

Syilx Sub-Watershed Pilot Management Plan: Policies and Protocols Informed by Traditional Syilx Knowledge

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) and its member bands receive numerous water referrals and proposals from governmental agencies and private industry that have both concentrated and cumulative impacts to Okanagan Nation water resources. In response to projected growth within the *Syilx* Territory that will bring water use and demands to new levels, the ONA is seeking to strengthen *Syilx* water governance through the development of sub-watershed management plans informed by *Syilx* Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), laws and protocols. Specifically, ONA is seeking to develop a methodology for applying *Syilx* ecological knowledge to both existing, established watershed plans, and new, *Syilx*-led planning processes. It is anticipated that this will dramatically improve collaborative efforts for decision-making within *Syilx* Territory.

STRATEGY

The purpose of this strategy is to formalize how the ONA Natural Resource Department will engage with ONA member bands and the Enowkin Centre for the *Syilx Sub-Watershed Pilot Management Plan: Policies and Protocols Informed by Traditional Syilx Knowledge* project. The objective is to articulate how traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is understood, and its critical role in watershed governance. The goal is to develop a methodology for applying *Syilx* ecological knowledge in taking responsibility for water. Community engagement for this project consisted of the following:

Method	Participants	Purpose
Group discussion guided by pre-determined questions to elicit community knowledge and views of local waters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) TEK/Tech group • Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) Women’s TEK group • LSIB Men’s TEK group • Penticton Indian Band (PIB) TEK/Tech group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve understanding of <i>Syilx</i> TEK perspectives, laws and protocols for watershed functions and management • To document concerns, issues and opportunities specific to the Inkaneep Creek watershed (OIB), Ashnola River watershed (LSIB), and Shingle Creek watershed (PIB)
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric Mitchell, Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) • Pauline Gregoire, OKIB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve understanding of <i>Syilx</i> TEK perspectives, laws and protocols for watershed functions in general and specifically to the Arrow Lakes
Meetings and Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONA Natural Resources Council (NRC), which includes representation from technical, political and TEK people from each of the ONA member bands • <i>Syilx</i> Watershed TEK Tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To receive input and guidance for the project • To assist in selection of sub-watersheds to focus on in this project • To feedback on the TEK Methodology Report

	Workshop, March 20-21, 2017	
Small group discussion	<i>Syilx</i> scholars (Dr. Marlowe Sam and Dr. Jeannette Armstrong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive input and guidance for the project from the perspective of traditional knowledge and academia

OUTCOMES

The themes that emerged as a result of the Tech-TEK meetings and interviews are summarized below:

- Historical perspectives of water – changes over time in water flows and quality; climate change, increasing water temperatures; sedimentation
- View watersheds from the *Syilx* perspective, i.e. from the past, in the present, into the future; micro to macro, $tmix^w$ (all living things) and $tmx^w ul' a?x^w$ (Earth/the land)
- Access for people and ability for animals to roam freely
- Increasing demands on water, e.g. ranchers, communities, mines, development
- *Syilx* laws, protocols, and practices related to lands and waters
- Responsibility of the *Syilx* to teach settler population to take care of resources
- *Syilx* understanding of ‘sustainability’
- Responsibilities to take care of $tmix^w$ and $tmx^w ul' a?x^w$, including the roles that animals and plants play in watersheds, e.g. beavers (dams), trees
- Aboriginal water rights and rights of animals drink safely; legislation as benefit and hindrance
- Impacts to watersheds, including cattle, logging, mining, contaminants, irrigation, water diversion, erosion
- Protection of headwaters, $tmix^w$, sacred places; medicinal plants
- Restoring the balance; restoration of watersheds
- Water licenses and diversion
- Connection between land and language
- Working together, collaboration for our water responsibilities, including youth alliances, communities, public forums
- Ethics of water protection and *Syilx* standards for sustainability – 100% regeneration
- Protocols and principles for stewardship found in $captik^w l$
- Connection between healthy land/ $tmix^w$ and healthy people
- Place-based knowledge for resource management and stewardship, including traditional burns
- Groundwater, natural springs – some still exist, some are now absent; their roles in watershed function and ecosystems
- Importance of ceremony; rituals; cleansing properties of water
- Transmission of knowledge to younger generations; training camps; education
- Place-based authority and decision-making (vs people in Victoria who don't know this land)
- Water as a life provider; water is a teacher
- Connectedness of water; water connects people
- Strength of water, it's powerful, strong