



ANNUAL REPORT

2015 | 2016

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The Okanagan Nation's Chiefs Executive Council works with Member communities on areas of common concern to strengthen Title and Rights. The goal is to ensure the recognition of Syilx Title and Inherent Rights to land, water, food, culture, language, identity and sovereignty continue.

This commitment to the Syilx Nation is carried out through nation-wide projects, initiatives, activities and relationships that are integral to and incorporate fundamental Syilx values and principles.

sqəlxcw'cawt

Our Syilx way of being.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We are Syilx. We Can Change History.

**“Unfortunately,
the invisibility of the
Aboriginal issue in this
country is something that has
been locked in by history...”**

Paul Martin, former Prime Minister
of Canada, May 12, 2016

Former Prime Minister Martin’s recent statement is, sadly, accurate. The tragedy of the residential school system is now dismissed as a simple fact of history; regrettable, but a relic of the past. The majority of Canadians refuse to see how it still resonates through Aboriginal communities; how it is a ghost that haunts us to this day.

The same may be said of reserve lands negotiated in bad faith, (or not at all, as is the case in most of British Columbia), or resource development on First Nation territories without equitable compensation, adequate consultation or being manipulated, bribed or bullied. Canada’s colonial past and history of intransigence toward Aboriginal peoples informs and negatively impacts our relationship with all

levels of government, and with the Canadian public.

When the children of Attawapiskat First Nation abandon all hope and dreams for the future to join their friends in an epidemic of suicide pacts, the country reacts with shock, outrage and shame. But the reaction is as short-lived as morning mist on a northern lake. It is soon forgotten, displaced by the next news crisis of the moment. For many Canadians, our

aspirations and frustrations are truly invisible.

Last fall, the voters in the federal election repudiated a government that had routinely reinforced colonial attitudes and biases, replacing it with a majority government that promised a new approach to Aboriginal issues. The election was notable in that ten Indigenous MPs were elected to parliament. Among the new members is BC’s Jody Wilson-Raybould,

who is now Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

The new government has vowed to correct many of the past injustices inflicted on Canada’s Indigenous population. It has begun by launching an inquiry into the issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls, and by ratifying the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both initiatives have long been

demanding by Canada’s First Nations, so the actions may be seen as a token gesture of good faith on the part of the new federal government.

But the government has an ambitious agenda and it remains to be seen how First Nations issues will fare as their term progresses. Will the federal government follow up on its good intentions with effective action? Or will First Nations once again be

last in line as the demands of the economy, business and industry steal centre stage? Only time will tell.

But our real concerns are closer to home. The provincial government has been a continuing frustration for BC First Nations, especially with its reckless, cavalier approach to the environment. The Premier delights in chasing rainbows in the form of the Site C hydroelectric dam project, the Petronas LNG Project on Lelu Island, and pipeline expansions such as Enbridge's Northern Gateway Project and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline that will transport dirty Tar Sands heavy oil through our province for export abroad, all promoted with the promise of pots of gold at the end. As always,

First Nations concerns are mostly ignored, while individual Nations are manipulated, bullied, or bribed in a cynical attempt to coerce community consent for the projects.

What the province does not understand is that when the land, Our Mother, is hurt and abused, we all suffer. Short term financial gain is no excuse for permanently damaging our lands and waters. We are stewards of the land, first and foremost, and we ignore this responsibility at our grave peril.

On January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal delivered a scathing report on the child welfare system's treatment of Aboriginal children on reserve, calling it racially discriminatory, because

the system provides flawed and inequitable services for First Nations.

Meanwhile, child welfare in BC is in crisis and the government's response is the disastrous Plecas report which was prepared without First Nations input. About 55% of children in care in British Columbia are Aboriginal. They are the invisible ones, gone from their families and communities, seized under antiquated child protection laws.

It is imperative that First Nations re-assume full control over the health and well-being of our children. We have the knowledge and expertise to do so, and the time is now.

This year, the 8th Spirit of Syilx Youth Unity Run continued to motivate

and inspire our youth, and to strengthen our communities. It is a highly visible event that brings First Nations issues and concerns to the broader public in a very positive way.

We have also expanded the salmon fry release program and hosted over 400 students from local schools at the Hands of Our Youth fry release in Penticton in May.

Work continues on the Syilx Protocol and the Governance Process with the ultimate goal of creating a Syilx Constitution to strengthen and solidify the Nation. We are also working with the Colville Confederated Tribes on a title and rights strategy for the Arrow Lakes and other complex legal issues.

Finally, I would like to offer

my heartfelt thanks to all those who have worked so tirelessly for the Nation over the past year. It is through your continued efforts that the Canadian public is slowly coming to better understand our issues, concerns, and challenges. Thank you for making us visible.

To be invisible is to be powerless. Let us prove that former Prime Minister Martin's statement is, in itself, a relic of the colonial past. We are neither invisible, nor powerless.

We are Syilx. We can change history.

Lim'limpt

ʔaʔsi Wł

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
ONA Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our Way

Reflecting on the last year in the context of where we have been, looking at both our struggles and success, and then considering where we are going, I used the Chief's Executive Council's (CEC) three priorities: People, Land and Resources along with our cultural teachings for guidance and direction.

Okanagan (Syilx) Peoples honour and respect our relations and the natural resources that surround us – still relevant are Syilx teachings of the Four Food Chiefs who gave their lives so that we, as humans, can exist: Bitterroot, Salmon, Saskatoon berry and Black Bear. Syilx history, culture, language and spirituality embrace this understanding and wisdom of our ancestors. We are enduring, responsible stewards of our environment.

Looking to *skemxist*, and considering the CEC Strategic Priorities it is the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women that stands out in 2015. Indigenous peoples rallied across the country keeping this societal shame in the headlines. Their communities, families and friends worked tirelessly to keep this national travesty a Government and Community priority. This is a national tragedy that has been too long overlooked. This is more

than an Indigenous matter. It is a womyn's issue. It is incumbent on us all to continue to fight for the rights of all Indigenous womyn and girls and to take action.

N'tyxtix majestically moves through our waters calling us to stewardship of our land, the water and its resources. ONA Fisheries and Aquatics, and Natural Resources continue to be active on our lands strengthening Title and Rights. There are numerous *n'tyxtix* stewardship

projects underway ranging from education and awareness, Sockeye reintroduction, salmon harvest, stock assessment, habitat restoration and water management.

The Syilx Water Strategy RBC project came to completion this past year. This project moved forward a longstanding CEC directive that was founded on the responsibility of the Syilx people as stewards for water and aquatic resources. The goal of the Syilx Water Strategy

has been to engage with community to address water issues and describe how to protect and manage water use and allocation based on Syilx law and Syilx law and culture. This four-year initiative has developed water strategies and articulates the Syilx understanding of the centrality of *sin'w'k'w* to our people.

Spitlem reminds us that we are all connected. When we work collaboratively we are building community and strengthening our Nation.



This is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than within the ONA Wellness department. The staff, with direction from the Wellness Committee, continues to build relationships and develop partnerships across departments, within our band communities and with external partners.

The ONA continues to lobby government, search for resources and advocate for the Syilx Nation agenda. The ONA continues to promote and develop the Syilx Child & Family, and Health Framework, but without funding for implementation.

Creativity and Innovations come to us from *siya?*. This youthful energy inspires us to look forward to the future with optimism. This upcoming year, we have three newly funded projects that will infuse our communities with

much needed resources: Cold Storage to assist with salmon harvest operations, The BRIDGE project and the YES project.

These projects have taken time to make it through the assessment and approval process yet all innovative and sound in addressing the CEC Mandate. Under direction of the CEC, the ONA continues working on securing resources to implement these projects for more than three years. However, after much hard work, it is with great satisfaction, that ONA can announce that the opportunities to work collaboratively with communities to address some of the economic, employment and mental health issues in our communities will commence this year. These projects will be built on the same model as many of our other

Wellness is leading the way, engaging community in shaping culturally based programs – doing it “Our Way”, as we are reminded by the words of the late Elder, Tommy Gregoire.

successful initiatives. Working together, our Nation has developed promising practices that are being emulated by other First Nations across Canada and on the international stage.

Finally, it will be critical this year as in past years, to continue to monitor our financial well-being. Financial oversight of all our projects, and initiative remains important for several reasons. First, as a non-profit we cannot carry debt. We are project-funded and driven, and with inadequate core funds, we must balance our books every year.

Secondly, there are no core funds to support our Title and Rights agenda (legal fees) or the work of the CEC. This funding is money that comes from the administrative fee charged out to each project. It is essential that we do not become too dependent on any one project or initiative.



We must continue to diversify to ensure our continued growth, and sustainability as an organization.

“Our Way” requires that we honour our Four Food Chiefs and the principles that our ancestors have taught us. The Four Food Chiefs are an expression of our Syilx worldview. This is foundational to who we are as Syilx people and how the ONA must evolve as an organization to serve Syilx people.

Lim'limpt
swiki?st

Pauline Terbasket
Executive Director

Rooted in *nx^walx^waltantot*:
THAT WHICH GIVES US LIFE

In the face of ongoing infringements and injustices, the leadership of our Nation is under pressure to address innumerable Title and Rights issues and to insist that government engage in negotiations and develop patterns of relations based on recognition and implementation of Title and Rights.

Fundamental change in First Nation-Crown relations is slowly underway in Canada based on the confirmation of Aboriginal Title in the Tsilhqot'in Nation decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. The Tsilhqot'in decision affirms what the Nation has known since contact, that our Title exists and is territorial in nature, and our Title lands cannot be used without our consent. The decision is a 'game-changer' and will pave the way for the greater

application of Indigenous governance and laws.

As part of preparing for this future, the CEC has continued to advance the Syilx Cooperative Decision-Making Protocol that helps provide clarity to the current roles and responsibilities of the communities and the Nation in our collective decision-making. This work reflects our inherent responsibility to care for the *fmx^wulax^w* which is rooted in *nx^walx^waltantot*.

The CEC is also advancing new models of negotiations with both the Province and Federal Crown. Several Chiefs are leading these initiatives on behalf of the Nation as a whole, including Chief Byron Louis and Chief Keith Crow as leads with the Province, and Chief Jonathan Kruger and Chief McLeod with BC Hydro. It is hoped that through this work we can address the long-standing injustices faced by our People and communities. The main themes being advanced are:

- Recognition of Title and Rights throughout the Territory
- Development of new models of decision-making grounded in collaboration and consent
- Design and implementation of Title-based fiscal relations

“We have a responsibility to make sure our ancestors are taken care of including the lands they’ve left to us. We have to make sure they’re proud of the work we do.”

