



MEDIA RELEASE | April 29, 2019

4.2 MILLION sc'win SOCKEYE FRY TO BE RELEASED INTO OKANAGAN WATERSHED

tkwə'niwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Syilx/Okanagan Nation's Chiefs Executive Council affirm a shared responsibility to care for Syilx lands and resources, including responsibility to our sacred waters and the foods that they provide. This year marks another huge milestone with 4.2 million sockeye fry being released into the Okanagan Watershed, primarily into Okanagan Lake. This work includes a series of Syilx ceremonial releases taking place from April 30 – May 2, 2019.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip shares that "These fry releases, and other continued efforts at returning sc'win (Okanagan sockeye) to our territory, are part of our inherent right and responsibility as Syilx People. We are dedicated to ensuring that our grandchildren and all future generations are able to fish, and practice our way of life to uphold these sacred relations".

Over the course of April and May, 2019, the Okanagan Nation Alliance's (ONA) *kt c'palk stim* Hatchery operations will release these sockeye salmon fry into various points within the watershed including 6 Mile Creek, Mission Creek, Trout Creek, and Shingle Creek. These fry releases are integral to the Syilx peoples' continued successful efforts to return sockeye salmon back to the Okanagan, and since 2016, specifically to Okanagan Lake.

The Syilx Chiefs and leadership are steadfast in their commitment to working collaboratively with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and recently with the Province of BC, to finalize long-term plans on sockeye salmon reintroduction in Okanagan Lake. Chief Chad Eneas states "The reintroduction of sockeye fry back to Okanagan Lake ensures the successful revitalization of these stocks and diversifies the stock with additional lake systems. Our ancestors knew these waterways and everything that depended upon them for survival. These were our food systems our food security and our responsibilities to care for as our ancient *captikwl* (stories) confirm this understanding. We remain committed to these responsibilities for our lands, waters and peoples".

Howie Wright, ONA's Fisheries Program Manager, affirms "The Syilx/Okanagan Nation's reintroduction of sockeye into Skaha Lake is highly successful, which enables us to upscale these efforts to Okanagan Lake. As these stocks continue to be re-established Syilx Okanagan Nation member communities are able to meet food, social, and ceremonial needs through the food fishery".

This initiative is critical given that sc'win were nearly extirpated in the Okanagan Basin. In the 1960's the Columbia River Treaty and habitat impacts in the Okanagan basin led to the creation of industrial reservoirs, and the building hydro-electric developments on the Columbia River, making it impossible for fish passage, while severely impacting Syilx cultural, political and near extinction of our central food systems: our salmon. Syilx title and rights assertions and advocacy have seen the ONA working with provincial, federal and US Tribes and agencies counterparts to rebuild this sockeye population with respectful balance of Traditional knowledge and western science.

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The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was formed in 1981 as the inaugural First Nations government in the Okanagan, which represents the 8 member communities of the Okanagan Nation. The ONA's kt c'palk stim Hatchery is central to our conservation efforts. The 25,000 square foot hatchery has the capacity to rear 8 million eggs, and is currently equipped to handle all fish culture aspects required for 5 million eggs from brood stock management until fry release.

For further information please contact:
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Okanagan Nation Alliance

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2019 Sockeye Fry Release Schedule

There will be numerous ceremonial fry releases taking place throughout the Syilx territory from April 30-May 2, 2019. These include the following scheduled releases.

Mission Creek Fry Release

Date: April 30, 2019

Time: 1:00-3:00 pm

Hosted by: Okanagan Nation Alliance and the Westbank First Nation

Location: Mission Creek

Details: This is a private event for the Westbank First Nation, and will not be open to the public.

6 Mile Creek Fry Release

Date: April 30, 2019

Time: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Hosted by: Okanagan Nation Alliance and the Okanagan Indian Band

Location: 6 Mile Creek

Details: This event is open to the public.

Annual Sockeye Fry Release

Date: May 2, 2018

Time: 9:30am - 2:00pm

Hosted by: Okanagan Nation Alliance

Location: Penticton Channel, off Hwy 97 & Green Mountain Road, Penticton BC

Details: This event hosts over 400 students from local schools that have raised fry through the ONA's (ONA) Fish in Schools Program, that will be released along with fry from the *kt'c'p'alk' stin'* Hatchery. A number of activities for participating students will also take place. Please drive slowly. Parking will be available along the left side of the Dyke and behind the Save on Gas station.

For more information on any of these events please contact:

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