

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The South Okanagan-Similkameen region is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Syilx/Okanagan people – indigenous people of the land. It is very important to acknowledge this before any meeting or gathering and to thank the Indigenous people for hosting you.

“The Syilx people have proper title and rights to the whole of the Okanagan territory and have collective rights and responsibility to protect and manage our land, our people, our culture, language, and spirituality.” (Penticton Indian Band Comprehensive Community Plan, 2009-2013)

The Syilx People of the Okanagan Nation are a trans-boundary tribe separated at the 49th parallel by the border between Canada and the United States. They share the same land, nsyilxcen language, culture, and customs. The Syilx People are a distinct and sovereign Nation that continues to assert their jurisdiction and responsibility over the stewarding of their land, resources and quality of life of their citizens. They respectfully honour the natural laws of the tmixw – that which gives us life (adapted from Okanagan Nation Alliance: <https://www.syilx.org>).



Image source: Okanagan Nation Alliance

“Aboriginal” is a term used for three groups: First Nations, Inuit and Metis. There are over 30 distinctly different First Nations in BC living in 198 First Nation Communities – reserves on Indian Bands. The Syilx could be referred to as the First Nation, Native of Indigenous community. There are four Indian Bands in South Okanagan: Penticton Indian Band (<http://pib.ca>), Osoyoos Indian Band (<http://oib.ca>), Lower Similkameen Indian Band (<https://www.lsib.net>), Upper Similkameen Indian Band (<https://usib.ca>), and Colville Confederated Tribes located on what is now Washington state (<https://www.colvilletribes.com>).

Throughout this Guide you will find more information about the Syilx people.