Chief Jonathan Kruger

The Tsilhqot’in Decision declared that Aboriginal Title real, meaningful and Territorial in nature, and Title lands cannot be used without consent of the Indigenous Title holder.



Alongside these efforts the CEC continues to address Claims made by neighbouring Nations that encroach on the Territory, and to advance incremental progress to reflect our culture and language on the land. For example, Environment Minister Mary Polak and Osoyoos Indian Band Chief Clarence Louie celebrated another step forward in their partnership in May announcing the official renaming of *swínw's* (Haynes Point) and *sx'wəxnitk'*

(Okanagan Falls) provincial parks to the traditional First Nation *nsyilxcən* (Okanagan) place names.

"Language and place names are of utmost importance to the historical and cultural identity of people from any region or country," said Chief Louie.

We are now at a threshold of unprecedented opportunities that will empower our People and communities like never before.



skc'əx'əxwipla? ut stəttətt



Syilx Title and Rights is tied to the right to live in our own way as Syilx People.

2015

MAY

- FNLC - First Nations Forestry Strategy Session
- ONA CEC LANGUAGE TRAINING, Spirit Ridge Resort, Osoyoos, BC

JUNE

- ONA Natural Resource Council Water Strategy, The Cove Lakeside Resort, Westbank, BC
- ONA CEC QUARTERLY MEETINGS, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC

JULY

- ONA CEC MEETING | Review BDO 2014-2015 ONA Audit, Westbank, BC
- ONA Special Meeting with Government, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC
- Southern Okanagan Parks Meeting, Penticton, BC
- ONA Annual General Assembly, PIB Host, Penticton, BC

AUGUST

- BCH/ONA EEC (Chris O'Riley), Penticton, BC
- SPECIAL CEC MEETING with Regional MLAs, Westbank, BC
- Desautel Hunting Case
- Interior Alliance Meeting, Westbank, BC

SEPTEMBER

- BC Cabinet and First Nation Leaders' Gathering 2015, Vancouver, BC
- ONA Nations Health Assembly, Vernon, BC
- MoE Meeting with Minister Polak - Southern Okanagan Parks, Osoyoos, BC
- Columbia River Governance - Universities Consortium for Columbia River Governance, Westbank, BC
- CEC MEETING | ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC
- Okanagan/Secwepemc Litigation Committee Meeting, Richmond, BC
- ONA & UBCO MOU 10th Anniversary Signing, UBCO Campus, Kelowna, BC
- UBCIC - Annual General Meeting, Vancouver, BC

OCTOBER

- Interior Alliance Meeting, Spences Bridge, BC
- Okanagan Nation Water Forum "From Knowledge to Forward Thinking", Kelowna, BC
- ONA CEC Quarterly Meeting, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC

NOVEMBER

- AANDC and FNLC - Joint Leadership Gathering 2015, Vancouver, BC
- Okanagan Nation Wellness Forum, Vernon, BC

DECEMBER

- ONA CEC MEETING, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC

2016 JANUARY

- Wellness Annual Strategy Planning Session, Spirit Ridge Resort, BC
- CEC MEETING with Colville Confederated Tribes Business Council, Nespelem, WA
- CEC Post-Tsilhqot'in Legal Strategy Session, The Cove Resort, Westbank, BC
- Syilx Children First Forum, Ramada Hotel, Penticton, BC

FEBRUARY

- SPECIAL CEC MEETING, River Rock Resort, Richmond, BC
- ONA CEC MEETING, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC
- 2016 Community to Community Forum, NK'MIP Conference Centre, Osoyoos, BC

MARCH

- Legal Team Meeting with Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria, BC
- Columbia Region Advisory Committee, Castlegar, BC
- SPECIAL CEC MEETING with DFO RDG, Penticton Indian Band Boardroom, Penticton, BC
- ONA CEC MEETING, ONA Chiefs Gathering Place, Westbank, BC

Supporting the Movement for Improved Roles in Land-Based Decisions

The Okanagan Nation and its communities are preparing for the increased role in land-based decisions on the territory.



Environment Minister Mary Polak and Osoyoos Indian Band Chief Clarence Louie celebrated another step forward in their partnership agreement in May announcing the official renaming of *swiws* (Haynes Point) and *sx'axnitk'* (Okanagan Falls) provincial parks to the traditional First Nation *nsyilxcan* (Okanagan) place names. "Language and place names are of utmost importance to the historical and cultural identity of people from any region or country," said Chief Louie.

The creation and affirmation of key internal governance agreements and traditional protocols, such as the Syilx Cooperative Decision-Making Protocol, are playing an essential role in this important transition.

The Natural Resources department has recently received a grant from the Real Estate Foundation to move forward on watershed management that is informed by Syilx laws and protocols. This upcoming project will help inform specific watershed management through community engagement, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Syilx language and *cap tik'w!l*.

A necessary change towards a more central theme of Syilx land ethics is vital to empowering and taking ownership of

natural resources. The Nation is at a threshold of unprecedented opportunities that will empower our communities like never before. We remain prepared, ready and continue to act.

EVERYTHING HAS A NAME

Place names projects have been an integral aspect of the cultural research that the ONA undergoes. This past year includes place name projects with the Penticton Indian Band, Lower Similkameen Indian Band, Osoyoos Indian Band, and a focal point in the Upper Columbia region. These projects resulted in research data to describe and locate place names throughout the Territory. With the ongoing work on the place names projects, the nation is taking a

“Our traditional stories reflect this deep connection and help to pass down cultural, spiritual, and historical knowledge through generations.”

step towards bringing our fundamental connections to place by the continued revitalization of traditional *nsyilxcen* names.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MOVEMENTS

The ONA continues ongoing collaboration with ONA member communities to resolve hunting and wildlife management concerns, support wildlife habitat improvement and provide responses to the provincial and federal government plans on wildlife, habitat, and species at risk.

The wildlife program assists communities with technical and research to support and further the Nation's cause in referral response and land use development. Member communities become rooted in the cause to resolve and protect our precious resources from the grassroots level and aid in the overall Syilx collective title.

The Syilx Cooperative Decision-Making Protocol is a mechanism that is based upon Syilx values, principles, and approaches towards an advance collective Syilx title to address major impacts and land development within the territory.

sq'wlg'itula'x' Voices on the Land has four active tours to discover. www.voicesontheland.org

The ONA Decision Support System is a land use tool designed to assist in land management decisions and the referral process. The ONA is working towards a newer upgrade that will ensure a more comprehensible outcome.

The Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA) seeks to establish a First Nation to First Nation working relationship and build capacity. A Memorandum of Understanding is intended to promote lasting working relationships and constructive dialogue to develop a process for governance, management, harvest and use of fish and aquatic resources.

“Through performing ceremonies and practicing TEK to honour the land and ask for replenishment, Syilx act as a natural stewards of their traditional territory from knowledge that has been passed down to generation to generation.”

VoTL Use Plan



Reshaping our Relationships

Reshaping the way we create and sustain our relationships within the Nation is based on the connections we have to our communities, our Nation and the land.

To move our work forward, we need to continue to build and shape our interactions with our community members, work partners, and collaborative partnerships.

Focusing on our relationships is a grounding exercise that serves to model our Syilx values, roles, and expectations within the projects and initiatives we undergo to bring the Syilx perspective forward on our own terms. We need to be able to work towards a sustainable and collaborative, future where our connections to *tmix*^w, *tmix*^w *ulax*^w, and *siw*^w *tk*^w help balance the social and economic relations.

WORKING TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE (BC HYDRO)

Throughout the past year, the Okanagan Nation Energy Executive Committee (EEC) has made great progress in advancing the Enduring Relationship. As part of the Enduring Relationship, the CEC meets with BC Hydro's CEO and senior executives on an annual basis to share successes and discuss barriers. Some of the main points of discussion included establishing short, medium, and long-term goals for procurement and employment targets, exploring a pathway to address past infringements,

and creating a strategic approach to support Okanagan youth.

The EEC, as part of the Relationship Plan has met with BC Hydro on a number of occasions to discuss the development and determine the parameters of the Enduring Relationship Implementation Plan. Ensuring that actionable, tangible, and relevant objectives are achieved for our communities was identified as a top priority for the coming year.

**BUILDING
RESOURCES
FOR INNOVATIVE
DEVELOPMENT,
GROWTH, AND
ECONOMIC STABILITY
(BRIDGES)**

BRIDGES involves innovative research with our community and partnerships with UBC Okanagan, Okanagan College and BC Hydro. This integrative project will support Aboriginal youth find their confidence to move into skills training, further education or employment. It includes a strong traditional cultural training and activities component based on Syilx understanding of how culture assists young people to find their way.

It is important to acknowledge the relationships we have as Syilx people to our Nation, our communities, our land, our family and friends, and with ourselves. This innovative project will help ground our communities to create the crucial ties to culture and identity and how these shape our lives.

**"It's our duty as leaders to
create a relationship with BC
Hydro, they have the biggest
foot print on our Territory."**

Chief Jonathan Kruger

**THE ENERGY EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

The Energy Executive Committee is chaired by Chief Jonathan Kruger and alternate Chief Harvey McLeod with CEC representatives Chief Byron Louis and Raf DeGuevara as full participants. The mandate of the EEC is to oversee all daily matters related to the operations of BC Hydro and other energy companies on the territory and to make recommendations to the CEC for decisions. The importance

of looking at the big picture that includes the past, present, and future is critical in ensuring the Okanagan Nation's needs are met.

The EEC is responsible for overseeing the Okanagan Nation's relationship with BC Hydro ensuring that it continues to evolve and progress. They work directly with BC Hydro executives on a regular basis to assess the work being done, progress being made, and any barriers that may arise.

nk'att'wistmuntam

"WE ARE STANDING TOGETHER WITH THEM ON THIS"



ENVISIONING A FISH NETWORK (OSCI)

In 2014, as part of ONA's Economic Pilot, discussions were initiated with a group of experienced recreational fishers to determine if there were opportunities to work collaboratively together to support the community of people fishing for Okanagan salmon, promoting healthy fishers and encouraging viable salmon fishing communities in the Okanagan.

