Okanagan Indian Band
syilx Community Safety

ntytyix's Journey



2025 - 2026

Annual Report

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Executive Summary

The syilx Community Safety 2025-2026 Report highlights a year of collaborative efforts, innovative initiatives, and culturally grounded approaches aimed at strengthening community safety and well-being. The department's work addresses not only the roots of crime, but also the holistic needs of the syilx people—physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental. Guided by the principle, ***"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together,"*** the team focused on upstream solutions that require investment, commitment, innovation, and collaboration.

The syilx Community Safety projects focused on community-driven safety and well-being priorities. Through the diverse needs of the membership these initiatives support preventative and long-term, culturally grounded education, awareness, and solutions. The community led ***"ntytyix, A Time for Action"*** continues to strengthen community and ensures that collaborative approaches, training and infrastructures reflect our values, priorities and cultural confidence.

Each section includes key investments and efforts to immediate safety impacts for Youth, Elders, families, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. This report draws explicitly from our communities, which emphasizes needs for mental health, policing, safe spaces, crisis response, intervention/supports for health and wellness, and culture.

Sustaining health and wellness requires the ability to foster and maintain deep connections to culture, language, and land. To be autonomous and self-determining in all aspects of life, and to have supportive systems that promote our ways of knowing and being. We remain strong despite the multitudes of challenges, including ongoing settler/colonial oppression, systemic racism, intergenerational trauma and overwhelmingly historic unresolved grief and loss, the toxic drug crisis, and the climate crisis. We are committed to creating and adapting systems and environments that uphold the initiatives to reconnect individuals with the cultural ways and the land, by emphasizing land-based education, language restoration, protocols and cultural exchanges.

Key initiatives include the *What Happens Upstream (WHU) Annual Youth Conference*, which brought together over 350 participants and amplified Youth voices through leadership, education, and cultural grounding. The Youth Leadership Council (YLC) played a pivotal role in both event planning and ongoing dialogue, ensuring Youth are directly involved in shaping their futures and community safety. Recommendations from the Youth survey emphasize the need for listening, expanding mental health supports, building safe physical spaces, promoting inclusion, and investing in Youth programs and leadership.

The report details the outcomes of the WHU Conference, including the establishment of a diverse Planning Committee with partner organizations such as School District 22, Mediate BC, Community Futures, CMHA, Vernon Pride Society, and others. The conference's theme, *"A Time for Action,"* inspired participants to address challenges like mental health, discrimination, poverty, homelessness, and infrastructure improvements.

Notable community-driven projects in 2025-2026 included healing circles, cultural safety education workshops, and Wellbriety meetings, which supported recovery, cultural reconnection, and holistic wellness. The introduction of probation services at the syilx Community Safety Office aims to provide culturally relevant support to those navigating the justice system.

Continued

The Community Consultative Group (CCG), coordinated by Indigenous Policing Services (RCMP), continued to strengthen relationships between the RCMP and OKIB members, supporting public safety education, Youth and Elder initiatives, enforcement, traffic management, and ongoing relationship-building. Regular meetings provided updates, discussed community concerns, and set priorities for action.

Below are the 2025-2026 quick stats on syilx Community Safety programs, supports, and initiatives:

CRISIS RESPONSE *5*	**HEALING CIRCLES** *3 (average 22 participants)*	**DROP IN'S** *989*	**BACKPACKS FOR PEOPLE IN NEED** *73*
COUNSELLING / PSYCHOLOGIST *520 Hours*	**PARTNERSHIP & COMMITTEE MEETINGS** *53*	**COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE GROUP** *6 Meetings, 13-16 people per meeting*	**WELLBRIETY** *256 Engaged*
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ENGAGEMENTS *66 Elders Lunch, 13 CCG members, 285 National Indigenous Justice Court Workers, 4 Client referrals and supports*	**WHAT HAPPENS UPSTREAM CONFERENCE** *356 Engaged, (267 Registered, 55 Unregistered, 16 Resource Booths, 18 Team members & Supports)*	**CULTURAL SAFETY EDUCATION** *13 Sessions, 203 total participants*	**YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL** *28 Meetings, 23 Initiatives, 19 Workshops, 27 Community Engagements, 7 Conferences, 19 Cultural Confidence Gatherings*

