Councillor Brett also highlighted the short-sightedness that is prevalent across the valley. She said that the Indigenous seven generations teaching is profound, and that she tries to bring this perspective to council. Regarding specific water issues, Councillor Brett voiced concern about the pace and intensity of foreshore development.

Councillor Brett is a process-oriented person, so she is looking forward to seeing how the collaborative table will roll out. She is interested in discussing the potential gaps and weaknesses of the table, including how it is going to be funded and staffed over the long term. She pointed to the fact that both local and syilx governments are strapped for capacity as a key issue. As a first step, she would like to see the table focus on relationship building and breaking down fears between the leaders.



# yílmix<sup>wm</sup> simo, Chief Robert Louie

First elected as a councillor in 1974, Robert Louie, whose nsyilxcən name is simo (which means connected to the land), has now served as Chief of Westbank First Nation for 26 years. In his long political career, he has been involved in various matters related to First Nations self-government across the country, including serving as chair of the First Nations Lands Advisory Board. He is also involved in a number of business ventures in the Okanagan and beyond, including real estate holdings and Indigenous World Winery, Indigenous World Spirits.



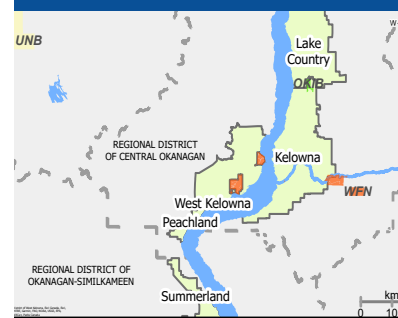
One of Chief Louie's primary objectives is asserting First Nations' inherent rights and jurisdiction over water. These are particularly important matters in the context of salmon reintroduction and climate change in the Okanagan, Chief Louie explained, where, in his view, First Nations need to be actively and meaningfully involved in decision-making. He identified climate change as a central concern that is already having a huge impact on everything that is important to a healthy ecosystem in the Okanagan. From a water perspective, Chief Louie is alarmed at the impacts of wildfire ash on water quality. In response to this concern, Westbank First Nation is considering setting up its own emergency preparedness program with a training centre to train people on how to get ready for the increasingly frequent wildfire catastrophes.

When it comes to collaboration, Chief Louie highlighted his council's work with nearby Mayors to establish a voting seat for Westbank First Nation on the regional district board. He hopes that these efforts will set a precedent for other First Nations across the province because, he says, the only way to make your voice heard is to have a seat at the table. He recognizes there has been a lot of progress made over the past 20 to 30 years on First Nations-municipal relationships and he notes Westbank First Nation has helped lead the way. But he also acknowledges there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure recognition and understanding of First Nations jurisdiction amongst developers, members of the public, and all levels of government.

## Westbank First Nation

Westbank First Nation (WFN) is located on either side of Okanagan Lake adjacent to the cities of Kelowna and West Kelowna.

WFN's reserve lands are comprised of five parcels, totalling 2,160 hectares. The reserves at Westbank and Kelowna were initially part of the Okanagan Indian Band but separated in 1964. Since 1998, the total number of people residing in WFN has grown from an estimated 5,500 people to 10,000. Of this, approximately 959 are WFN members, the majority of which reside on reserve, along with 9,000 non-member residents.



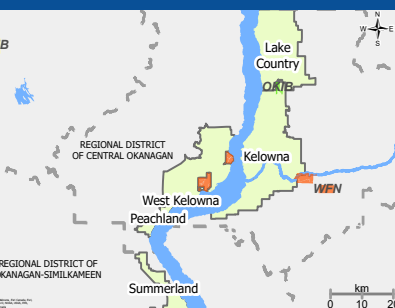
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## səxw'k'wínmaʔm éris, Councillor Jordan Coble

Jordan Coble has served on Westbank First Nation Council since 2019. He was recently appointed as the chair of the Okanagan Nation Alliance Natural Resources Committee and sits on the board of directors for the Regional District of Central Okanagan. In addition to his political responsibilities, Councillor Coble is also proud to be the president of Ntityix Resources LP, which is the Westbank First Nation forestry company. It is the mission of Ntityix Resources to promote the syilx forestry standards, so that there is consistency in forest protection, stewardship, and caretaking throughout the nation that honours the tradition of thinking seven generations into the future. Councillor Coble is also a natural storyteller.



When asked what keeps him up at night, Councillor Coble responded first and foremost with family matters followed by concerns connected to the climate crisis. His biggest worry was the fear of not being able to co-ordinate efforts across the syilx Nation and the Okanagan region to work towards shared goals. The one connection we all have, he said, is our connection to water. But Councillor Coble recognizes that making decisions about water is complicated because of overlapping jurisdictions and different priorities. He wants to make sure that we are protecting water not just for human use but also for the animals and ecosystems that rely on it.

With respect to the Collaborative Leadership Initiative, Councillor Coble observed that it is important to include the broadest span of knowledge and ways of knowing and caring, including spiritual connection to the lands and their waters. He warned that inherent prejudices to traditional knowledge still exist. A holistic approach, however, is absolutely necessary. He noted when his people speak of water, the word they use is siwlkw, a word that implies a law that says this water has to be here not just for us, but for all life.



