

January 18, 2021

Email: yoursilga@gmail.com

Dear SILGA Executive Director:

Re: 2021 SILGA Community Excellence Awards – Salmon Chief Sculpture
Category: Social Responsibility

The Town of Oliver respectfully submits the Salmon Chief Sculpture project to the 2021 SILGA Community Excellence Awards under the Social Responsibility category.

In late 2019, Oliver Council met with the Osoyoos Indian Band Chief and Council to discuss matters of joint interest for our communities. Recognition of Okanagan Nation people in Oliver is foremost in the minds of Oliver Council together with the introduction of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Council recognizes Osoyoos Indian Band's right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs on and off reserve.

The discussion led to the commissioning of Artist Smoker Marchand of the Okanagan Nation to design a sculpture of the Okanagan Salmon Chief as a main feature in a new park adjacent to the Okanagan River, which is called Bridge Park.

The park was designed to provide opportunity for visitors to rest, reflect, and enjoy the green space. The location of the park adjacent to Okanagan River, that features the Salmon Chief Sculpture, is conducive to inspiring future generations on the importance of protecting the water so one day the salmon may return.

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The story of the Salmon Chief is of historical significance to the Okanagan Nation people and Mr. Herb Alex, a direct decedent of the Salmon Chief, spoke at the dedication. He told the following story placed which is inscribed on an informational plaque:

This statute plays homage to the fish and the Salmon Chief who sustained us and now inspires future generations on the importance of protecting the water (siwlkw) so the salmon will return. The Salmon Chief was responsible for the fish harvest, distribution and overall vitality of the Okanagan River. This site was chosen by the Osoyoos Indian Band for its proximity to nalemkenict which is 1 km upstream and was a major Okanagan fishing site before the river was channelized in the 1950's. nalemkenict was named for a large white rock submerged in the river. The salmon stood out in contrast to the white rock and the Okanagan fisherman harvested food for their families. The Okanagan people have an intrinsic relationship with the Okanagan River salmon stocks which were considered sacred to all members of the Okanagan Nation. Chinook Salmon (ntytyx) are culturally important as they represent one of the Four Food Chiefs.

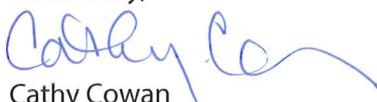
The dedication included a socially-distanced ribbon cutting and dedication of the Salmon Chief through traditional song and prayers.

The Town of Oliver wishes to support the Okanagan Nation Alliance desire to create greater awareness and understanding the importance of the habitat and rehabilitation of local ecosystems, watersheds and a renew connections and relationships between all residents of the region with water and fish. It is important to honour the salmon so they will always come back to feed the people.

The sculpture honors the Salmon Chief and brings a connection to the original territory of the Okanagan people and their ancestors.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) continue to be dedicated and vigilant to ensuring the successful reintroduction of sockeye salmon to the lakes and rivers in the Okanagan valley.

Yours truly,

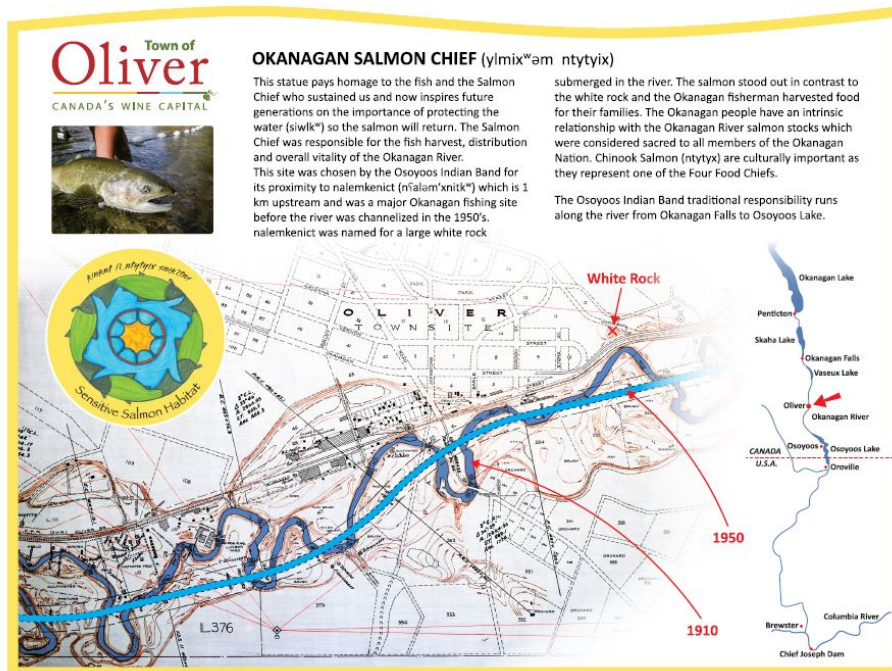


Cathy Cowan
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment

cc Council





Information Plaque placed at the Salmon Sculpture



Salmon Chief



Salmon Chief (credit Leza Macdonald)



Osoyoos Indian Band Chief and Council, Town of Oliver Mayor and Council



Drummer – Okanagan Song