



MEDIA RELEASE | March 18, 2019

***cikilax^wm* (Prescribed Fire) Used to Manage Bighorn Sheep Habitat on Syilx Territory**

ki? ʕacqɁwú? (Crater Mtn), Syilx Territory: This March, as part of a *Syilx* land management practice, a *cikilax^wm* (prescribed fire) will take place at *ki? ʕacqɁwú?* (Crater Mountain) to restore forest and grassland health, including bighorn sheep habitat.

“After the devastating wildfires that we experienced in 2018 it is vital that we implement these practices to enhance wildlife habitat and adapt to the effects of climate change. *cikilax^wm* is a long standing *Syilx* method that enhances wildlife habitat and reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire, it only makes sense that we revitalize these practices.” stated Chief Keith Crow, Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB).

This burn is phase one of a comprehensive, multi-year project aimed at improving bighorn sheep habitat, reducing wildfire threats to nearby communities, protecting cultural values, and providing an opportunity for collaboration to support the re-establishment of fire as part of the natural disturbance regime in the Okanagan.

The burn is targeting 192 ha of a total of 680 prescribed hectares on the East slopes of *ki? ʕacqɁwú?*. The treatment is focusing on areas nearest to communities as a priority, protecting nearby LSIB members and the community of Keremeos from potential wildfire moving up from the South.

The Okanagan Nation’s Chief Executive Council acknowledges the importance of cultural values, respecting traditional ecological knowledge, and collaborative efforts by the *Syilx* Nation and member communities, particularly in the face of some of the most complex challenges ever faced. This *cikilax^wm* is a partnership project between LSIB, Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA), the Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) and BC Wildfire Services (BCWS).

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Active fire suppression has led to extreme fuel loading and vegetation ingrowth throughout *Syilx* Territory. Combined with climate change, fire suppression has led to longer, more intense, and more destructive wildfire seasons and a less resilient forest and grassland ecosystem. The ONA supports the important role of *Syilx* communities’ responsibility to re-establish prescribed fire on the Okanagan landscape. For more information:

www.syilx.org/projects/prescribed-burns/

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