# Mayor Tom Dyas

Originally from Toronto, Tom Dyas first came out west as the executive sous-chef at the Ontario Pavilion at Expo 86. He then went on to be the executive chef for Delta Hotels in Whistler before creating his own company in the insurance and financial sector, where he worked for 36 years. He has always been actively involved in the community, coaching local soccer clubs and hockey clubs, as well as sitting on various community boards and committees. Mayor Dyas was elected Mayor of Kelowna in 2022.



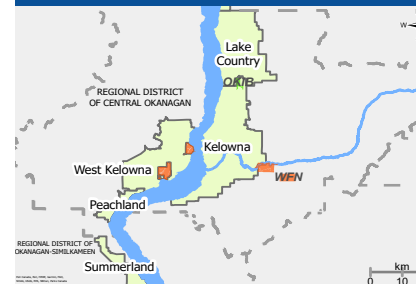
When asked what kept him awake at night as a leader, Mayor Dyas cited the challenges facing many communities, not just in Kelowna, such as community safety, housing affordability, and public health. One of Mayor Dyas's concerns regarding water is the potentially catastrophic impacts that quagga and zebra mussels could have if they find their way into the lakes and watercourses of the Okanagan.

When asked if there were specific goals he wanted to achieve during his term, Mayor Dyas indicated that he and his council colleagues are focused on advancing their six priorities. In addition to these priorities, Mayor Dyas is focused on maintaining a sense of community and ensuring Kelowna meets its infrastructure needs as the city continues to support rapid growth. Mayor Dyas added that Kelowna is continuing work on the Kelowna Integrated Water supply plan that calls for a city-wide water system to achieve the best, lowest-cost, city-wide solution that meets Canadian drinking water quality standards and maintains agricultural interests. He is looking forward to learning about the water priorities of other jurisdictions in the valley and discussing regional water stewardship priorities and opportunities.

## City of Kelowna

The City of Kelowna is located along the shores of Okanagan Lake. The name "Kelowna" was derived from the nsyilxcən word *ki?lawnə?*, meaning male grizzly bear.

With a population of nearly 150,000 people, Kelowna is the largest city in the Regional District of Central Okanagan. It encompasses 21,400 hectares of land and 4,800 hectares of water area. Kelowna's official floral emblem is the Arrowleaf Balsamroot, often referred to by locals as the Okanagan Sunflower.

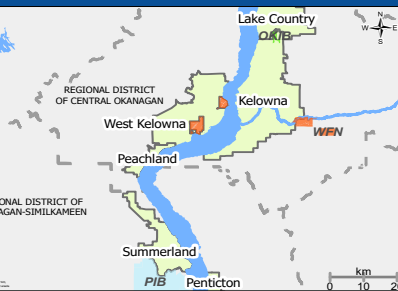


**cli Okanagan**  
Collaborative Leadership Initiative

## City of West Kelowna

The City of West Kelowna is located on the central, western hills of Okanagan Lake. It is part of the Greater Westside, which includes Westbank First Nation, the District of Peachland, and the Central Okanagan West Electoral Area.

West Kelowna has an estimated population of 38,311 residents living in more than 12,500 homes located within an area of 12,353 hectares. The municipality is the third largest city by population in the Okanagan.



## Mayor Gord Milsom

Gordon Milsom first began serving on West Kelowna Council when the municipality was incorporated in 2007. After several terms on council, he was elected Mayor in 2018. One of his top priorities during his time as Mayor is to maintain a good relationship with the neighbouring Westbank First Nation. Mayor Milsom identifies as a lifelong learner who enjoys reading about a range of different topics. He was also a business owner who took four years off from council to help his son take over his business.



When asked what kept him up at night in terms of concerns and priorities, Mayor Milsom noted he was able to sleep well because he had a good team around him. After 13 years in local government, he feels like he understands how things work and he is careful with decision-making and working with others. But that does not mean that there aren't critical issues, and one of them is water. One of his top concerns is wildfires; despite having an excellent fire department, one thing that worries Mayor Milsom every year is the beginning of the wildfire season. Beyond wildfire, he noted that climate change will have big impacts on water across the region, including flooding, irrigation, and fish populations. He is particularly interested in preventing the introduction of zebra and quagga mussels into the region, which would have massive economic and ecological impacts.

When it comes to collaboration, Mayor Milsom expressed a strong desire to collaborate with other communities across the region. Reconciliation is especially important to him, which means learning about syilx ways of looking at things that may have been overlooked in the colonial system. He discussed the importance of including senior management in the collaborative process to ensure a whole-of-organization approach.



# Mayor Patrick Van Minsel

Patrick Van Minsel moved to Peachland from Belgium in 2011. After four years on the Council, he was elected Mayor in 2022. Mayor Van Minsel was Peachland Chamber of Commerce C.A.O. for 10 years and left the position upon his election. He has founded several businesses in the Okanagan alongside his wife. He serves and leads his town, using his acquired life skills to empower others. His background as an entrepreneur, using his learned skills as an economist, mathematician, and a chartered professional accountant, helps him achieve this goal.



When asked what issues kept him awake in his new role as the Mayor of Peachland, Mayor Van Minsel identified drought as a big-picture challenge. He said that increased drought is a challenge for the Okanagan and the whole of B.C. He worries that as the population of the Okanagan continues to grow, and with the new legislative initiatives of the provincial and federal governments to build more housing, we don't have enough water for future generations. This means we must find solutions looking at least 100 years into the future.