In summary, 2025-2026 was a year of laying down *"eggs of wisdom,"* investing in Youth, supporting vulnerable members, and advancing upstream solutions. The syilx Community Safety Team raises our hands to our partners, participants, and individuals who generously shared their time, their stories, and their guidance to make us stronger. We honour the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Ancestors, as well as the children, Youth, and future generations who connect us and inspire us to do better every day. We honour the lands and waters that have sustained them, and that continue to sustain us all.

To the OKIB Community, this report is for you.



Swimming Upstream Together

ntytyix's Journey

The What Happens Upstream Initiative, guided by the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB)'s Youth Leadership Council (YLC) since 2024, centres on empowering Youth and fostering community collaboration to address community safety and belonging. This initiative provides a forum for discussing a range of challenges and opportunities related to Youth safety, inclusion, and well-being. This initiative seeks to unite young people, social services, and community members in a collective effort towards creating a safer, more supportive environment for Youth.

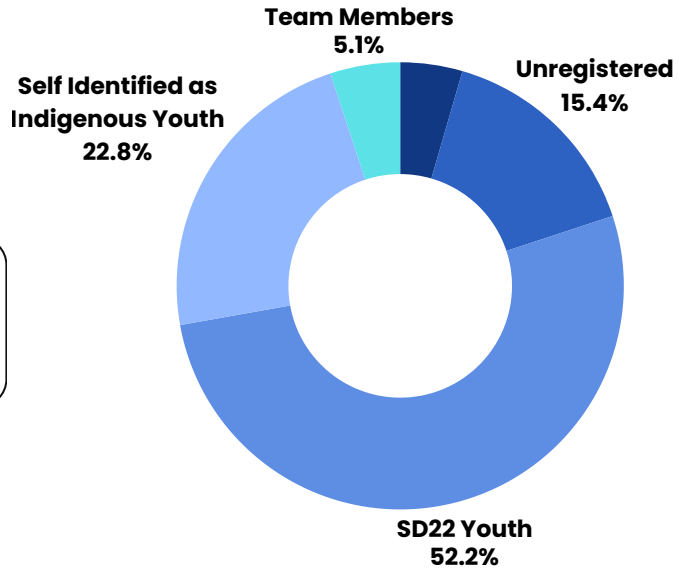
A key component of the initiative is engaging Youth with lived and living experience to explore approaches to mental health, crime prevention, education and community support. Through this initiative YLC continuously aims to involve Young people directly in leadership and idea-generation processes, recognizing their critical role in shaping their own futures and driving positive change within the wider community.

2nd Annual Conference Theme: *A Time for Action*

The 2nd annual What Happens Upstream Conference, hosted by the OKIB Youth Leadership Council, welcomed over 350 participants—including Youth, community leaders, and educators—for a day dedicated to learning, cultural grounding, and Youth empowerment. Key moments included, an inspiring keynote speech on Story, Voice, Dream and Responsibility by Vanessa Mitchell, an educational session on misinformation by Mira Harvey with the Okanagan Regional Library, and Youth Led Presentations on Indigenous Youth Justice, Land based community learning, and Indigenous Youth leadership. The What Happens Upstream Youth Conference provided a Youth-centered space that amplified young voices, strengthened community ties and emphasized the shared responsibility to drive upstream change. This event highlighted the powerful role of Youth leadership in shaping a healthier, more resilient future.

Total Attendees

356



SHARING RESOURCES

Bringing together local resources strengthens the support available to young people in the community. By inviting these resources to participate in the conference, they gain the opportunity to hear directly from young people about how they can improve their outreach and provide more focused support.

