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OKANAGAN NATION'S INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL (SIRS) SURVIVORS RELEASE PUBLICATION SHARING THEIR STORIES

tkwəʔniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) is honored to announce the publication of “Take The Indian Out of the Child: Okanagan *Syilx* Experiences in the Violent and Forced Assimilation of Indian Residential Schools.” The official launch of the publication will take place on July 17, 2018, at 2:30 pm during the ONA’s Annual General Assembly at *saʔtikn* (Manning Park), BC.

This publication contains over 50 contributions, the majority of which are first-hand accounts from *Syilx* Indian Residential School (SIRS) survivors. The ONA’s *Syilx* Indian Residential School Committee (SIRS) guided the development of the publication. It is a testament to the strength of the *Syilx* people in surviving the horrendous experiences of Indian Residential Schools and the aftermath that followed.

This book was written so that *Syilx* people, today and for generations to come, will know the atrocities that occurred and how we survived. Learning through the past is an integral part of living well today, and lays the foundation for a healthy future. It also celebrates the fact that the *Syilx* people are here and are thriving. As such, it is a tribute to the former Indian residential school students who shared their stories – and is a memory of the many whose stories will never be able to be told, and is an historical and personal account of Truth telling. This is critically important to share so that families, communities, tribes, Nations of indigenous peoples all will continue a pathway forward. As stated by Denise Lecoy, *Syilx* community member, “we’re here in the name of hope, I wish you all healing and strength”.

It was created to educate all Canadians about the history of the Indian residential school system, the inhumane nature of its operations and its significant impacts on the *Syilx* Nation, which are felt today. Importantly, our people wanted to tell their own stories of their experience, not have it told for them.

“We have held hurt feelings and shameful stories in our hearts and minds for many years. They were secrets at one time, but now we are trying to make our communities aware of the crimes that were committed against us”, stated Hazel Squakin, *Syilx* elder and Indian Residential School Survivor.

This publication is a continued part of the ongoing commitment of the ONA’s Chiefs Executive Council to honor and support the survivors and their families. As part of the Nation’s Healing Strategy, this publication represents yet another step on the path toward healing, which over the last year has seen the unveiling of a *Syilx* Indian Residential School Monument and the hosting of the ‘*Syilx* Resiliency: A Day of Discussion on Healing’ Forum, which had Senator Murray Sinclair as the keynote.

ONA’s Syilx Indian Residential School Committee is comprised of representatives from all seven member communities, many of whom are Indian Residential School survivors. This Committee is committed to telling the truth and their stories, developing and implementing healing strategies throughout the Nation, and rebuilding their family systems. This group is highly dedicated, committed, and has provided invaluable direction to ONA staff on numerous projects. The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was formed in 1981 as the inaugural First Nations government in the Okanagan.

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