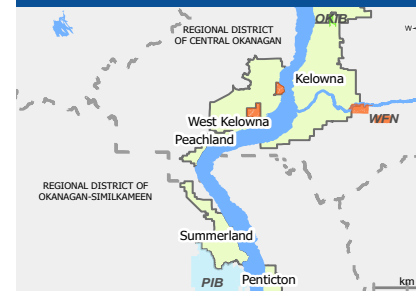
It also requires collaboration between different levels of government: federal, provincial, First Nation, and municipal. Mayor Van Minsel also identified watershed protection as a major priority and emphasized that communities within the watershed must have a say in its protection. For example, he cited invasive species, specifically zebra and quagga mussels.

When asked about the collaboration, Mayor Van Minsel spoke about the importance of regional partnerships. Peachland already has a memorandum of understanding with Westbank First Nation, and the two governments hold council-to-council meetings to discuss issues they want to work on together. Mayor Van Minsel said that Peachland is very open to partnerships and that the first step in building partnerships is doing a lot of listening. He is keen to learn more from the other leaders at the table about what drives them to be leaders and the key priorities that they care about.

## District of Peachland

The District of Peachland is located on the west shore of Okanagan Lake in the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

With 11 kilometres of Okanagan lakefront, the district covers 1,575 hectares of land and is home to just over 5,700 people. Peachland was founded in 1899 and incorporated as a district municipality in 1909.

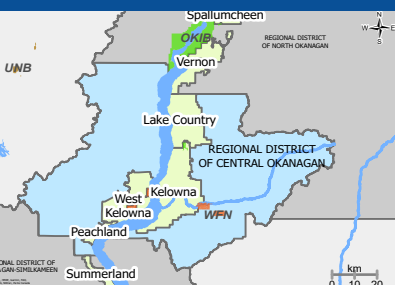


**li Okanagan**  
Collaborative Leadership Initiative

## Regional District of Central Okanagan

The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) encompasses over 314,000 hectares and straddles the shoreline of Okanagan Lake. With a population of 222,162, it is ranked as the fastest growing region in Canada and the third largest urban area in the B.C.

The RDCO includes the two unincorporated Electoral Areas of Central Okanagan East and Central Okanagan West, along with four member municipalities: the City of Kelowna, District of Peachland, District of Lake Country, and City of West Kelowna.



## Chair Loyal Wooldridge

Loyal Wooldridge is the chairperson of the Regional District of Central Okanagan and two-term councillor with the City of Kelowna. He's also an entrepreneur who founded and led Loyal Hair, a full service beauty brand, for 16 years.

In navigating the challenges of government, Chair Wooldridge underscores the importance of building relationships and trust as the bedrock for progress.

He believes in the power of constructive conversations to gain a deeper understanding of local history to address complex priorities. This understanding is essential in the context of pressing issues like climate change and Indigenous relationships.

Water is one of Chair Wooldridge's priorities. Delving into the intricacies of Okanagan Lake, he emphasizes the vulnerability of the lake. There is a cumulative impact of everything flowing through the watershed, from the headwaters to the lake. Chair Wooldridge urges increased education that helps people recognize the often-underestimated consequences of water use and development on the lake's well-being.

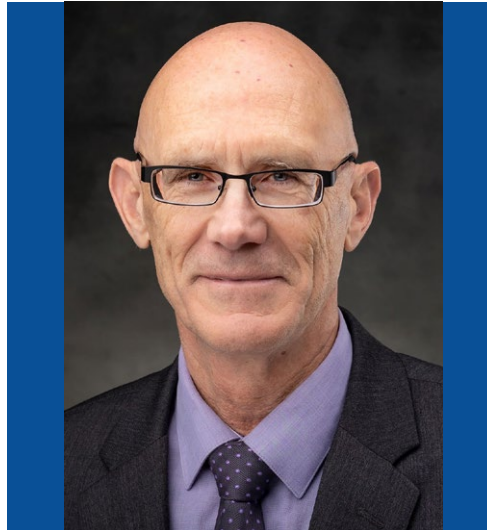
Eager to harness collective potential, Chair Wooldridge envisions a united front at the table to tackle region-wide issues. He champions collaboration as the catalyst for Okanagan governments to build influence at all levels of government. Chair Wooldridge wants the table to be action-oriented and to focus on figuring out how jurisdictions can work together on water, where often there is overlap.





# Mayor Doug Holmes

Before moving to the Okanagan, Doug Holmes lived in Yellowknife working as a journalist with the CBC and as editor of the Yellowknife newspaper. He left the north in 1990 to work in business and journalism internationally before settling in Summerland in 2004. After serving eight years on council, he was elected Mayor in 2022. Mayor Holmes also serves as a director of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and on the board of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.



When asked if there were issues that kept him awake at night, Mayor Holmes said that he remained focused on the strategic commitments established at the beginning of his term. We know, he said, where we want to be at the end of four years, and so you try to block the noise and stay focused on what we as a council have established as goals. These priorities include a new recreation centre, improving health care, affordable housing, and reconciliation. Mayor Holmes also identified improved watershed management as a high priority. Summerland recently completed a watershed assessment, and now they are moving on to the next step of putting the protection plan in place. But, he noted, capacity remains a challenge for all the partners involved in the plan. He cited an ongoing project with the Okanagan Nation Alliance to restore salmon habitat on Trout Creek as a good example of outcomes that can be achieved by working together.