"This conference is important because not many people know where or how to ask for help. I feel like this conference makes Youth feel acknowledged and heard, that they matter. It's hard finding support. Having all these resources in one area makes it easier and shows how much support there is," - Akasha. (YLC Member)

Below are the reousrces that supported the conference through their booths:

1. OKIB syilx Community Safety
2. OKIB Indigenous Policing Services
3. OKIB Wellness Hub
4. ONA Crisis Response Team
5. Teen Junction – Boys & Girls Club Okanagan (BGCO)
6. Okanagan Regional Library
7. Vernon Pride Society
8. BC First Nations Justice Council
9. Archway Society – The Oak Centre
10. This Space Belongs to You
11. School District 22 – Awaken Program
12. MediateBC
13. North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society (NOYFSS)
14. Community Futures – Youth Employ Program
15. Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Youth Integrated Services Hub (YISH)
16. Interior Health – Early Psychosis Intervention – Mental Health Substance Use Youth Programming



Outcomes: What Happens Upstream Planning Committee

The initiative also emphasizes the importance of ongoing dialogue and engagement. By encouraging continued conversations beyond the initial conference, YLC has ensured lasting impact through the What Happens Upstream Planning Committee, where YLC sits as the Chair. This committee includes Youth participants from partnered service providers and will support discussions dedicated to Youth safety and belonging. The committee will also support with the planning of the WHU Conference providing a platform for Youth with varying life experience and backgrounds to participate as leaders in community.

Below is a list of the partners that sit on the WHU Planning Committee:

SCHOOL DISTRICT 22
MEDIATE BC
COMMUNITY FUTURES
THIS SPACE BELONGS TO YOU
YOUTH INTEGRATED SERVICES HUB - CMHA
VERNON PRIDE SOCIETY
BGCO- TEEN JUNCTION
SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL
LOCAL IMMIGRANT PLANNING COMMITTEE
NORTH OKANAGAN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY
ARCHWAY SOCIETY - OAK CENTRE
VERNON & DISTRICT IMMIGRANT & COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY
NORTH OKANAGAN FRIENDSHIP CENTRE
OKANAGAN REGIONAL LIBRARY
OKANAGAN COLLEGE
ARTS COUNCIL OF THE NORTH OKANAGAN

To see the full WHU 2025 Conference Report, visit **www.okib.ca** website, click the Public Safety tab or use the QR code below and scroll to the What Happens Upstream – Comprehensive reports on Youth Conferences tab.

What Happens Upstream Indigenous Youth Justice Project

The Indigenous Youth Justice Project provided direct frontline support to Youth navigating the justice system with a focus on advocacy, prevention, and reintegration. Over the reporting period, the project prioritized consistent, relationship-based engagement with Youth, ensuring they had access to support at critical points in their journey.

Core activities included court accompaniment, individualized advocacy, and system navigation support. Youth were supported in understanding legal processes, preparing for court, and connecting with appropriate services such as housing, education, and wellness supports. This work often required ongoing, hands-on involvement to ensure continuity of care and reduced barriers to access. A key strength of the project is its emphasis on building trust and maintaining consistent relationships. Through a culturally grounded and a trauma-informed approach, the project worked to create a sense of safety, stability, and belonging.

The project also supports Youth in moving toward accountability in a way that is constructive and non-shaming. By integrating restorative justice principles, Youth are encouraged to understand the impact of their actions while being supported in making positive changes. This approach strengthens pathways to rehabilitation and reintegration, rather than reinforcing cycles of harm. Challenges within the reporting period included navigating systemic gaps in services, particularly in areas such as housing, mental health access, and timely supports. These challenges highlight the continued need for advocacy and coordination across systems.

Overall, the Indigenous Youth Justice Project demonstrated the importance of hands-on, relationship-based support in improving outcomes for Youth. The work continues to evolve in response to community needs, with a strong focus on prevention, cultural connection, and long-term wellness.