Out of these discussions emerged the Okanagan Salmon Community Initiative, otherwise known as the OSCI. In the spirit of cooperation and collaboration 9 recreational fishers did volunteer assistance with ONA's Chinook acoustic tagging efforts near Oliver from September 26 to October 11, 2015. These organic relationships are intrinsic

to the work the ONA does and help motivate projects, initiatives, and events all while ground the work we do within an educational context for non-community members.

BUILDING A PATHWAY FORWARD THROUGH COLLABORATION, RESEARCH, AND PARTNERSHIPS

As a reaffirmation of a lasting relationship between the Okanagan Nation and the University of British Columbia Okanagan, a resigning of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) serves to sustain this important connection. Chief Robert Louie officially resigned the MOU in good faith to ensure this relationship is maintained for the good of the nation and its member communities.

This partnership helps to advocate for Syilx participation within the academia arena. Syilx people hold a plethora of education, knowledge, values, and worldviews that will serve to help build a more resilient future by the creation of relationships from the grassroots to the highest executive level.

ENSURING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN THE OKANAGAN HEALTH SCIENCES SECTOR

This exciting project is funded through the Ministry for the Status of Women Canada and has the ultimate goal of increasing the number of Aboriginal

women working in the health sciences sector in order to increase their overall economic prosperity.

Priority focuses are on a needs assessment looking at the barriers to Aboriginal women and the creation of further recommended changes to policy and practice to support respective career goals. This initiative serves to address the lack of support Aboriginal women are facing within the health sciences and works towards creating a collaborative affair between the nation, academia, and the provincial government.



Leaders from around the Columbia Basin come together at the Universities Consortium on Columbia River Governance to raise the topics of rights, roles, collaborative leadership opportunities, and responsibilities.

<http://www.columbiarivergovernance.org>





Preparing the Way for the Salmon in the Upper Columbia

Over many years, and indeed generations, our people have been forced to watch as our lands have been flooded, rivers turned into stagnant reservoirs and our natural resources devastated by hydroelectric projects, operations and activities in the Columbia River Basin. One of the most serious and devastating impacts of hydroelectric dam operations in the Basin has been upon the Okanagan fisheries, including Okanagan salmon.

The Okanagan Nation has paved the way for the return of Salmon into the Upper Columbia with the success of the Okanagan Sockeye into the Okanagan sub-basin. The return of salmon demonstrates that Sockeye can be restored in the Upper Columbia as the migration for Sockeye is the same distance from Grand Coulee to Penticton as it is to Kettle Falls.

The CEC has provided instructions on numerous initiatives to ensure that our approach leads to the successful return of *n'tyxtix*.

**The Salmon, the Water
and our Prayers
have no borders.**

Our people continue to honour our ancestors and pray for the salmon to return to the Upper Columbia. The Salmon and our prayers have no borders.

We, along with our relatives and partners share the responsibility to find solutions that work. We need to work together to ensure we are not overlooked this time in the Columbia River Treaty Process. It is what our salmon deserve and what our people demand.





INFORMING WITH EVIDENCE

This work includes technical research and data collection by monitoring water flows, nutrient basis, and the relationship between salmon and water. Much of the work being done in the Upper Columbia is shifting towards a more sustainable management of water and fish.

Evaluating alternative operational water storage models and enhanced salmon survival research is key to preparing for the return of salmon. The relationship of water flows and dam operations to fish mortality for example. This will give us insight into what needs to change under a new Columbia River Treaty (CRT) to protect and enhance salmon returns and aquatic interests.

MONITORING SPECIES

Work being done in the eastern part of the territory includes monitoring of freshwater mussels (Columbia Basin), juvenile White Sturgeon (Upper Arrow Lakes reservoir), and various water quality and feasibility and physical habitat monitoring studies in the Duncan reservoir and mid-Columbia River and tributaries.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS

This can only be done by education and awareness, technical research, creating and implementing land-based management practices, and gathering the necessary research to inform water and salmon initiatives.

We are working to determine impacts of reservoir operations and any future key operation models on cultural and heritage resources in the Arrow Lakes region.

Basin Stories: Moving Lives-First Nations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJt1EQocxBo&list=PLQCfSzYU1aNtB6soaoOTXO9moxJgYdu3&index=6>

PROMOTING A COORDINATED, BILATERAL FISH PASSAGE AND REINTRODUCTION EFFORT

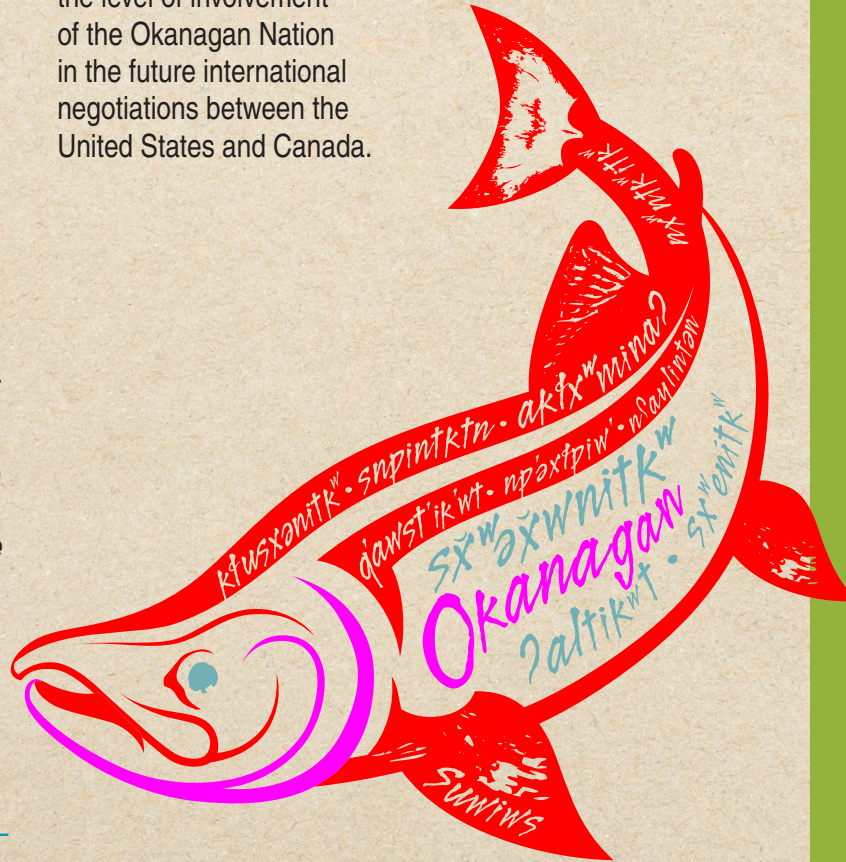
The ONA as part of the Columbia Basin tribes and First Nations jointly developed this paper to inform the U.S. and Canadian Entities, federal governments, and other regional sovereigns and stakeholders on how anadromous salmon and resident fish can be reintroduced into the Upper Columbia River Basin.

Read the Joint Paper of the Columbia Basin Tribes and First Nations: *Fish Passage and Reintroduction into the U.S & Canadian Upper Columbia Basin*.

[http://www.ucut.org/Fish Passage and Reintroduction into the US And Canadian Upper Columbia River4.pdf](http://www.ucut.org/Fish%20Passage%20and%20Reintroduction%20into%20the%20US%20And%20Canadian%20Upper%20Columbia%20River4.pdf)

SHAPING THE FUTURE

The CEC is devising negotiation approaches, interests and outcomes. This includes determining the level of involvement of the Okanagan Nation in the future international negotiations between the United States and Canada.



PROTECTING OUR CONSTITUTIONAL FISHING RIGHTS

In collaboration with the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Okanagan Nation continues to advance its united position in the Columbia River Treaty. It is imperative to ensure that the Nation's interests and rights are addressed, respected and included in the final negotiations processes. The connection between hydroelectric and water flow operations and its potential and actual impacts on our constitutionally-protected fishing rights is distinctly an Okanagan issue. This matter provides the Okanagan with a unique opportunity to engage in future discussions with both levels of government, due to the critical nature of those rights.

The CRT is a 30-year renewable multi-million dollar water storage agreement between Canada and the US. It led to the construction of 3 major Canadian dams that flooded much of the Slocan (Arrow Lakes) valley and converted the upper Columbia watershed into a massive reservoirs system.

This treaty created one of the most significant and ongoing infringements of Syilx Title and Rights. The Columbia River Treaty is up for renewal and re-negotiation by Canada and the United States as it will expire by 2024. Until now, there has never been any consultation or involvement of the Syilx/Sinixt, or any other First Nations in the design, negotiations or implementation of the original treaty.

The Chiefs Executive Council is directing the technical team and has maintained a strong unified approach to protect and advance the complexity of its related CRT interests. Due to past involvement and specific interests in the CRT review the Chiefs Executive Council are uniquely positioned to influence the outcome of any new Columbia River Treaty.

Highlights from our Technical Work

The awareness and understanding of the current state of Sockeye salmon in the Okanagan is increasingly important as these stocks are threatened by a number of key environmental stresses.



DNA work shows that reintroduction is succeeding with larger numbers of Sockeye returning to spawn in Skaha Lake.

Disease prevalence in returning spawners among the highest years for IHN virus (39.7%) but lowest for other diseases.

Okanagan fish exhibit a four-year population cycle.

Ratio of hatchery to non-hatchery fish in Skaha Lake was 1:2.20

Average length of smolts leaving last spring was 10.7cm from Skaha Lake, and 8.8cm from Osoyoos Lake. All smolts leaving were non-hatchery fish.

Broodstock collection faced significant challenges in 2015 due to the environmental pressures that greatly undermined the number of salmon that were able to return.

The *K̓c̓p̓alk' st̓im̓i* Hatchery received 485,032 Sockeye salmon eggs, less than half the original goal.

Eggs came from two different collection sites: Penticton Channel Weir and Oliver, from a total of 239 females.

DATA & ANALYSIS

The *Kt cp'alk' stimi* laboratory provides critical information and data on the effectiveness and impact of fisheries management decisions, and the health of the Sockeye return. For the first time the Hatchery Sockeye fry were tested in the laboratory to ensure they were free of viruses before they were released.

In the autumn, returning spawners were surveyed for diseases to establish the health of the stock. Additionally, we monitored the size, diet, age, and origin of the juvenile fish and returning spawners in Skaha and Osoyoos lakes.

Along with work on Sockeye we have also started training in macroinvertebrate taxonomy work and aging of Mountain Whitefish scales.

