



MEDIA RELEASE

December 13, 2019

'Fish in Schools' program reaches 41 participant schools

Syilx Territory, Westbank, BC – The Okanagan Nation Alliance Fish in Schools (FinS) Program is now in 41 participating public and private and Band Operated schools throughout the Syilx Territory as well as the Penticton Museum and Archives, Christina Lake Stewardship Society and the Oliver Correctional facility.

FinS is a comprehensive fish education program for youth, with a focus on *sc'win* (sockeye salmon), their lifecycle and the importance of their ecosystems. By creating greater awareness of fish species, the intent is for students to become future advocates for both salmon and their habitat.

In the Columbia Region, this program further cultivates awareness of salmon's historical runs from the ocean, upstream to the Kettle River, Columbia, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenay Rivers, including major tributaries the Salmo River and Slocan River. The program has doubled in size in the Columbia region this year - which demonstrates the success of the program.

This year the FinS program extends to the Oliver Correctional Facility programs department as well. It will provide inmates with a new educational opportunity in order to contribute to broader knowledge and training necessary to apply for jobs when they are released.

Howie Wright, ONA Fisheries Manager states that "Bringing FinS to the Oliver Correctional Facility will increase awareness on fish culture, sockeye life cycle, and traditional knowledge on what salmon and indigenous fish species means to the Okanagan Syilx people. It also continues to exemplify ONAs ongoing commitment in providing FinS education to as wide an audience as possible."

The ONA upholds the responsibility to the *tmixw* (all living things), our Syilx Okanagan traditional ecological knowledge systems and actively involve our Cultural knowledge keepers that inform our interactions on the land – balanced with the incorporation of western science. Through the integration of these two systems, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) has been persistent in ensuring that we are restoring and rejuvenating the habitats and ecosystems of the Upper Columbia and Okanagan Basin in the most dynamic way possible. We engage both traditional knowledge and cutting edge science to contribute to protecting and advancing a bio-diverse environment. FinS is a key step in the Syilx Nation's broader intent to raise awareness and bring salmon back to their original range, having been blocked from returning by dams along the Columbia River in the 1940s.

Over the course of December the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) is delivering fish tanks and equipment to all our participants throughout Syilx territory, as part of the Fish in Schools (FinS) program. Egg delivery to FinS participant schools will begin in early January 2020. Upon successfully raising the fry, students will include their fry in ceremonial releases that take place throughout the Syilx Territory in 2020.

~

*The Fish in Schools program has been running successfully since 2003 in the Okanagan region, and contributes to the *kl'c'p'alk' stim'* Hatchery's fry release efforts. The *kl'c'p'alk' stim'* Hatchery is a testament to the perseverance of the Syilx people to realize their dream of restoring the *n'titx'* (Salmon) – one of our Four Food Chiefs – to their original habitat and rightful place in our territory.*

For More Information Contact:

Howie Wright, ONA Fisheries Manager
Tel: (250) 718-5215

Michael Zimmer, ONA Fisheries Columbia Biologist
Tel: (250) 304-7341

Okanagan Nation Alliance

101-3500 Old Okanagan Hwy Westbank, BC V4T 3J6: (250) 707-0095 www.syilx.org

FinS Participants

School Districts 8, 10, 20, and 51, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, and Regional District of Central Kootenay

1. Christina Lake Elementary
2. Glenmerry Elementary
3. Hutton Elementary
4. Kinnaird Elementary
5. Lucerne Elementary
6. Robson Community School
7. Salmo Elementary
8. South Nelson Elementary
9. Twin Rivers Elementary
10. Mt. Sentinel Secondary
11. W.E. Graham Community School
12. Fruitvale Elementary
13. James E. Webster Elementary
14. Rossland Summit School
15. Hume Elementary
16. St. Michael's Catholic School
17. Ecole des Sentiers-alpins
18. Christina Lake Stewardship Society

In the Okanagan Sub-basin FinS continues to be offered at:

1. OK Falls Elementary
2. Oliver Elementary
3. Osoyoos Elementary
4. Tuc-el-Nuit Elementary
5. Senpokchin Elementary
6. Outma School
7. Cawston Primary
8. Columbia Elementary
9. Wiltse Elementary
10. Little Paws Daycare
11. Ntamqen School
12. South Okanagan Secondary School
13. John Allison Elementary
14. Casorso Elementary School
15. Penticton Excel K-12 Learning Centre
16. Ellison Elementary
17. Alexis Park Elementary
18. Sensisyusten
19. Enowkin Center
20. Osoyoos Secondary
21. Queens Park Elementary,
22. West Bench Elementary,
23. KVR Middle School
24. Kaleden Elementary
25. Penticton Museum and Archives
26. Oliver Correctional Facility