Regarding collaboration, Mayor Holmes noted that one of his main concerns is trying to prepare for the impacts of climate change: floods, wildfire, and landslides. He wants to work together to try to mitigate the impacts of these events rather than simply cleaning up after they happen. This will require all watershed players to be involved. Mayor Holmes mentioned his work with the Okanagan Basin Water Board as an important form of collaboration, as well as the need to engage the forestry industry.

## District of Summerland

The District of Summerland is located on the west side of Okanagan Lake in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen. It is centered around the downtown core and extends south to Trout Creek and back into four valleys: Garnett, Prairie, Peach, and Happy.

Summerland has a population of 11,615 and is home to the last remaining stretch of the Kettle Valley Railway.

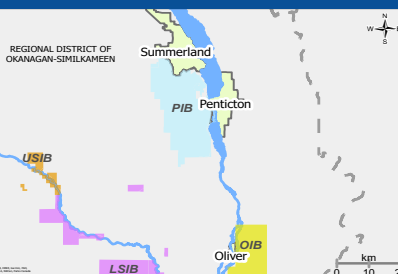


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Collaborative Leadership Initiative

## Penticton Indian Band

SnPink'tn (the Penticton Indian Band) is located in the southwestern portion of the Okanagan Valley.

SnPink'tn lands comprise three reserves that collectively encompass 19,436 hectares at the south end of Okanagan Lake. Their reserve lands border the District of Summerland to the north and City of Penticton to the east, as well as Okanagan and Skaha Lakes. SnPink'tn has 1,161 registered members, including 586 residing on reserve.



## yílmixʷm sil-teekin, Chief Greg Gabriel

Chief Greg Gabriel, who is also known by his traditional name sil-teekin, is the Chief of the Penticton Indian Band. This is his first term as Chief; prior to that, Chief Gabriel served as PIB's band administrator for over 36 years.



Chief Gabriel's long tenure as band administrator gave him first-hand historical knowledge and wide-ranging expertise with respect to the needs of his community. Of these needs, addressing water security challenges is his community's most important priority. His community is growing, Chief Gabriel said, and meeting the needs of his community means more water and water infrastructure. This is not just a regional issue. Of all the influences of climate change, Chief Gabriel believes that its effects on water are most troubling. The reduction in the extent and duration of mountain snowpacks is impacting stream temperatures, which affects reservoir levels while at the same time increasing the threat of wildfire.

Fortunately, Chief Gabriel said, the Penticton Indian Band has a close working relationship with surrounding communities and municipalities who are all contributing to a common long-term water master plan that will hopefully address not only immediate crises, but also future growth needs. Chief Gabriel made it clear, however, that in his estimation, the biggest obstacle to water security in his community and the realization of this plan was the level of bureaucracy that exists with respect to water governance. Chief Gabriel went on to express relief that, given the current circumstances that his community faces, that it wasn't hit by wildfire this year. He worries about having enough water to fight wildfires in future years.

With respect to the Collaborative Leadership Initiative, Chief Gabriel highlighted the different needs of communities across the region. While they are all part of the same watershed, every community is different and faces different water challenges. Chief Gabriel expressed the importance of speaking to each leader individually to hear their story.



## səx<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>inmaʔm silx<sup>w</sup>a əlq<sup>w</sup>, Councillor Tim Lezard

Councillor Tim Lezard has served on the Penticton Indian Band Council for 20 years. Councillor Lezard also works for PIB Natural Resources and their Guardian Program. He worked in a water quality lab for 13 years, so he knows a great deal about water. Councillor Lezard likes to be out on the land, taking photos and learning different things about the territory. Penticton in nsyilxcən is Sn'pinktn, which means a "place to stay forever." It was so named because everything came there: The salmon came into their front yards, and the two lakes created a natural corridor for animals to go through.



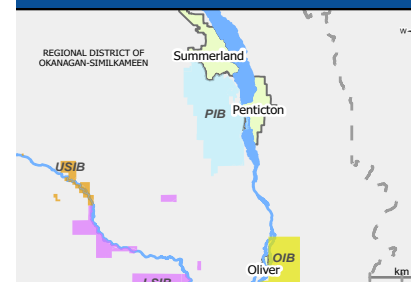
When asked what kinds of things keep him awake at night, Councillor Lezard observed that most people do not understand the value of water. He pointed out that we live on the shores of a big lake and once we were not afraid to drink water right out of that lake, but we can no longer do that. He cares deeply about both water quality and quantity issues. There is a finite amount of water in the Okanagan, and when it comes to climate change, it is important to reuse water and not be so wasteful. When asked what kinds of projects he would like to see happening in his region, Councillor Lezard said that the water source for his band is groundwater and that they have just done a masterplan for water use, but it is still not enough. He highlighted the importance of salmon habitat reclamation, as well as better water quality monitoring to be able to anticipate what we need to do to protect water in the future.

Regarding collaboration with other leaders, Councillor Lezard said that we need to start by acknowledging that we are all here forever and that we are here together. Our climate is changing; before things get worse, Councillor Lezard stressed that we need to find solutions to better manage water use.

## Penticton Indian Band

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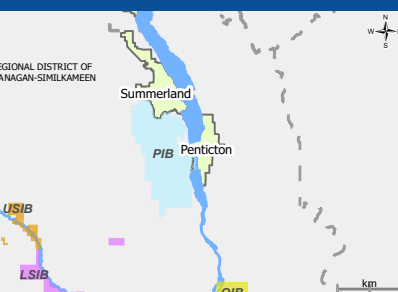


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Collaborative Leadership Initiative

## City of Penticton

The City of Penticton is located in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen situated between two lakes: Okanagan Lake to the north and Skaha Lake to the south. It is bordered on the west by the Penticton Indian Band.