Kt cp'alk' stimi
Hatchery is one of the
largest technical fisheries
organizations in BC with more
staff in the region than both
the federal and provincial
agencies.



FISH IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM (FINS)

ONA's Fish in Schools program is one of the key fish education programs for youth in the region, teaching on the presence and life cycles of fish, particularly the Sockeye salmon, so that students may become future advocates for both salmon and their habitat. In mid-January 2016, ONA staff delivered fertilized eggs to 11 FinS tanks located at the participating schools, explaining the lifecycle and habitat requirements to the students, and providing students with the opportunity to raise the fry in the classroom. This program also provides the opportunity to educate children on the connection of salmon as a source of sustenance.

Kt cp'alk' stimi RELEASES FIRST FRY FROM OUR NATION HATCHERY

On May 20, 2015, near the confluence of the Pentiction Channel and Shingle Creek, thousands of fry were released as part of the Sockeye Reintroduction Program. This was monumental as it was the first year that the newly opened *Kt cp'alk' stimi* Hatchery was able to directly release Sockeye fry. Over the course of the week over 1.7 million Sockeye fry were released.

There are more than 50 projects that the Fisheries and Aquatics Department took lead in this past year.

The newly developed Penticton channel weir is used to evaluate the potential collection of broodstock for salmon restoration.

\$450,000 project took place on the Penticton Channel, between Okanagan Lake and Penticton Golf and Country Bridge, from September 8 – October 15

Over 4,000 metric tonnes of specifically-sized gravel placed instream to create 7,154 m² Sockeye and 1477 m² Kokanee high-quality, nature-like spawning habitat.

Multiple boulder clusters for salmonids and Burbot were placed in the channel to further enhance the spawning habitat.

Provided high quality spawning habitat for 3000+ breeding Sockeye salmon pairs.

The previous two stages of this project took place in the fall of 2014, and have already created 7,500 m² of spawning habitat in the Penticton Channel.

CLIMATE CHANGE TAKING HOLD

Globally, 2015 was the hottest year ever on record, with a level 4 drought declared throughout the region, and large scale forest fires taking place throughout the Okanagan.

At the same time, the 2015 Okanagan Sockeye salmon run was to exceed expectations, with over 500,000 Sockeye entering the Columbia River as of mid-July, exhibiting the success of the Okanagan Nation in bringing the back the Sockeye. Due to the persistent and intensified effects of climate change on the Pacific North-West, continuous above-average temperatures raised the water temperature and created a thermal barrier, disabling the migration of the vast majority of fish up to British Columbia.

By the end of the season approximately 15,000 – 25,000 Sockeye entered Osoyoos and Skaha Lake. In direct response to the collapse, ONA closed the economic and recreational fishery, and minimized the food fishery (<800) to properly conserve Okanagan Sockeye salmon stocks for the future. These events will likely have a deep impact on salmon stocks and food security in the Okanagan for a time to come.

Understanding Water as our source. *Twix*[™]. Embedded in this ancient word, *Twix*[™] is the idea that water gives life to all living things that exists, we take life from the water.

Jeannette Armstrong
and Marlowe Sam
Rock Creek, April 2016

The ONA has stepped up to support the newly-founded Columbia Basin Transboundary Youth Network.
<https://columbiabasintransboundaryyouthnetwork.wordpress.com>

Syilx Water Strategy: Protecting the Life of Water

Water plays a key role in the health and well-being of the *tmix'wax'* and *tmix'*.

The Our Syilx Water Strategy is vital to the Nation in terms of creating awareness, incorporating Syilx principles, and practices on water governance. Implementing the strategy will help the Nation to take a main role in water for animals, plants, medicines, and people.

“When we take care of
the land and water, the land
and water take care of us.
This is our law.”

ONA Annual General Assembly, 2013

In order to move forward on land and water based projects and initiatives we need to strengthen and build a governance structure for water. This can only be done by education and awareness, technical research, creating and implementing land based management practices, and gathering the necessary research to inform water and salmon initiatives.

RAISING YOUTH WATER LEADERS

The ONA teamed up with Waterlution Canada in the creation and support of the Syilx Youth Water Leaders group. This group brought youth together from across the member communities. A series of workshops helped mentor youth in current and ongoing water issues and the importance of relationship to place. Youth becoming involved in water is a step forward

in creating the capacity and empowerment of future leaders who will take up these water roles. It is essential for our youth to be deeply involved in responsibilities to the land and water.

WATER NEEDS FOR THE *tmix'*

The Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) is a collaborative project between the ONA, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) and the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The goal of the project is to develop EFNs and Critical Flows for water management in Okanagan streams.

It is anticipated that a final EFN and critical flow setting will be used in water licensing and drought management decisions.

WATER AS A CENTERPOINT FOR DISCUSSION

As part of the ongoing water work, ONA has hosted two major water forums to bring insight into the water strategy. The purpose of the Special Water Meeting was to help support community and create and uphold new and existing relationships between people from across the Nation.

In October 2015, in light of the 2015 Level 4 drought, the ONA hosted a Water Forum that brought together water leaders and community to create relationships and collaborate on processes through a series of dialogue sessions. The outcome was a tremendous amount of supportive dialogue that informs the Nation on its intricate and delicate relationships.



WATER STRATEGIES AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Chiefs' Executive Council (CEC) and Council's directive on the creation of a Syilx Water Strategy is designed to recognize the responsibility for water.

Five key strategies outline the Nation's water goals through a series of continuing approaches.

- 1 Shift perspectives and propel forward with clear action steps
- 2 Convey and apply a new language of governance
- 3 Develop Syilx territory water and land stewardship plans
- 4 Write and deliver new or additional water/land governance policies, processes and decision-making tools
- 5 Identify implementation opportunities and constraints

WETLANDS: THE LIVERS OF THE ECOSYSTEM

Program staff and PIB partnered on a wetland habitat restoration project combined with cultural rejuvenation. To re-introduce fire to the landscape, a prescribed burn was conducted at an old river oxbow near Penticton airport.

With support from LSIB and PIB, the ONA collected and planted over 1000 cottonwood, willow and red-osier dogwood stakes. These plants will grow to recreate a streamside forest that will provide valuable wildlife habitat.

The wetlands are an important part of the ecosystem that supports our traditional foods. Wetlands become a central habitat area where indicator species of both flora and fauna are located.

New Prospects for Restoration and Renewal

It is part of our Syilx responsibilities to care for the *tmix*[™]. As such, ONA's restoration initiatives encompass a holistic approach to restoration that include the land, water and the wildlife that inhabit both.



Project goals include the re-establishment of important nutrients for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, creating opportunities for Syilx people to culturally connect with the renewal of our territory, provide public viewing opportunities of activities, and continue relationship development. These are coupled with the recognized importance of taking care of the land, including the necessary research for wildlife preservation and continuation.

PUTTING THE RIVER BACK

The Penticton Channel is an important location for salmon spawning and rearing but it currently highly degraded with limited quality salmon spawning and rearing habitat. As a means to begin re-mediating these

ecosystem losses and promote healthy fish habitat in the region the Okanagan River Restoration Initiative (ORRI) began the third stage of its spawning bed restoration in the Penticton Channel. ORRI's restoration projects rehabilitate the natural features to Okanagan waterways that were lost to such restructuring of water habitats, for the health of fish and wildlife.

ENSURING WATER SUSTAINABILITY

The ONA has partnered with the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) to secure a \$397,000 grant through the federal Gas Tax Fund. This funding will help better understand the water needs in a region known for its water challenges and Canada's largest population growth. A two-year study will begin looking at the Environmental Flow Needs (EFNs) or the water needs of fish and aquatic ecosystems in the Okanagan Basin. The phase of the project will include approximately 16 stream-by-stream studies, using flow monitoring equipment in streams identified as important for fish habitat throughout the valley.

"This project will give us a common data set to start the needed dialogues on how to make informed decisions on Water for the tmix™ and all the Okanagan Watershed".

Howie Wright
ONA Fisheries Program
Manager

PARTNERING FOR RENEWAL

As with all restoration projects, multiple partnerships have been successfully initiated and maintained to ensure the success of the Mission Creek Restoration. Members of ONA currently sit on a steering committee and help fulfill the role of project partners in the

restoration of Mission Creek. Being project partners enables a more enhanced flow of cultural diversity and understanding to occur. The ONA has assisted in media outreach and video collaboration as well as assistance and incorporation of the *nsyilxcen* language.

sanxʷaʔqʷaʔstan
Mission Creek Restoration
<http://www.missioncreek.ca/>

LEARNING FROM OUR ELDERS

Elders of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band identified the loss of the log jams, which play an important part in river health in the Similkameen River. This pilot project aims

to create a log jam on an exposed gravel bar in the river and monitor the impacts as part of this pilot project. The importance of restoring the log jams for the river is part of the on-going revival of cultural knowledge informing technical work. This pilot project helps to inform one aspect of the restoration and renewal piece within the nation to help water, animal, and plant health.

RESTORING THE NATURAL FUNCTION

The Shuttleworth Creek initiative is a project to create a long-term fish-friendly access. The project will provide fish passage, increase fish populations, improve spawning habitats and overall habitat diversity while opening up 25 kilometres of stream habitat. It will also allow for easier clean out and maintenance of the sediment basin. Ability for permanent riparian vegetation to be planted, improving fish and wildlife habitat, will also be a major benefit of this project.



CALLING BACK OUR RELATIVES

The ONA continues to promote recovery of threatened grizzly bear populations in the territory by project proposals, involvement with conservation groups, and interaction with provincial biologists. Program staff joined provincial biologists in a grizzly hair-snagging project in the Kettle-Granby area to obtain DNA samples to assess the population and how isolated it is from other bear populations. A total of 76 grizzly bear individuals (38 females and 38 males) were detected by analysis of over 1300 hair samples collected from about 100 hair snagging stations set across the area.

Moving forward, we hope to develop proposals consistent with our culture, traditional knowledge, values, laws, and customs and to collaborate with neighbouring Nations to ensure that appropriate numbers of *ki?lawna* remain in the North Cascades forever.



Wápuḡx̱n (LYNX)

Wápuḡx̱n are commercially trapped in BC but are protected and listed as threatened in Washington State. The ONA looks to continue to live capture and study *wápuḡx̱n* with a view to re-establishing a productive population in under-occupied habitat on Colville lands in Washington State.

