



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

101 - 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy, Westbank, BC V4T 3L7
Phone 250-707-0095 Toll Free 1-866-662-9609 Fax 250-707-0166 www.syilx.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN NATION SECURES \$500,000 IN FUNDING FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE SERVICES PROGRAM

tkwəłniwt (Westbank), *Syilx* Territory: The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) is proud to announce the acquisition of nearly \$500,000 from the Ending Violence Association of BC, with the funds going towards a Sexual Assault Response Services Program over the next three years.

These funds will build on the longstanding work already carried out by the ONA's You Empowered Strong (YES) program, which actively supports Syilx Okanagan Nation individuals, families and communities who are dealing with the impacts of trauma caused by violence, including sexual assault and human trafficking. On June 3rd, 2019, "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report on the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" was released, outlining 231 Calls to Justice. These calls demand specific actions to address the current, systemic issues that Indigenous communities experience, and that contribute to the on-going violence towards Indigenous women and girls, including the development of "self-determined and Indigenous-led solutions and services". In 2015 the ONA Wellness committee identified the needs to address family violence in the Okanagan Nation, and in Response the YES Program was launched. On July 18th, 2019, the ONA CEC passed a Tribal Council Resolution to further support the Final Reports Call to Justice, and the continuation of the YES Program. Chief Clarence Louie, ONA Chairman, states that "The roots of violence toward Syilx women and girls can be traced back to the trauma and systemic racism that communities have experienced over years of colonization. The ONA remains committed to ensuring that Syilx individuals and families across the Nation have proper support, safety, and healing. Through such initiatives as this we are taking decisive action to provide access to community-driven, culturally appropriate and effective services. This work must continue."

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You Empowered Strong (YES) is a program that addresses the need for community-based solutions for Syilx Nation individuals, families and communities who are dealing with the impacts of trauma caused by violence, including sexual assault and human trafficking, and are wanting to address the impacts in a safe, culturally appropriate way. Each community determines how they provide the service based on individual community needs. Prevention and education opportunities are available to communities to enhance knowledge around the many forms of violence and its impacts, personal safety, trauma informed practice among others.

For further information please contact:

Tara Montgomery, ONA Communications Lead
T: 1-250-862-6866 E: tmontgomery@syilx.org