In 2021, the City had a population of 36,885 people. The name Penticton comes from the nsyilxcən word snpintktn, which is commonly translated as “a place to stay forever,” or more accurately, “a place where people have always been all year long.”



## Mayor Julius Bloomfield

Previously a councillor, Julius Bloomfield has been the Mayor of Penticton for close to a year. He considers himself an environmentalist and lives off-grid in a straw bale house. Beyond his commitment to public service in his role as an elected leader, Mayor Bloomfield has a passion for horses. Over decades of riding around the Okanagan Valley, he has seen changes to wildlife, forests, and streams that concern him.



Top of mind for Mayor Bloomfield is forest management, particularly the forests in the headwaters, because of their impact on wildfire management and water quality. For Mayor Bloomfield, it is a question not just of how forests are being managed, but by whom and to what end. He believes that everyone must work together to help communities become more resilient in a changing climate in which wildfire may be a constant threat. He pointed to recent wildfires as a concern that is front of mind, but also noted that water issues have been a constant feature of the past 10 to 20 years. Mayor Bloomfield cited the reintroduction of salmon as a significant environmental and cultural achievement in the watershed and acknowledged the work of the syilx Nation in leading those restoration initiatives. He is keen to see that work continue.

Regarding the Collaborative leadership Initiative, Mayor Bloomfield mentioned that he is looking forward to building on existing collaboration. He noted that he has good relationships with other community leaders up and down the valley, but that there is an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between all leaders, syilx and municipal. Mayor Bloomfield is particularly interested in learning more about syilx watershed planning and the syilx Water Declaration.



# ȳilmixʷm kalʔlùpaq'n, Chief Keith Crow

Chief Keith Crow, who also goes by his traditional name kalʔlùpaq'n, is from the Similkameen Valley. He became Chief of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band after four years on council, and he has now served as ȳilmixʷm, Chief for 10 years. An expert in water treatment, Chief Crow is passionate about science and syilx water law. He represents his nation in the Columbia River Treaty negotiations and on the Columbia River Salmon Restoration Initiative.



When asked what kept him awake at night, Chief Crow pointed to diminishing groundwater flows; rising levels of arsenic and cyanide in well water; the growing number and consequences of bigger, hotter, and faster wildfires in the region; and the impact of persistent drought, noting that all these threats related in one way or another to water. Chief Crow worries about how growing pressures on water will affect traditional fish food sovereignty and sustainability for his people.

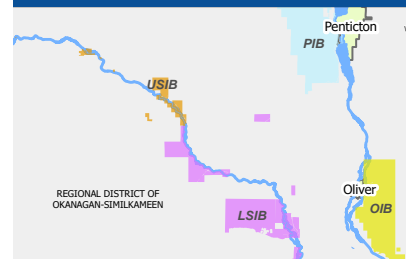
Chief Crow also worries about water licensing on the Similkameen River and how this impacts his community. He notes also that, historically, a greater number of water licenses were held by his people and that a great majority of these licenses are now held not by Canadians but by American companies. He is also concerned about changing patterns of land and water use in the Similkameen, including the disproportionate number of vineyards that have come into existence and about the inevitable arrival of invasive species like zebra mussels.

In terms of the Collaborative Leadership Initiative, Chief Crow hopes the region will move forward together. To that end, he suggests cultural sensitivity training for all involved and the inclusion at all stages of traditional knowledge keepers.

## Lower Similkameen Indian Band

The Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) is located in the Smelqmix, Similkameen Valley at the southern boundary of the Okanagan-Similkameen Watershed.

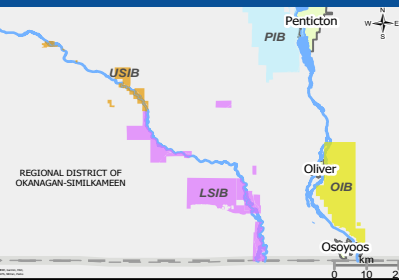
LSIB covers 15,276 hectares across 11 reserves that are divided into pockets of land stretching over 90 kilometres. These lands are largely found along the nməlytkʷ, Similkameen River, which flows south before joining with the Okanagan River in Washington state. LSIB's current membership is 680 members, including 220 residing on reserve.



## Lower Similkameen Indian Band

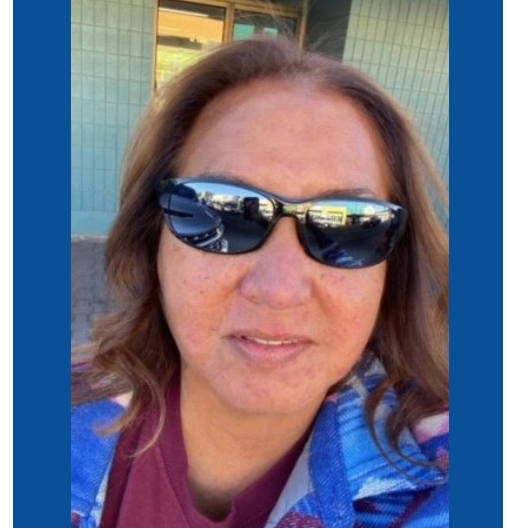
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## səxʷkʷinmaʔm twintᵏʷ Councillor Janet Terbasket

After a 20-year career as a constable with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Janet Terbasket retired in 2018 and was elected as a council member for the Lower Similkameen Indian Band in the same year—a position which she has held for nearly six years. Councillor Terbasket, a lifelong rancher, also spends much of her time taking care of her 130 head of cattle. She feels privileged to live in a place with so much natural beauty and wildlife, as well as a responsibility to take care of the land according to the syilx captikʷɫ teachings.