Through this project a resource package, titled “What’s Happening Downstream?” a collection of community, legal, health, and cultural supports available to Youth and families locally, online, and across British Columbia. This booklet was created to make information accessible and meaningful: a tool to help Youth know where to go, who to reach out to, and how to find help when it’s needed most. This booklet includes information on: Health & Wellness, Housing & Basic Needs, Law, Justice & Advocacy, Youth & Community Development, Crisis & Emergency Lines and general information on Mental Health, Home Safety, Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships, Health Tips and Social Media Safety.



Community Consultative Group (CCG)

The Community Consultative Group (CCG) is coordinated by Cst. Neil Horne with Indigenous Policing Services (IPS & RCMP) and is comprised of a committed team of OKIB members to support a safer, more connected community.

The CCG acts as a liaison role between the community and the RCMP. Many OKIB volunteers have been part of this group for years, bringing local knowledge, lived experience, and guidance that help shape priorities and responses across the community. The CCG provides a space for members to share concerns, identify solutions, and strengthen relationships.

Their work supports public safety education, Youth and Elder initiatives, communication, enforcement when needed, traffic management, and ongoing relationship-building across all areas of the community. The dedication of CCG volunteers helps keep the community informed, involved, and supported. Their efforts reflect shared values and the commitment to creating a safer and more resilient place for everyone.

Please let Cst. Neil Horne, know if you are interested in joining the CCG and able to attend the next meeting. Email at neil.horne@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

Upcoming CCG Meetings:
June 16, 2026 – Tuesday
August 19, 2026 – Wednesday
October 13, 2026 – Tuesday
December 15, 2026 – Tuesday

Stats: 6 meetings occurred over the course of 2025: February, April, June, August, October, December with 13-16 participants per meeting.

Summary of Meetings from 2025:
Each meeting included RCMP reports related to OKIB community, updates from: IPS officer Neil's initiatives and activity, syilx Community Safety Team, Youth Leadership Council and OKIB community members. Monthly RCMP reports are provided to Chief & Council.

FEB: RCMP provided updates on the Community Tripartite Agreement (CTA) renewal, the FOX Radar traffic monitoring, and efforts to regulate cannabis shops in accordance with OKIB bylaws. The syilx Community Safety Office reported on recent achievements, upcoming funding, and recognition from Public Safety Canada. New initiatives and suggestions were reviewed including rotating meeting locations, improving transportation for members, organizing community events, and enhancing Youth and Elder engagement. Reports on recent Youth activities, like the successful *"What Happens Up Stream"* campaign, were shared. The importance of healing from trauma, fostering community unity, and supporting vulnerable members were highlighted. Follow-up actions were set regarding Elder abuse education, community surveys, and representation on the CCG.

APRIL: The meeting, held at komasket Park Pit House, included RCMP, CCG and community members, OKIB Youth Leadership Council, and guests from the Indigenous Youth Center Justice Project. Key topics covered included an increase in visitors to the syilx Community Safety Office, the upcoming Restorative Justice Program, and updates on Youth programming and partnerships. The Community Safety Officer discussed bylaw enforcement, cannabis shop licensing, and plans to expand the safety team. Concerns raised by the group included trespassing (especially by ATV users and “squatters”), drug paraphernalia, rental issues on Reserve lands, and the need for more education and signage. Suggestions were made to re-visit partnerships for safe supply, to involve community members in bylaw updates, and to ensure Indigenous rights are integrated into new laws.

JUNE: The meeting covered several topics including increased RCMP highway patrols, traffic safety concerns, updates on a police investigation of bones found near Round Lake, ongoing community worries about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, issues with suspicious vehicles and trespassing, and the use of dash and trail cameras to address safety and evidence collection. The group discussed the limits of RCMP authority on Reserve land, the need for more patrols, road improvement suggestions, and the broader challenges of police staffing shortages in BC.