Ray Derickson, Russell Baines and Graeme Derickson all of Westbank First Nation took a break last winter from harvesting fur to live-trapping *wápuḡx̱n* with the ONA's wildlife biologist Al Peatt. In a pilot-project to understand how *wápuḡx̱n* use the Kettle River landscape and determine their family relationships, three *wápuḡx̱n*, all males, were captured successfully, GPS-radio collared, ear-tagged and released. The ONA wildlife team will monitor each cat monthly and will recover data stored in the GPS collars later in 2016. Corrine Derickson visited the trapline to lead a campfire ceremony honouring and thanking *wápuḡx̱n* and approving of the live trapping project. This culturally understood blessing and service was as essential to success of the project as the trapping knowledge, skills and time so kindly contributed by trappers Ray, Russell and Graeme.

In Ray's words, "When considering culture, understanding and way of life, having a person give a cultural blessing for the intended purpose serves as a good blessing to all people involved."

"*Wápuḡx̱n* are a beautiful animal" added Ray. "Working with the ONA to live trap and study *wápuḡx̱n* has gelled into long-lasting friendships and working relationships that connect traditional and scientific practices. It makes me proud because it is happening on the Derickson Family Trapline."

Pathways to Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Restoring our Indigenous food systems is foundational to the well-being of Syilx communities. ONA contributes to the wide range of traditional food initiatives that are carried out by communities, organizations and individuals throughout the Nation ensuring that our food systems continue despite ongoing challenges.

Concurrently, ONA is committed to building a relationship with the Provincial government to advocate for a more inclusive approach for Syilx values and perspectives into the management of our wildlife resources.

In 2016 we are hopeful to move forward with extending the reintroduction program to Okanagan Lake so the salmon have another cold water lake (after Osoyoos and Skaha Lake) to help us build resilience in Sockeye salmon stocks. Based on its size and depth we could see above 30,000 spawners per year and optimistically,

over 300,000 for fisheries harvest would be coming to Okanagan Basin. It has the significant potential to meet food, social, ceremonial needs, while providing food security for communities.

In order to move forward for the path of sustainable first foods, it is undeniably vital to our way of being as Syilx people to work towards protecting, enhancing, and preserving the ecology, cultural ceremonies, relationships, and first food systems for the generations yet to come.

Wild Pacific salmon are integral to the culture, well-being, and livelihood of BC First Nations people and First Nations support is critical for the conservation and protection of wild salmon and the well-being of wild salmon runs in British Columbia.

To support our assertion of Syilx responsible stewardship, our endeavors have begun to reach out to a number of partners that would assist us in this renewed Food Sovereignty journey.



ACROSS BORDERS

ONA supported the Colville Confederate Tribe's (CCT) seine fishery at Wells Pool on the confluence of the Okanagan and Columbia Rivers with a packer boat, deck crane, and reefer truck. From this endeavor approximately 4,300 Sockeye were sent to Swinomish fish plant and were canned for communal distribution. This was an opportunity for ONA to both continue collaborative efforts, while sending Sockeye and Chinook salmon to Okanagan communities. ONA will be working with CCT on future opportunities for collaborating on communal distribution for Chinook and Sockeye.

EXTENDING OUR HAND

The *ke'cp'alk'stim'* Hatchery is currently in the process of amending our aquaculture license. This amendment will allow us to culture different food fish species at the hatchery, which will include: Sockeye, Kokanee, Chinook, White Sturgeon, and Rainbow Trout. This gives us the opportunity to utilize the Hatchery to its maximum capacity assisting in the conservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of fish stocks. It also highlights the diversity of fish species that have been, and continue to be part of our Indigenous food systems.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND ADVOCACY

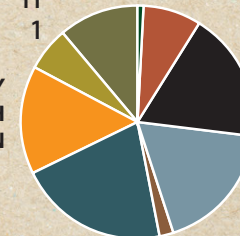
ONA continues to be dedicated to advocating for Indigenous food sovereignty, particularly as it pertains to Syilx communities and the return of Okanagan Sockeye, both regionally and internationally. One of our key partners in enabling these commitments continues to be Slow Food. The Okanagan Sockeye artisanal fishery has received international recognition through Slow Food International.

This has included invitations to attend and present at multiple high profile international events like the Milan Expo, the largest international exposition of sustainable initiatives and projects, as well as Slow Food Canada's National Meeting in Montreal.

These opportunities will continue to bring the story of the return of Okanagan Sockeye salmon to international delegates, including United Nations representatives, philanthropic organizations and other Indigenous leaders from around the world. It will also provide the opportunity to attempt to learn more from other community's adaptation strategies for Indigenous food sovereignty in the face of such adverse challenges as climate change.

	%
LSIB	8
OIB	18
OKIB	18
ONA	2
PIB	21
UNIB	15
USIB	6
WFB	11
other	1

COMMUNITY FISH DISTRIBUTION



snxawilam

The Salmon Feast brings together people from around the nation to celebrate and honour the "sacredness of the river" and revive cultural practices tied to water and salmon.

This event is an opportunity for community to continue the tradition of gathering, feasting, celebrating fish, and building nationhood. This gathering is an essential practice in the continued efforts by the Okanagan Nation to rehabilitate local ecosystems and renew connections with water and fish. It is vitally important that we honour the salmon so they will always come back to feed the people.

Slow Food works around the world to protect food biodiversity, building connections between producers and consumers, and raises awareness of some of the most pressing topics affecting our food systems.

<http://www.slowfood.com/>

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

The ONA's continued efforts to achieve shared management of wildlife and wildlife harvesting within Syilx Territory is consistent with past Chiefs Executive Council direction. The contribution of wildlife to food security and nutritional well being for Syilx people is also expressed in the cultural values placed on wildlife. The people depend on sustainable populations of food species so Syilx management of wildlife and wildlife habitat is central to the food security of current and future generations.

Program staff met with several communities to hear hunters' concerns and seek guidance of Elders and knowledge keepers. ONA provided advice to Band referrals staff about protecting deer winter range and

responding to provincial hunting regulations and helped support community discussions of Okanagan Laws and Protocols for wildlife harvesting.

Building on the work of previous years, the ONA was able to recently re-open meaningful early discussions to design a community-driven hunting and wildlife management agreement aimed at joint decision-making on the territory. This renewed effort seeks to identify priority issues and interest, highlight key species and regulation concerns, and seek better management decisions.

PROTECTING OUR RELATIVE, WOODLAND CARIBOU

The rapid decline of *stuytca?* (woodland caribou) within Syilx Territory over the past several decades is unequivocally the result of habitat change wrought by the disruptive legacy of human settlement, forest resource extraction and recreational policies of successive provincial governments.

Ensuring further inclusion of Syilx knowledge and perspectives as a basis for *stuytca?* recovery within Syilx Territory will help guide and inform recovery actions and strategies based on traditional ecological knowledge that is consistent with Syilx laws, ethics and protocols.

ONA and community members have hosted a second annual caribou ceremony that provides the central spiritual aspect in moving forward for our first foods. Traditional Ecological Knowledge holders and ONA wildlife technicians hosted this vital first foods ceremony to honour the caribou in the South Selkirk mountain range to encourage *stuytca?* to remain and thrive.

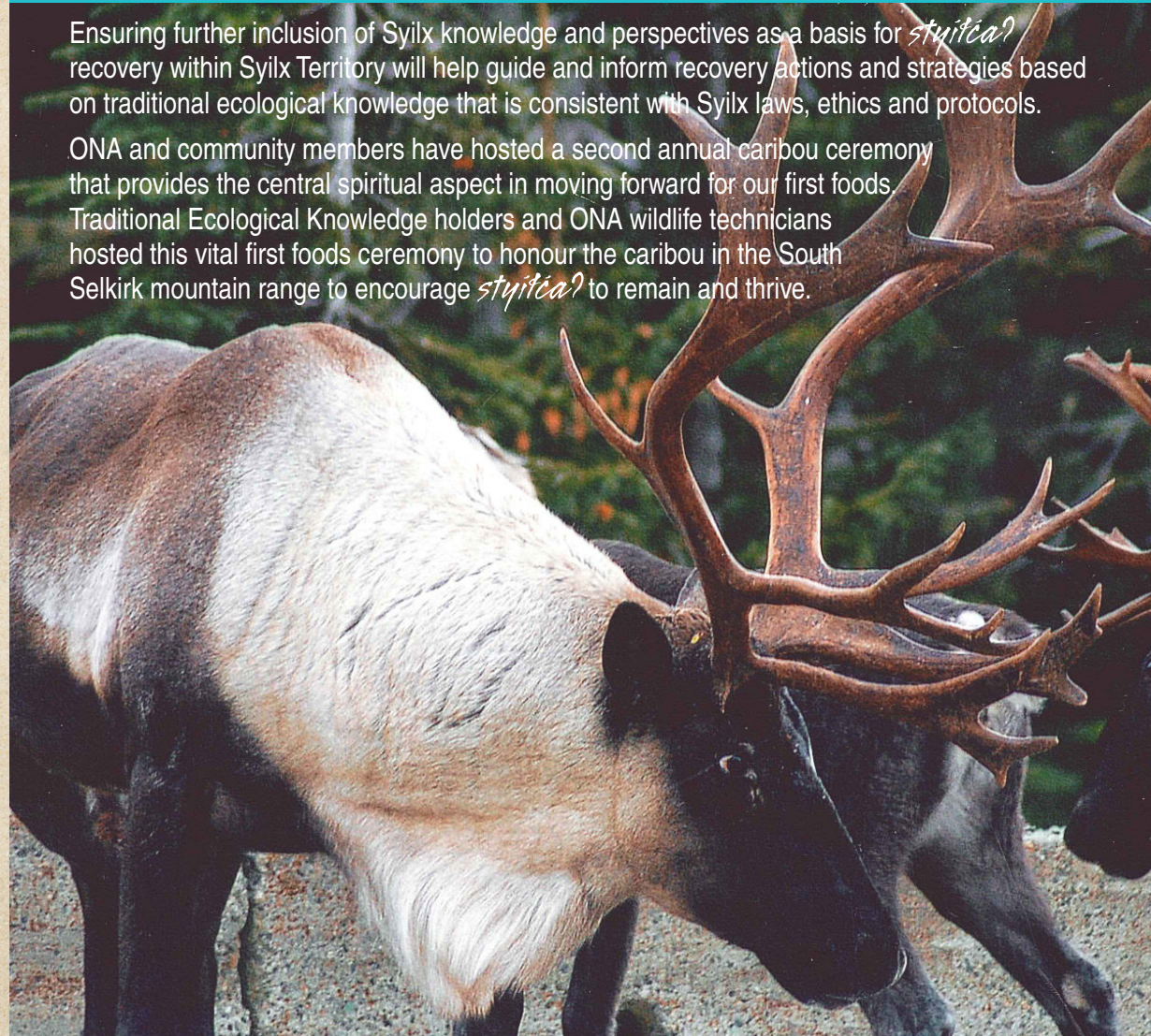


photo courtesy Alex Schonicoff

Incorporating Indigenous Principles for an Economic Fishery

The ONA supports the sustainable development of a regional economic fisheries sector, with measures that strengthen competitiveness and add value. Such developments recognize the need to diversify and be competitive, so that our goals of incorporating Indigenous and sustainable principles are affirmed and aligned with our Syilx responsible harvesting practices.