Water concerns were among Councillor Terbasket's main reasons for seeking election to council, particularly issues such as water title rights, the impacts of flooding, and water contamination from mining. Her driving motivation, she explains, is to look at what is occurring in her region in the context of the next seven generations, so that those who come next can experience everything that we experience today, including clear streams and clean drinking water. Councillor Terbasket highlighted several important initiatives that LSIB is working on, including protection of the Ashnola Corridor, planting trees, and working on advancing their own water laws.

The biggest problem in addressing regional water challenges, Councillor Terbasket said, was getting everyone to work together, including logging companies, mining companies, and the provincial ministries. Accountabilities in the region are stuck in silos. We go 'round and 'round, Councillor Terbasket said, trying to get answers on how we can work together to the point that seeking resolution is often like chasing our own tails. She said that these are drastic times, but that we should be able to come together because everyone needs water. If we don't work together to protect our water and lands, no one will. At the collaborative table, Councillor Terbasket put forward the necessity of focusing on the big picture and the interconnectedness of water issues with forestry, ranching, farming, and all things that affect our water systems.



## ki?lawna? xa?tus, Chief Clarence Louie

Chief Clarence Louie has been Chief of Osoyoos Indian Band for nearly 40 years. During that time, the OIB has become a regional economic hub that owns and manages a wide range of businesses that employ hundreds of people, including from over 30 different First Nations and six provinces. Syilx Okanagan language and culture are front-and-center across these businesses, including the Nk'Mip Desert & Cultural Center and Nk'Mip Cellars, the first Indigenous winery in North



America. Chief Louie was raised in Osoyoos, where he spent time working on vineyards in his youth. In 2021, Chief Louie published *Rez Rules*, a book about his life and the transformation of his community, as well as the systemic racism facing Indigenous peoples in Canada and the U.S. In addition to being the Chief of the Osoyoos Indian Band, Chief Louie serves as the xa?tus, Tribal Chairman, of the Okanagan Nation Alliance whose mandate is to advance, assert, support and preserve syilx Okanagan Nation sovereignty.

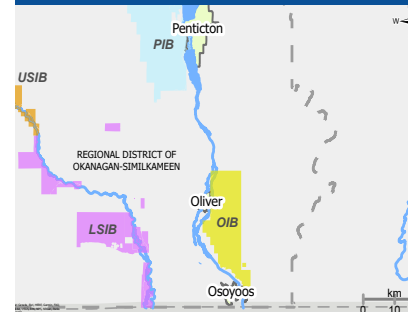
Chief Louie is concerned about water issues across the Osoyoos Indian Band's contemporary and historic reserve lands, as well as its backyard within syilx Okanagan Territory, which includes the South Okanagan and Boundary regions and extends east to the Castlegar-Arrow lakes region. Chief Louie explained that OIB lost land due to past decisions and development, including international agreements such as the Boundary Waters Treaty and Zosel Dam, as well as the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission. OIB's land includes sacred landforms and the syilx Okanagan Nation's largest fishery in the Canadian portions of the Okanagan watershed. The OIB reserve also contains some of the only untouched and unchannelled parts of the Okanagan River system. The cultural importance and salmon-related benefits of this unchannelled section of the Okanagan River are significant, and protecting this area is a responsibility OIB takes very seriously.

Chief Louie sees a lot of potential in bringing leaders across the Okanagan together under the Collaborative Leadership Initiative. He noted that OIB already works well with Oliver and Osoyoos, and that he looks forward to seeing what can be accomplished across the region. He stressed the importance of humility amongst the leaders – “elected leaders don't know everything” – which means involving councils and staff in the process.

## Osoyoos Indian Band

Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) is located in the south Okanagan Valley adjacent to Osoyoos Lake and just north of the U.S. border. The name 'Osoyoos' is derived from the nsyilxcən word swiws, referring to the narrows formed by two splits across the lake.

OIB has two reserves that comprise 12,950 hectares of land between the towns of Oliver and Osoyoos. OIB's land runs parallel to the Okanagan River. As of July 2021, the Nation had 598 registered members, of which 364 reside on reserve.

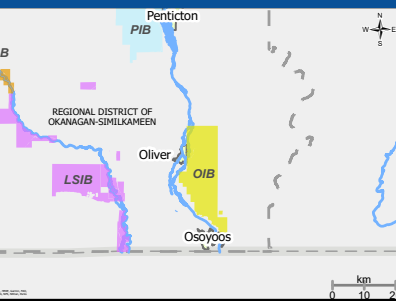


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## Town of Oliver

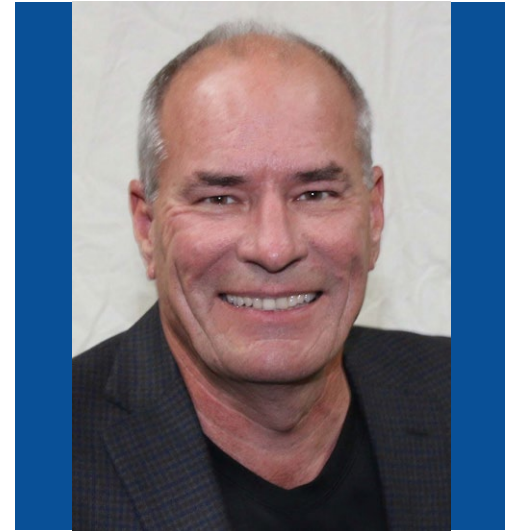
The Town of Oliver is located in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen on the banks of the Okanagan River and adjacent to Tuc-el-nuit Lake. It is bordered by Osoyoos Indian Band in the east.

