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YEARS OF SYILX OKANAGAN NATION ACTIONS BRING AWARENESS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE LAST REMAINING styitc'w (CARIBOU)

tkwəłniwt (Westbank), Sylx Territory: The Sylx Okanagan Nation acknowledge recent actions taken by the BC Government and Parks Canada to relocate the last remaining styitc'w from the Columbia South herd to the Central Selkirks maternity pen. For years Sylx Okanagan Nation leadership has prioritized the protection of styitc'w as a critical part of Sylx Okanagan Title, Rights and interests.

Since 1995 the Columbia South subpopulation of styitc'w declined precipitously to a lone female. The decline of this subpopulation was ultimately due to ongoing habitat loss in the herd area. We emphasize that the urgent decision to move this last caribou and extirpate the Columbia South caribou has been difficult and caused a sense of grief for Sylx Okanagan people.

“styitc'w has been an integral and critical part of Sylx culture since time immemorial. Since colonization Sylx Okanagan people have witnessed the continued depletion of our relative and their home. In the face of such losses, we continue to assert, as we have in the past, that it is our responsibility to collectively and cooperatively recover styitc'w (caribou), if they are to remain on the landscape. The Sylx Okanagan Nation leadership alongside other First Nation governments have been responding to declining caribou populations by leading with direction and advice from our Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and experts remain committed to doing what it takes to ensure the best outcomes for our relative,” stated ki?lawna (Chief Clarence Louie), ONA Tribal Chair.

The Sylx Okanagan Nation acknowledges the work of multiple First Nations to bring attention to the protection of the last remaining styitc'w and will continue to work and collaborate with our neighbors to ensure that styitc'w (caribou) is recovered and protected for the generations to come. Since 2021 a collaborative process guided by Revelstoke Complex and Central Selkirks Caribou Technical Working Group (RCCSCTWG) technical advisors led to a collective decision to translocate this lone female caribou. This partnership consists of representatives from several First Nations governments including the Sylx Okanagan Nation, Ktunaxa Nation Council, Simpcw First Nation, Splatshin, Shuswap, Adams Lake Indian Band, Skwłáx te Secwepemc (formerly Little Shuswap Lake Band) alongside the Province of BC and Government of Canada. The RCCSCTWG provides a collaborative space where recommendations to support styitc'w (caribou) can be developed together. The RCCSCTWG spent many hours in order to collectively arrive at the recommendation to support the translocation of the last lone female South Columbia styitc'w (caribou).

“The decision to translocate the last remaining styitc'w (caribou) from the South Columbia herd required collaboration on a difficult decision. The decision was made with the best knowledge and expertise available to us, with the aim of increasing her likelihood of survival, breeding and calf retention, so that she may contribute over the long term to recovery, and ultimately, eventually, re-establishment of the South Columbia herd. Our success is dependent on collaboration, and to commit to breaking down systemic barriers to shared decision making. Ultimately, if we put styitc'w (caribou) in the center of the discussion, we will create solutions that will lead to recovery, and persistence on the landscape- but we must harness all of the information, knowledge, and capacity we can”, Cailyn Glasser, ONA Natural Resource Manager stated.

styi+c'?' (caribou) ceremonies have been undertaken by Syilx Nation members and other Nations for many years. We continue to follow our ancestral teachings taught to us as Syilx people. We believe in the sacred connection and care of our tmix^w and all peoples for the health and well-being of tmulxw^{lax} shared by Elders like calyx (Richard Armstrong).

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The Okanagan Nation Alliance is committed to conserve, manage, co-manage the wildlife, lands and waters of the Nation's territory. In doing so, the Nation will be true to its spiritual and environmental values, mindful of the cultural and social needs and aspirations of its individual bands, and strong in its assertion of the Nation's rights and title to its entire area of occupancy and use.

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