AUGUST: Key topics discussed included updates from the syilx Community Safety Office, ongoing collaborative initiatives, cultural safety education, and responses to non-fatal overdoses. There was emphasis on harm reduction, community education, and the need for improved communication and info sharing across departments. The Youth provided updates on their summer activities and upcoming events, while traffic enforcement and restorative justice initiatives were acknowledged. Future goals outlined by the group include enhancing public engagement, establishing streamlined communication and developing a formal communication policy that decenters the use of Facebook.

OCTOBER: Meeting discussions included review of recent community policing reports, introduction of the new RCMP Rural Commander, and updates on bylaw reviews and enforcement. Key topics addressed were concerns about cannabis and alcohol sales on Reserve, the impact of drugs and alcohol on families, and suggestions to amend bylaws to address substance issues. Attendees shared personal stories regarding substance abuse, discussed enforcement against drug dealers, and requested more community education on addiction. The need for safe and legal cannabis supply, as well as the influence of organized crime, was raised. The group highlighted the importance of CCG as a liaison for community safety concerns and recommended more involvement from health professionals and workshops on addiction and mental health. The Youth Leadership Council reported on their successful annual Youth conference.

DECEMBER: At this meeting recent community policing and traffic reports were reviewed, with particular attention to speeding data on Westside Road. The new North Okanagan RCMP Rural Commander was introduced, and a new partnership with Vernon Probation was announced, featuring weekly office hours for community support. Discussion included the status of past enforcement reports on cannabis and tobacco, with confirmation that no such reports are currently held by Council or the CEO. The group agreed to invite CSU and leadership to a future meeting for clarification. Updates on bylaw enforcement and an upcoming MOU with ICBC were shared, along with information about potential funding for road safety improvements. The meeting also revisited the history of the "dry reserve" status and the process for intoxicant legislation, noting that any changes require a community referendum. The Youth Leadership Council provided updates on their recent activities, including cultural events, partnerships, and community support initiatives. The meeting concluded with a traditional year-end celebration.

Throughout the Year Neil has completed 14+ presentations on topics of Mental Health, Online Safety, Bullying, Healthy Relationships, Careers (Policing), Fraud, Elder Abuse, Process of making a police report, Wellness, Hold and Secure protocol, Drug awareness and a Q&A related to concerns of world events

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026

- Continue to provide monthly RCMP reports to Chief & Council to maintain transparency and accountability within the community.
- Increase ongoing representation from all community sectors, including Chief and Council, Community Safety Officer and Bylaw, local business owners, Youth and Elders and OKIB departments to reflect diverse perspectives in decision-making.
- Strengthen engagement efforts by rotating meeting locations and improving transportation options for members to encourage broader participation.
- Organize more community events and initiatives that enhance Youth and Elder involvement, fostering intergenerational dialogue and unity.
- Increase education and awareness about Elder abuse and vulnerable populations, mental health and addictions, including community outreach to identify needs and support mechanisms.
- Review and update bylaws, especially concerning local businesses such as cannabis shops, to align with community standards and safety priorities.
- Seek additional funding and recognition opportunities to enhance community safety programs and community leadership initiatives.









Laying Down Eggs of Wisdom

ntytyix's Journey



Youth Leadership Council

Overview:

Youth Leadership Council (YLC) aims to empower syilx Youth by equipping them with essential life skills through leadership training, cultural confidence, and safety and prevention workshops. This prevention-focused program is supported by the Okanagan Indian Band syilx Community Safety Office.

Leadership Training:

Connecting OKIB Youth to educators, mentors, and Elders in the community and the nation. Leadership training workshops are delivered throughout the year either in-person or online training. Other Leadership trainings take place at local, provincial and international conferences such as Cultural Safety Education, the syilx Youth Leadership Conference and Gathering our Voices Youth Leadership Conference.