Oliver has a population of just over 5,000. Initially a cluster of mining camps, it was incorporated into a village in 1945. Oliver is officially recognized as Canada's Wine Capital.



## Mayor Martin Johansen

Martin Johansen worked for the City of Kelowna for some 20 years before retiring to Oliver, where he realized that he could use his municipal skillset to serve on council. He was first elected Mayor in 2018 and again in 2022. Mayor Johansen enjoys golfing and is an avid outdoorsman who spends a lot of his time hunting, fishing, and camping. One of Mayor Johansen's highest priorities as Mayor is to address problems with the health-care system in his community, which he believes has reached a tipping point.



When asked about other big issues in his community, Mayor Johansen expressed concern about the impacts of climate change on Oliver's infrastructure and water system, which is largely based on groundwater. Climate change is particularly concerning, he said, because addressing climate change requires everyone to do their part, but the world continues to operate in silos with everyone thinking of their own piece of land and their own immediate interests instead of thinking of the Earth as a whole. Mayor Johansen noted that increasingly dry summers highlight the need to reduce water use. However, implementing effective water restrictions in Oliver has been challenging. Less water usage means less revenue for running the water system, which can result in higher costs. Mayor Johansen is interested in discussing effective water conservation strategies.

When asked about collaboration, Mayor Johansen noted that Oliver has a good relationship with the Osoyoos Indian Band, and that he is interested in learning more about the other bands and communities in the valley. He also stressed the importance of good water data and forecasting to help communities to get on the same page. As the region continues to grow, Mayor Johansen believes governments need to start working together to ensure that there is enough water for people and businesses.



## Mayor Sue McKortoff

Sue McKortoff was a teacher in Osoyoos for 35 years and has now been the Mayor of Osoyoos for nine years. She is also the chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. Dominating these two roles is the fact that Osoyoos is in a desert and as such is prone to both floods and droughts in the same year. Mayor McKortoff cites California as a bellwether of the kind of future she wants her region to avoid. They are building houses down there like there's no tomorrow, but they have precious little water.



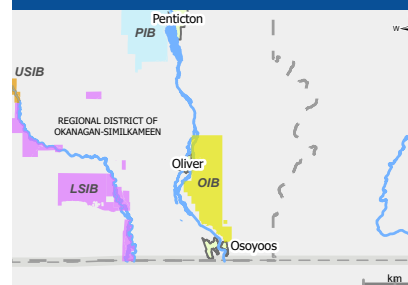
When asked about the water issues affecting her community, Mayor McKortoff talked about high manganese levels in several wells in Osoyoos, invasive species, and the challenge of building and maintaining water infrastructure to accommodate the summer tourism season. Mayor McKortoff also cited public knowledge and awareness as a significant barrier. Community members often do not see the big picture and do not understand why they are being asked to conserve the amount of water they are using for things like lawns and hot tubs. Mayor McKortoff said that we should all be reminded of what she taught her grade one and two students about water and what it means to live in a desert. She cited the Okanagan Basin Water Board as a powerful collaboration tool to help deal with regional water challenges, including as a way of bringing Western and Indigenous knowledge together in their science forums.

When asked about working with other leaders, Mayor McKortoff responded that she still has a lot to learn. She cited the syilx Water Strategy as an important framework for the region. She thinks it is important for all the leaders to learn about the work that has been done, but that it needs to be presented in a condensed way for the leaders to be able to understand the big picture.

## Town of Osoyoos

The Town of Osoyoos is located on the border with Washington state along the shores of Osoyoos Lake at the southern boundary of the Okanagan-Similkameen Watershed.

Osoyoos has a population of about 5,000. The community lies in the shadow of the Cascade Mountains and is surrounded by the only desert in Canada, with Canada's lowest annual precipitation, warmest annual temperature, and warmest freshwater lake.

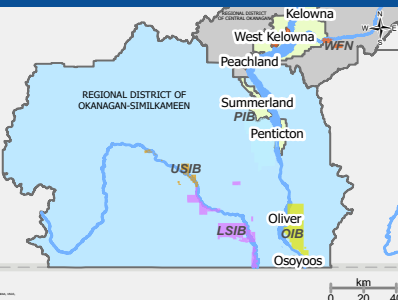


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## Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) encompasses a land area of 1,040,000 hectares in the southernmost portion of the Okanagan-Similkameen Watershed, adjacent to Washington state.

The RDOS was incorporated on March 4, 1966, and currently has a population of 83,022 across nine rural electoral areas and six municipalities, including the City of Penticton, the District of Summerland, the Town of Oliver, the Town of Osoyoos, the Town of Princeton, and the Village of Keremeos.