These activities are balanced with strategic plans and proposals that support our community's access and planning, and that will ultimately contribute to feeding the Syilx Nation. This has extended our uptake of activities of networking with regional, national, and international members, presenting on our trans-boundary fishery work to interested parties, creating media that communicates our initiatives, developing projects that support environmental and economic sustainability,

while looking to cultivate alternative markets for niche-based products. Okanagan Aquatic Enterprise (OAE)'s sales and marketing efforts of the locally caught Sockeye marked the start of our efforts to maximize the value of the fish caught. The region has shown it is willing to pay a premium for locally caught salmon.

CRAFTING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

The 2015 marketing strategy focused on the continued education

and awareness of the Okanagan Sockeye salmon and the ONA's conservation efforts in addition to maintaining and extending our sustainable regional sales base. This successful model focused on creating markets that support the broader values of the Indigenous cultural significance and environmental sustainability of Okanagan Sockeye.

This has included a wide range of opportunities from the Penticton and Summerland Farmer's Markets, to more sustainably focused

"We in the West need to learn from Indigenous People. The future is NOT in the Global economy but in an economy in harmony with Nature."

Carlo Petrini, Founder of Slow Foods International,
Terra Madre, India 2015



retailers, including Choices, Nature's Fare, Urban Fare, multiple fruit stands and direct delivery including LocoMotive and Farmbound Distributors. ONA's Okanagan Select Sockeye products have been diversified from previous years and now include 180g canned, smoked, candied and fresh frozen Okanagan Sockeye fillets.

As part of our involvement in the Inland Salmon Producers Association the ONA also continues to be involved in producing and selling River Select products. This has included the development and procurement of alder smoked Sockeye, both maple smoked Sockeye and Pinks, and candied Sockeye retorts. These products will become available in the 2016 season.

Due to the collapse of the Sockeye fishery in the Okanagan in 2015, there was no commercial harvest.

To ensure that populations of plant and animals remain abundant, trading of Indigenous foods must take place only when there is a surplus and the ecosystems are healthy and functioning.

The Economic Fisheries initiative relates to the water strategy with a focus on food sovereignty and food security. What began as a project to explore the economic sustainability of a food fishery has developed into a recognition of the universal struggle of indigenous people across the globe.

EXTENDING THE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES

The latter part of 2015 witnessed the initial steps forward at acquiring and constructing a cold storage and food hub, located next to ONA's Westbank Office. Our goal is to set up a system for integrated local fisheries development based on local resources and supplemented with like-principled producers and distributors. A cold storage facility with freezer, storefront supports the fishery while meeting consumer demand of product, and increases the viability of the initiative. These developments have taken place to both ensure the financial sustainability of the economic pilot, providing a key piece of infrastructure for the storage of Okanagan Sockeye, while increasing the range of possible food

security developments and activities.

The cold storage will allow the Economic Fisheries Pilot initiative along with the Food, Social and Ceremonial Fishery to continue to grow within a model that recognizes the need of both sustainable operations and that of the

ONA Chiefs' Executive Council. It will allow us to have more control over the fish stock, its distribution and prices. We will continue to provide this valuable resource to our communities and now we can offer diversified service of improved storage.

REVITALIZING TRADE ROUTES

An aptitude for developing sustainable trade relationships with other Indigenous communities is part of what has always made the Okanagan Nation resilient and prosperous. Due to the damaging effects of colonization many of these connections were previously disrupted.

One of the central goals of ONA's economic initiative is to rejuvenate trade relationships, particularly with other inland Indigenous fishing communities. These trade partnerships provide unique opportunities to collectively innovate and support each other. They will also become increasingly valuable for our resilience as the environmental, social and economic challenges that we face become more complex and numerous. The environmental struggles faced by the Okanagan Sockeye fishery in 2015 highlight the need to continue collaborating and innovating with other organizations and Indigenous communities within the region.

Integrating our Approaches to Well-being

One of the top priorities of the ONA continues to be the wellness and safety of our children, women, families, and communities.

The ONA Wellness team continually develops and enhances the services and programs offered to our communities. In addition to the direct services/programs offered, the Wellness team builds individual and community capacity, provides training opportunities and facilitates resource development and sharing within and between the team and the member communities.

GROUNDING OUR WORK

ONA strives to provide quality services using a holistic, integrated approach with a Quality Assurance model. The Wellness Committee has developed four strategic priorities helps to inform some guiding principles.

Strategic Priorities

#1 MENTAL WELLNESS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

#2 INCREASE ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

#3 ELDERS CARE

#4 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

These strategies help to inform some guiding principles in the Wellness team approach and delivery of initiatives and programs. The Wellness principles include traditional wellness, improving health governance and relationship building, capacity building, and funding sustainability.

Our Nation's Wellness representatives

continue to advocate for an increase in the 23% regional allocation of First Nations Health Authority resources to more accurately reflect the resources required to service such a vast geographical area.



Over 40 psychological assessments were completed on Nation members to properly diagnose their mental wellness concerns in order to effectively plan for their care

Due in part to strong advocacy from our Nation's Leadership, Interior Health agreed to set aside 15 of the 73 Interior Region substance misuse recovery beds for Aboriginal organizations in a partnership process

ONA created a Mental Wellness Lead position to further focus and advocate for program and policy changes to enhance mental wellness services for our members.

Okanagan Indian Band held their R'Native Voice Circles at their *siyistken* – Pit-House

A formal evaluation of the Letter of Understanding relationship with Interior Health is underway with the final evaluation report expected in early Fall of 2016.

The Wellness Committee agreed by consensus that Eliza Terbasket (LSIB) would be our newly appointed Syilx Technician with Lynn Kruger (PIB) as her alternate.



RECLAIMING AND RESTORING SYILX WAY

Following discussion and consultation it has been agreed that in 2016-2017, the ONA will hire a Syilx Traditional Wellness Coordinator whose role will be to implement key priorities of the Syilx Traditional Wellness Strategy. In addition, our Nation participates in Interior Health's Spiritual Care Committee to advocate for increased Aboriginal spiritual care services in the primary care setting.

CELEBRATING AND PROMOTING WELLNESS

In light of the long term strategic wellness plan the Nation held its annual forum: Celebrating & Promoting Wellness. This event is centred on key Syilx themes such as traditional medicine, kinship roles, health of the land, reconciliation, language revitalization, empowerment and leadership. Along with the workshops were practitioners who were able to help provide complementary self-care services.

A special performance from the *nkmaplqs* *I snmamayatn iki* *sqilxwtet* Cultural Immersion School unveils the dedication and capacity that our children are learning. Okanagan Indian Band members, Danielle Saddleman, Sheldon Louis, and Frank Marchand showcase the work being done for the people that build the foundation of resilient communities.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE BURSARY AWARD

The ONA and Fortis BC bursary program builds on the concept of the betterment of our Nation through education. This bursary is open to all Okanagan Nation members who are post-secondary students enrolled at a recognized university or college on a full-time basis, registered in a minimum two-year academic program and are attached by ancestry and identity to the Okanagan Nation.

The 2015 recipients are:

Nicola Terbasket, member of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band, currently attending Vancouver Island University, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Sport, Health and Physical Education.

Mary-Rose Cohen, member of the Okanagan Indian Band, just completed her first year at Emily Carr University.

The Power of our People's Resilience



"As a nation we have to integrate holistic approaches as a meaningful alternative to how we achieve our goals of safe, health communities grounded in our vibrant cultures and revitalized languages."

Pauline Terbasket

The basis in which communities thrive give light to the events that tie relationships and people together.

These events infuse a powerful sense of cultural connection to the land, the water, and the people.

Out of our connections to the land, we build upon the resilience, resurgence, and empowerment of the people. These relationships born from being on the land help reinforce the health, wellbeing, and safety of the people.

Out of the negative impacts to our people and land we find the nature of community bonding that creates the fundamental ties to each other as a nation. It is the land that heals us and allows our prayers to be heard and carried by *tmix*.

PROTECTING THE MENTAL HEALTH FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health (ACYMH) program is a partnership project between ONA and the Oonakane Friendship Centre. This specific initiative provides culturally significant mental health services to children and youth in the South Okanagan communities. Services include direct outreach services to children and youth, mental health promotion, and community health group coordination. It is vital to our communities and to the nation that we move forward to protect the health and well-being of our children and youth.

ASSISTING IN THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE

The Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT) continues to focus on supporting communities through trauma, providing prevention in relation to suicide and suicide behaviours, and developing team member capacity. The team members continue to challenge themselves which has increased their confidence and ability to take lead roles in crisis responses, debriefing, and prevention delivery.

The fourteen ONRT team members received training on three separate occasions covering topics such as suicide/trauma assessment, ONRT roles and responsibilities, ethical responsibilities, program duties and responsibilities, case management, *capitix*™, suicide signs & symptoms, and team

building. All of this training works towards assisting in the power of people.

ROOTED IN REALITY: THE HEARTS OF OUR WOMEN

Violence against women was addressed over the last year by educating youth about healthy relationships during our annual Unity Run, R'Native Voice and during the health and wellness forums.

Okanagan Nation Response Team (ONRT) supported the family of Roxanne Louie, as well as Nation members through the preliminary trial, and a vigil held this past year as well. Our survival as Indigenous people is dependent on creating communities where Indigenous women and girls feel included, valued, and respected.

"No inquiry can undo what happened, nor can it restore what was lost, but it can help us find a way forward for women."