Cultural Confidence:

Connecting OKIB Youth to educators, mentors, and Elders in the community and the nation. Cultural Confidence series is delivered through workshops monthly (the last Friday of each month). YLC gathers with Birch Creek for drum making, drumming and song, and stick games. This builds confidence and a sense of belonging for Youth that participate in syilx culture. Other workshop series throughout the year include land-based teachings, traditional plant and medicine knowledge, syilx harvesting and protocols, medicine making, food preservation/canning, nation hunting camps, rattle making, equine connection, wild colt-starting at Stelkia Ranch, and attending/participating in powwows, conferences such as the syilx Youth winter gathering, and first speakers language gathering.

Safety & Prevention Workshops:

Connecting OKIB Youth to educators, mentors, and Elders in the community and the nation. Prevention workshops are delivered through facilitations throughout the year either in-person or online training. YLC has started a movement “What Happens Upstream”, which is a platform for Youth to advocate for their needs and bring awareness to Youth serving organizations. YLC regularly joins seminars online or that are taking place in the Okanagan. Other workshops include peer support, crisis response and intervention training through Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), and the “You are Enough” Wellness conference by Youth Council of WFN.

2025-2026 Highlights for YLC

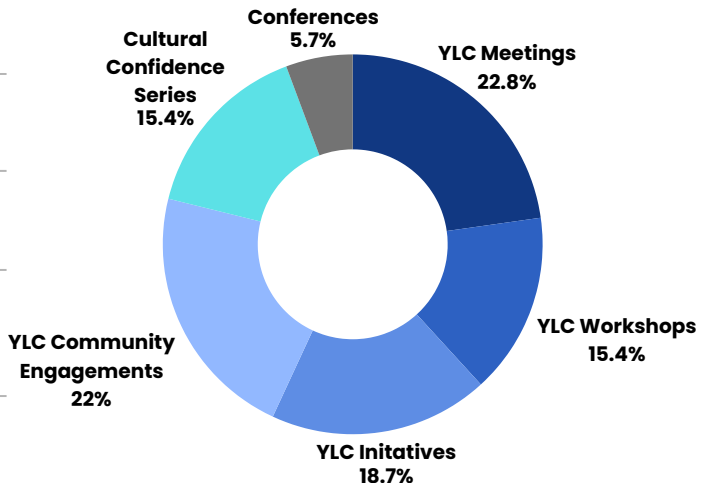
The YLC seeks to address the critical issues facing young people with a focus on prevention, education, advocacy and cultural respect. Together, we can create impactful changes that fosters collaboration and guidance, ensuring our young people are equipped to lead us into a vibrant future.

Total Meetings	Total YLC Members	Total Activities
28	**8**	**123**

Statistics:

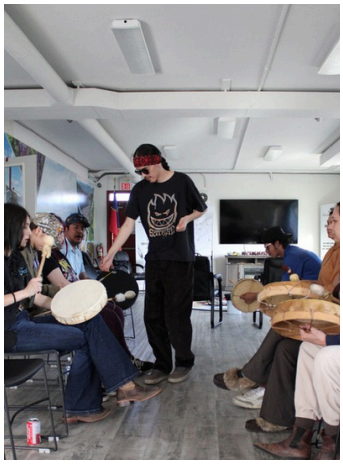
Meetings	28
Workshops	19
Initiatives	23
Community Engagements	27
Cultural Confidence	19
Conferences	7

Percentages breakdown:



Achievements:

The Youth Leadership Council had another fulsome year – a few achievements to mention would be that 7 YLC members have obtained their certificate of participation for a 2-day *Cultural Safety Education* from syilx Community Safety, a certificate of participation from a 6-day series on *Youth Crisis and Suicide Intervention* training from the Canadian Mental Health Association, and 1 YLC alumni has successfully completed *Gladue Report Writing* and has received certification by the Indigenous Perspectives Society in partnership with Royal Roads University. Lastly a YLC member travelled to the *Global Indigenous whānau to the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE)* 2025, in Tāmaki Makaurau, New Zealnad.