## Chair Mark Pendergraft

Mark Pendergraft is in his sixth term as a Director of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, where he currently serves as chair. Chair Pendergraft is a third-generation Osoyoos resident and comes from a longtime ranching family. He runs a small farm of his own and has a passion for hunting. Prior to deciding to run for area director in 2005, Chair Pendergraft worked as an education assistant with the local school district. He has had a varied career in logging, construction, and guided outfitting.



Chair Pendergraft is concerned about the ability of local governments to play a leading role in addressing water challenges and environmental issues more broadly. The main reason he got into politics back in 2005 was to create a sewer system along the edge of Osoyoos Lake to deal with water quality issues. He still has a passion for this issue. Chair Pendergraft said that decisions are often made at provincial or federal levels without enough consideration of how they affect people living in an area. He pointed out the importance of watershed planning as a way to implement solutions on the ground and to ensure good management of the headwaters.

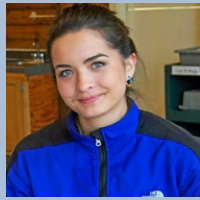
Chair Pendergraft is looking forward to getting to know other leaders a bit better. He said that it is easy for governments to become siloed and not work together because there is so much work going on and people are so busy. But creating the space for conversation, he said, is a good starting point to identify a common place to begin working together. Chair Pendergraft is particularly interested in learning more about syilx water management and syilx territory.





# **Stories of Leadership**

## THE CLI TEAM



**qʷəqʷim̓cxn, Tessa Terbasket** is a syilx woman from the Lower Similkameen Indian Band. She currently works for the Okanagan Nation Alliance supporting implementation of the syilx siw̓tkʷ Strategy. As a water champion, she is passionate about syilx-led watershed planning and governance initiatives. She is a mom to her two-year-old son and the owner of T Diamond Ranch.



**Merrell-Ann Phare** is a lawyer, writer, and the founding Executive Director of CIER, as well as legal counsel and advisor to First Nations and other governments and organizations. As co-facilitator of CLI, she brings extensive experience advancing Indigenous water rights and negotiating intergovernmental water agreements.



**Scott Boswell** is a conservation specialist, with over 20 years of experience in environmental planning and economic development. As the program manager for the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, he works with all levels of government in building partnerships to protect the region's biodiversity. Scott holds a Master of Environmental Planning.



**Michael Miltenberger** is an experienced politician and an expert in intergovernmental relations, serving as Mayor and councillor of the town of Fort Smith, NWT for six years, as well as 20 years as a member of the Northwest Territories Legislature (including 14 years as a minister). Michael co-facilitates the CLI.



**Colleen Sklar** is the principal of Creative Resolutions, she is a conflict resolution expert, policy innovator, strategic communicator, and IAP certified community consultant. Colleen led the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region to develop the first regional land use plan – Plan 20-50.



**Deborah Smith** is a member of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation with over 20 years of professional experience in the area of community economic development and skills development. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Manitoba. Deborah has served two terms as Chief of Brokenhead from 2018 to 2022.



**Eva Antonijevic** is the siw̓tkʷ projects co-ordinator for the Okanagan Nation Alliance. She is a registered professional biologist who specializes in environmental education and stewardship, including leading publication of *Building Climate Resilience in the Okanagan: A Homeowner's Resource Guide*.



**Richard Farthing-Nichol** is a project manager at the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources and past director of the Forum for Leadership on Water. Richard has formerly worked on water co-governance and Indigenous economic development projects in British Columbia.



## Leaders of the kłúsxnít<sup>w</sup>, Okanagan Lake Watershed

ýilmix<sup>w</sup>m, Chief Byron Louis  
Okanagan Indian Band

Mayor Christine Fraser  
Township of Spallumcheen

Mayor Victor Cumming  
City of Vernon

Councillor Brian Guy  
City of Vernon

Chair Shirley Fowler  
Regional District of North Okanagan

Director Amanda Shatzko  
Regional District of North Okanagan

Mayor Blair Ireland  
District of Lake Country

Councillor Tricia Brett  
District of Lake Country

ýilmix<sup>w</sup>m simo, Chief Robert Louie  
Westbank First Nation

səx<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>ínmaʔm éris ,  
Councillor Jordan Coble  
Westbank First Nation

Mayor Tom Dyas  
City of Kelowna

Mayor Gordon Milsom  
City of West Kelowna

Mayor Patrick Van Minsel  
District of Peachland

Chair Loyal Wooldridge  
Regional District of Central Okanagan

Mayor Doug Holmes  
District of Summerland

ýilmix<sup>w</sup>m sil-teekin, Chief Greg Gabriel  
Penticton Indian Band

səx<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>ínmaʔm silx<sup>w</sup>a əlq<sup>w</sup>,  
Councillor Tim Lezard  
Penticton Indian Band

Mayor Julius Bloomfield  
City of Penticton

ýilmix<sup>w</sup>m kalʔlùpaq'n Chief Keith Crow  
Lower Similkameen Indian Band

səx<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>ínmaʔm twink<sup>w</sup>,  
Councillor Janet Terbasket  
Lower Similkameen Indian Band

kiʔlawnaʔ xaʔtus, Chief Clarence Louie  
Osoyoos Indian Band

Mayor Martin Johansen  
Town of Oliver

Mayor Sue McKortoff  
Town of Osoyoos

Chair Mark Pendergraft  
Regional District of Okanagan  
-Similkameen



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