Jody Wilson-Raybould



photo courtesy Steve Kidd/Penticton Western News

OUR ANCESTORS ARE WATCHING

After more than ten years of grassroots activism, the Government of Canada finally addressed the reality of violence against women. Minister Bennett, Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and Minister of Justice, Jody Raybould-Wilson, have committed to a National inquiry.

Wounded by domestic violence, poverty and internalized hopelessness, there are too many Indigenous women and girls who face unemployment, inadequate housing, gender and race discrimination. Long held stereotypes intensify their vulnerability.

It is our roles as Syilx people to continue to fight for the rights of all Indigenous women and girls. Our survival as Indigenous people is dependent on creating communities where Indigenous women and girls feel included, valued, and respected.

BC accounts for almost 1/3 of all cases of MMIW, most illustrated on the Highway of Tears.

On December 8th, 2015 a national inquiry was launched.

**BUILDING A
GENERATION OF
STRONG AND
PROUD YOUTH**

Continuation of multi-communal social institutions of interaction, of kinship, gathering, and practicing activities language and ceremony is a vital

contribution in today's day and age, building or enhancing relationship support and help and identity for all involved. The concept of getting to know the land and each other is a long-term practice in health and well-being in all aspects of traditional land

management and self-care. These community focused events help encourage and instill cultural teachings, education and awareness for the Nation and the public, build success in terms of understanding cultural identity through

holistic occasions such as the Canoe Journey, Unity Run, R'Native Voice, and Youth Leadership gathering. These events give cause to ignite the spark and passion in the journey that youth, women, men, and elders transition through.



This year's unity run, over 100 participants ran 230 kms!

**WE ARE AS STRONG
AND GROUNDED
AS THE LAND -
INDIAN RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL:**

Former Indian Residential School students and their families continue to feel the impacts and effects of Indian Residential School

experiences resulting in the need for ongoing social, emotional, spiritual, physical and cultural support. The Chiefs' Executive Council supports ONA Wellness Nation-based initiatives to support the ongoing work to access the needed resources that will assist

former students, their families and communities in dealing with these Indian Residential School impacts.

The ONA is currently developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy and plan to support the former students, their

families and communities in dealing with the ongoing trauma, healing and reconciliation processes of the Indian Residential School experience and the Indian Residential School Compensation process.

SIRSC MEMBERS:

OKANAGAN INDIAN BAND Diane Louis and Eric Mitchell

PENTICTON INDIAN BAND Jack Kruger and Valerie Baptiste

OSOYOOS INDIAN BAND Hubert George and Ramona Bent

WESTBANK FIRST NATION Andrea Lavigne and Ray Derickson

UPPER NICOLA BAND Sharon Lindley and Trish Manuel

LOWER SIMILKAMEEN INDIAN BAND Herman Edward and Leon Louis

UPPER SIMILKAMEEN INDIAN BAND Hazel Squakin and Nancy Allison

"Never again will my people have to suffer
Never again will we lose our voice to a higher power
Never again will I let myself be abused or pushed around
simply because I am a female & native
I am the grass blowing in the wind...
I have potential & I will use it to its full effect
I will sing for my people & stand up for those who are still
here & for those who didn't make it to see today
I will use prayer for the future
And I will wash away my worries and sadness in the water
My drum is a beat I will never stop
I am only here because someone fought for me to be here
and I will never take that for granted
I come from a long line of strong women
And I will work hard everyday so I can become one
Our culture is not gone yet, and we will have to work hard
to revive it
But their hopes were that we would be gone, they thought
we would be falling apart
Little did they know, that this is just the start."

sti?wulax Mykelty Lezard

Upholding Our Children and Youth

The traditional Okanagan kinship system is based on the principle that the whole community is responsible for the care, education, and well-being of all children.

As a Nation we must proactively integrate these holistic approaches to how we achieve our goals of safe, healthy communities. While this task is daunting at times, it is extremely important that we pass on this knowledge to our children and grandchildren.

We aim to ensure that culturally-appropriate programming is readily available to our youth and children, enabling them to become more grounded and confident in their traditional knowledge and practices. We are also taking any opportunity to involve traditional knowledge, community resources and to share our people's tools in a good way.

R'NATIVE VOICE

R'Native Voice Coordinators ran a program that consisted of 12 weeks in each community. The fresh, culturally-infused curriculum is being implemented in the communities and is inspiring the participating youth to learn and get more involved in community and culture. *Nsyilxcen* and *cap tik'w* are utilized within program components to assist in helping the youth discover their *smimay*, their own personal story, while promoting the revitalization of language.

CHILDREN FIRST FORUM

In January the Children First Forum was hosted to ensure a Nation-based

approach for Syilx children and family planning, setting the stage for healthy childhood and placing children first. It was held the day after the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) decision further exposed the Federal Governments discriminatory and racist policies enacted upon First Nation children.

Andrea Auger of the First Nations Caring for First Nations Children Society presented on *Setting the Stage: Because kids only get one childhood*. Children and Youth and MCFD Special Advisor, Grand Chief Ed John participated in a panel on Children First: a Provincial Perspective.



K'w'xast PROGRAM

This Program is in its second and third program delivery cycle after having been implemented in the summer of 2014 and delivered to all seven ONA communities.

During the second round of delivery, the children learned values, laws and lessons from the *captik'w'!*, *How Turtle set the Animal People Free*. Children who completed the *K'w'xast* program made warrior animal masks that were made out of gypsum. During the final session in each community the children had an opportunity to showcase their masterpieces and creativity to their parents, grandparents, siblings and extended family members.

The *K'w'xast* coordinator had an amazing opportunity to work with the Penticton Indian Band to plan and host a *K'w'xast* family day. This event included active presentations about *spic'n* hemp rope and a storyteller told *captik'w'!*.

SYILX PARENTING PROGRAM

The Syilx parenting program consists of three components: Syilx parenting, traditional storytelling and activity, and kinship roles. Traditional storytelling offers opportunity to teach stories while crafting a rattle that can be used as a tool for song, dance, and revitalization of the Okanagan language. Reclaiming traditional roles and applying them

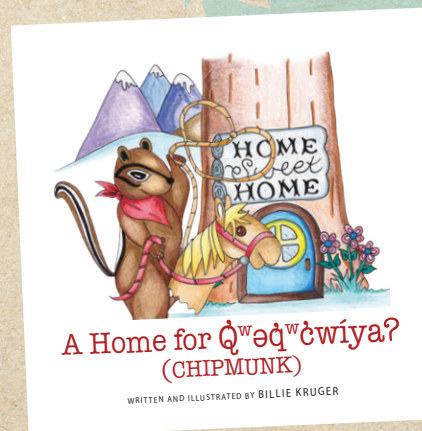
within a modern contest is an exploratory aspect of the program, assisting participants to explore these roles in order to become an active member of the community with clarity and a sense of purpose and belonging is the vision for this program.

PUTTING CHILDREN AT THE CENTER

The Family Decision Making (FDM) upholds the children and puts them at the centre of decisions about their wellbeing. The FDM circle is a meeting where members of a family come together with significant others and members of the child's community who are, or might become, involved to assist the family to develop a plan to care for their children.

This process helps promote and develop the capacity of Aboriginal families and communities to care for and protect children and supports child and family development. The Key components of this process including the involvement of the FDM coordinator to work with participants and to actively participate in planning for the child's safety and wellbeing.

This past year brought many changes to the FDM program, including changes in personnel and team leadership. The FDM program has evolved to incorporate a Syilx worldview where the inherent Right to ensure the wellbeing for children and families in a holistic and preventative way.





xixutem

2akwtila?t, 2ukwt

tetwit

2uxwti?, 2uxwtila?

On January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the federal government discriminates against First Nation children on reserves by failing to provide the same level of child welfare services that exist elsewhere.

Due to the lengthy wait lists for therapeutic services (up to 3 yrs) the ONA Early Intervention program addresses the developmental needs of children (0-6) through: playgroups, 1 to 1 services and regular screening/ assessments.

ONA's *k'u xast* Program has provided services to 120+ children since starting in 2014.

RNativeVoice was utilized in 5 communities.

71 Youth participated in the RNative Voice Program.

231 participants from 8 communities complete 8 week Syilx Parenting Program

93 children completed *k'u xast* After-School Program

28 children completed the Culture Camp

THE HANDS OF OUR CHILDREN OKANAGAN SOCKEYE FRY RELEASE

"The Hands of Our Children" Fry Release is a pivotal cultural event that provides the opportunity for Syilx youth to culturally connect with salmon, and affirms the importance of their prayers in the process of the salmon's return. On May 20, 2015, a ceremony led by Elder *Calyx* for the Sockeye fry was held, near the confluence of Penticton Channel and Shingle Creek, followed by the release of Sockeye fry. This release provides the opportunity for youth to participate through song, dance and direct release, the fry they have raised through ONA's FinS program. This year over 300 youth participated in the event.

A group of early grade public school children composed and drummed a salmon song for the ceremony feast, exhibiting how the power of this event has rippled out, promoting other youth to also take responsibility and recognize reciprocity of the Okanagan waters.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

This year's Youth Leadership Gathering focuses on empowering youth by generating creative capacity to develop leadership knowledge skills. A proactive approach to deliver workshop material was utilized for themes that play a central role in building up youth leaders. This includes cultural components such as concepts of giving back, gratitude, creativity, honouring and respecting, and reconciliation.

**"The issue is simple,
Aboriginal children and families
are being offered ineffective,
capricious service and we will not
be silent until we are allowed to be full
partners in planning, strategizing and
implementing services that work for
the unique needs of our communities.
This battle is ongoing."**

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



lim'limpt asck

Thank you for your prayers

Creating the Linkages to Well-being

Reclaiming and restoring Syilx way of being and knowing through development of holistic programs and services grounded in a Syilx-centered framework.

We continue to assert a Nation-to-Nation approach and the need for culturally based programming with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), but there has been no funding to the ONA for planning or strategic initiatives.

