



OKANAGAN
INDIAN BAND

September 28, 2021
Vernon B.C.
For Immediate Release

Okanagan Indian Band
12420 Westside Road
Vernon, BC V1H 2A4

MEDIA RELEASE

OKIB, REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH OKANAGAN, AND CITY OF VERNON UNVEIL NEW CULTURAL INTERPRETIVE SIGN AT CANOE BAY

A new interpretative sign that introduces regional residents and visitors to the story of Syilx presence in the area and particularly at Canoe Bay is set to be unveiled on the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30, 2021 at 10 a.m.

"I am pleased to see the interpretive sign erected at Canoe Bay because this area has always held great importance to the Syilx people," said Byron Louis, Chief of the Okanagan Indian Band. "The Syilx presence in the area goes back centuries and our people used this beach and the area for trading, ceremonies, celebrations, fishing, hunting and for gathering food."

The sign, developed in cooperation with OKIB's Territorial Stewardship Division and Language and Culture team, tells the story of how the bay was used traditionally by the Syilx people.

The project began over four years ago when OKIB and the City of Vernon started a Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) together. It became clear that developing a shared understanding of history and of Syilx presence in the area before settlement was key to developing a more honest relationship.

"Recognizing and understanding the history of the Syilx people is a fundamental part of our journey together," said Victor Cumming, City of Vernon Mayor. "The City of Vernon is happy to see the new interpretative sign at Canoe Beach, and we will be installing a similar sign at Kin Beach to help share the Syilx history of this area."

The RDNO and OKIB have developed a meaningful working relationship over the past few years. In 2020 a beach maintenance agreement was signed whereby the RDNO maintains the beach and regional residents are permitted to respectfully use the space, which is reserve land. The beach now features walking paths, landscaping, seating, and a regular maintenance schedule.

"I am very pleased with the way that we, through the Electoral Area B and C Parks service, have been able to work with the OKIB to improve the user experience on this tremendous community asset, made possible by the generosity and vision of the OKIB Chief and council," said Bob Fleming, RDNO Electoral Area "B" Director.

"We applaud the OKIB for renaming this beautiful beach and adding interpretive signage that will further enhance the visitor experience and inform people about the Syilx historical use of the area. And we look forward to continuing partnerships and learning more about Syilx culture," said Amanda Shatzko, RDNO Electoral Area "C" Director.

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The signs being unveiled are designed to help regional residents learn about the cultural significance of the lands in the hopes that they treat the land and waters with respect. More signage work will be undertaken in the future in other locations to continue this journey of reflection and shared learning. Along with the improvements made last year, we are seeing the beach area coming back to life.

The sign will be officially unveiled at a ceremony on Thursday, September 30 at 10 a.m. on Canoe Beach (adjacent to Kin Beach). Parking is available on Lakeshore Drive and at the Kin Beach parking lots. COVID-19 protocols will be in effect.

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