



MEDIA ADVISORY | November 1, 2017

SYILX OKANAGAN CHIEFS CLOSELY MONITORING SALMON RIVER INVESTIGATION

(*Syilx* Okanagan Territory/Vernon, BC – November 1, 2017) The Chiefs of the *Syilx* Okanagan Nation are deeply concerned with the recent developments at Salmon River Road in the North Okanagan given the current status of Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (“MMIWG”) in this country.

Recently, *Syilx* Okanagan Nation members have been rallying to bring this important issue to the forefront and leadership from the Okanagan Indian Band and the *Syilx* Okanagan Nation are closely monitoring the Salmon River investigation to determine whether any of the investigations findings are MMIWG-related. Currently, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have not indicated whether the Salmon River investigation could be possibly related to any of the five women that have gone missing from the North Okanagan in the past two years.

The Salmon River Road investigation could be potentially the latest development in the on-going MMIWG issue affecting Canada and has resulted in a National Inquiry formed to examine the systemic causes of violence directed against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Sources have concluded that the number of MMIWG victims could be as high as 4,000. While it is yet to be determined whether the current investigation is MMIWG-related, *Syilx* Okanagan leadership are calling for more attention to be paid to the issue of violence against women and girls and that this pressing issue be brought to the forefront in the North Okanagan.

Chief Byron Louis of the Okanagan Indian Band has stated that, “First and foremost, our prayers and thoughts are with the families who are awaiting further information stemming from this investigation; it has to be an incredibly challenging time for those families. The current investigation being carried out at a local Salmon River farm drives home the fact that violence against women is not an issue that is only brought to light under the present circumstances; it demands constant and unrelenting action and on-going vigilance of society as a whole.” He further stated that, “Everyone has an active role in addressing this issue. We must all speak out against those who physically, verbally, mentally and spiritually abuse women and girls. We, as men, must take full responsibility of the fact that much of these types of abuse are perpetuated by men.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chair of the *Syilx* Okanagan Nation concluded by stating that, “It is the sacred duty of all Canadians to vigorously oppose any and all forms of the demeaning, humiliating, and too often, brutally tragic manifestations of violence against women and girls.”

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