ONA continues to work with Interior Health (IH) and FNHA to address these issues. We cannot continue to spend money without a framework and strategic plan. The short-term approach of both provincial and federal governments is perhaps the biggest threat to our continued ability to provide enhances services in our communities. Instead of focusing on

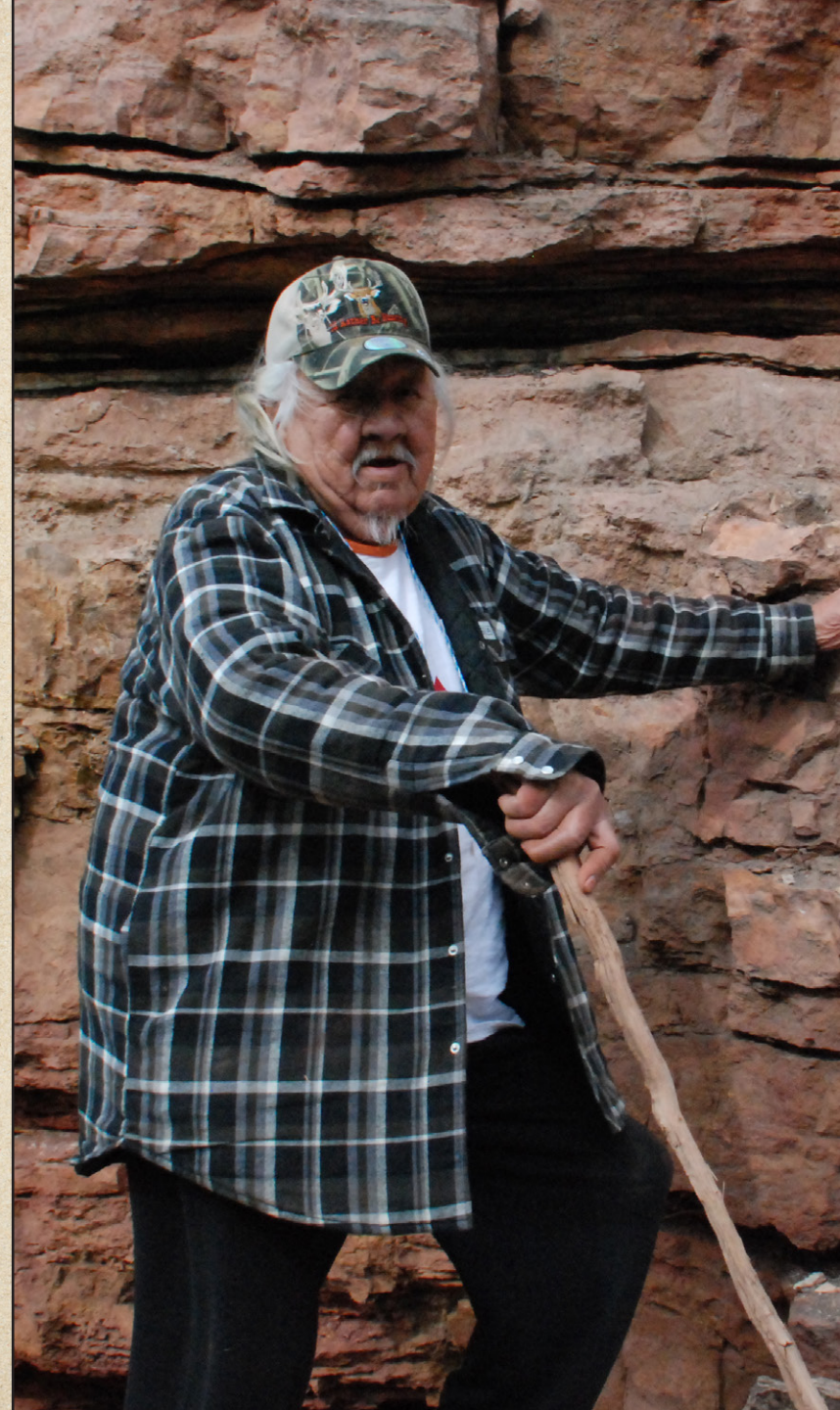
the need for significant increases access to health funding, the emphasis is on finding ways to spend funding more effectively.

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY: CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

The FNHA has been fully operational for just over 2 years. FNHA is bringing some flexibility, allowing some bands, with permission from FNHA, to carry funds forward into the next fiscal reminding us that ultimately this is still a bureaucracy whether delivered by the Federal Government or First Nations.

STRENGTHENING THE NATION

The ONA hosted the 2nd annual Elders and Youth Gathering at Rock Ridge in Princeton, BC. Focusing on the health and wellness of the *tmix* is central to the connection of healing from the land. This gathering is part of the commitment to support relationship building, provides an opportunity for activities on the land where participants can practice protocols, our language, engage in meaningful interactions and discussions while learning more about our territory.





“We have to have our own child welfare, do it ourselves. We know how to keep our kids safe.”

Dorothy Ward

CULTURAL SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

The Cultural Safety Symposium marks an important step forward in fostering a strong partnership between the ONA, Interior Health, University of British Columbia, and the First Nations Health Authority to achieve a shared goal of creating a healthcare environment that embraces all patients regardless of ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, or spiritual affiliation. Identified as a key priority

by the Chiefs' Executive Council, cultural safety focuses on creating a cooperative relationship that targets accountability and responsibility on the authoritative position to practice self-reflection to ensure care respects cultural differences. This event celebrated and shared knowledge surrounding local initiatives and cultural-safety tools, which have been developed to improve the experience of First Nation patients accessing mainstream health services.

Cultural Safety is what happens when Aboriginal people feel we can trust our service providers.

3 Cultural Safety groups were held in the Okanagan with Interior health professionals to learn Syilx concepts of well-being.

Four steps to Cultural Awareness:

- 1 Know yourself**
- 2 Know what you don't know**
- 3 Know your culture**
- 4 Know your power**

HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE (HCA) PROGRAM

The IH MOU has seen some increased access to services. ONA was able to hire two Nurse Practitioners but we have already seen a tremendous amount of turn-over.

ONA continues to work with IH and FNHA to address issues that arise such as time constraints.

CHIEFS WALK THE LANGUAGE FORWARD

With the support of the Chiefs the ONA continues to incorporate language and culture into all of its programs and initiatives. The Chiefs' Executive Council support for language rejuvenation was evident as they committed to walk the language forward by participating in a language training session. It is our Chiefs and Council's leadership within our Okanagan Nation and its territories that will carry

forward and remind our people of the responsibility to the beautiful lands of the Okanagan, the language, and the culture.

As our Chiefs and leaders walk with our people into the future with our beautiful *nsyilxcen*. Our language will continue to grow and no longer be endangered.

Language revival brings health back to our communities. En'owkin played an important role as teachers for this *nsyilxcen* initiative.

STANDING UP FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Chief Harvey of the Upper Nicola Indian band joined a Chiefs protest over concerns about biowaste operations. Out of protest against the operation in the Merritt area, the leadership occupied BC Premier Clark's office to find solutions to address

concerns about the dumping of biowaste in First Nations' territories in the Nicola Valley.

The chiefs are seeking a collaborative process with the Province to gather and share information about biowaste, manage and address impacts, and protect lands and wildlife in the Nicola Valley.



"We decided we had no choice but to begin the occupation once it became clear that the Province was refusing to take our concerns seriously. The Province should have sought our consent before allowing any kind of biowaste dumping on our lands."

Chief Harvey McLeod



SHOWCASING SYILX ARTWORK AS A HEALING STEP FORWARD

During October this year, the ONA and IHA, worked collaboratively to publicly unveil artwork created by Syilx artists to symbolize a step forward to the health and wellbeing of Syilx people. Artists from the Okanagan Indian Band and Lower Similkameen Indian Band each created a piece that speaks to the importance of our health connections to land in a traditional, cultural, and spiritual way. These artworks are a tribute to the newly established partnership.



David Wilson
Star Blanket of Life



Les Louis
The Land Before Us



Sheldon Louis
Pica? Digging Stick

"The Spirit of the Syilx Unity Run means reconnecting the land and the People in parts of our territory we don't often go. It means affirming our existence and the existence of our ancestors who travelled these routes on foot. For us to do the simple act of putting foot to ground, instead of always driving a car, reconnects us to the more important things in life. We feel the spirit of the land, the wind, the rain, the sun, and each other. It heals the heart and soul, and reconnects us as one Nation, one Community, One People."

Mariel Belanger
Okanagan Nation member



"Watching our youth on the land, my heart is full."

Andy Joseph Jr.
Councilman CCT



RECONNECTING OUR PEOPLE TO THE LAND

The ONA hosted the 8th annual Spirit of Syilx Unity Run through our traditional Syilx territory, crossing international boundaries of Canada and the United States. This community event was born out of the need to promote healthy living, nationhood, cultural appreciation, and to raise awareness of mental

health issues. Being out on the land and seeing new places creates a deeper connection to community and territory. This relationship to place comes from learning about the place names, stories, and songs.

This event inspires the songs that give voice to the prayers of the youth for the land, for the communities, and for

the people. Youth and community members are able to witness leadership. Elders and community members cheer and pray for the youth and the land. It is through these tangible experiences that youth are voicing their concerns on violence and suicide and empowering each other by reconnecting to the culture by being out on the land.

2015 - 2016 Revenue Analysis

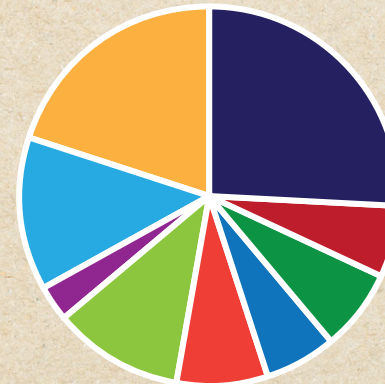
The overall ONA income is up this 2015 – 2016 fiscal year by more than 13% over last fiscal, with growth seen in Natural Resources, Wellness and Fisheries departments.

See audit under separate cover.



	%
Administration	14
Natural Resources	13
Policy & Governance	4
Wellness	18
Fisheries	51

REVENUE BY DEPARTMENT



	%
USA Public Utility Districts	26
USA Colville Confederated Tribes	6
Other Income	7
Indigenous and Northern Affairs	6
First Nations Health Authority	8
Department of Fisheries and Oceans	11
Other Government of Canada	3
Province of British Columbia	13
BC Hydro	20

ACTUAL REVENUE

kʷu scünmaʔstm iʔ siwtkʷ kʷut ʔkʷcəckʷ act ut qmqañt

OUR SACRED WATER TEACHES US THAT WE HAVE GREAT
STRENGTH TO TRANSFORM THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN
WHILE BEING GENTLE, SOFT AND FLEXIBLE.





Limlamit walmcutn xal yay^syat stim

THANK YOU, CREATOR, FOR EVERYTHING.

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