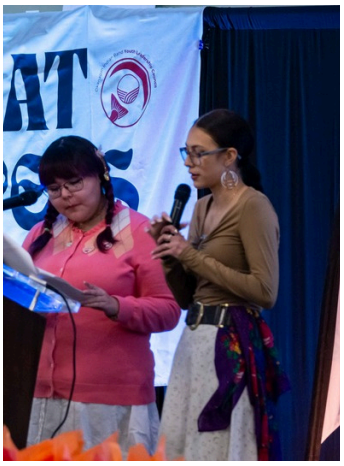















Youth Leadership Council

2025 -2026 Highlights for YLC Breakdown

Workshops, Trainings, and Certifications:

- **Two-Day Cultural Safety Education** - Eric Mitchell & Chris Marchand (x2)
- **Collaborative Decision-Making in Child Welfare** - MediateBC
- **syilx Youth Empowerment** - ReWild Ranch
- **Six-Workshop Series on Crisis and Suicide Intervention Training** - Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
- **Gladue Report Writing** - Indigenous Perspectives Society (Certification for Alumni YLC)
- **Talking Circle** - Enoke Counselling
- **"You Are Enough" Wellness Conference + Workshops** - Westbank First Nation
- **Cathy Peters Book Launch: "Child Sex Trafficking in Canada and How to Stop It,"** Second Edition - Online Webinar
- **What Happens Upstream Media Communications Training** - OKIB Comms
- **Story, Voice, Dream, and Responsibility** - WHU2025, Vanessa Mitchell
- **Misinformation, Disinformation, and How to Deal With It** - WHU2025, Mira Harvey
- **You Have Greatness in You** - WHU2025, K.A.S.P
- **Intimate Partner Violence - Traumatic Brain Injury (IPV-TBI)**- SPARK
- **2025 Gathering Our Voices Youth Leadership 3-Day Conference** - 6 Youth Total (3 YLC Members) and 48 workshops attended (Kamloops)
- **2025 Global Indigenous Whānau to the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE)** - Tāmaki Makaurau, New Zealand (1 YLC Member)
- **Three part Youth Digital Safety Cirriculum Lunch and Learn online series** - You Empowered Strong (YES) Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
- **2026 Gathering Our Voices Youth Leadership 3-Day Conference** - 10 Youth Total (7 YLC Members) and 60 workshops attended (Vancouver)

Initiatives:

- **Annual backpack donations for the houseless** - YLC collects and distributes bags with winter gear, water, snacks, and harm reduction kits.
- **"What Happens Upstream" video documentary** - Eagle Vision Video Productions.
- **Community Wellness edition of "What Happens Upstream"** - YLC, syilx Community Safety and local organizations share services and resources that are available to OKIB community.
- **Indigenous Family Wellness room** - consultations with Vernon Jubilee Hospital.
- **Pink Shirt Day** - YLC creates tie-dye shirts for anti-bullying awareness.
- **Hygiene bags, beverages, and Youth serving organization resources** - for students at W.L. Seaton High School delivered to the Welcome Room.
- **Outdoor syilx Community Safety murals** - YLC collaborates with syilx Youth, Nizhoni D.
- I**ndoor syilx Community Safety murals** - for the counselling room and kitchen, inspired by n'kmaplqs (Head of the Lake), by YLC member
- **Micro-surveys on climate change** - completed by all YLC members with For7Generations.
- **Three-day volunteer support for komasket powwow and stick games** - including organization, set up, take down, and serving food to attendees.

Continued...

Initiatives:

- **Youth, Elders, Ecology, Horses and Health (YEEHAH)** - with Dr. Bill Cohen, UBCO & Okanagan Wild Horse Society (OWHS)
- **Three-day Youth Colt Starting Camp Stelkia Ranch** - with YEEHAH/UBCO/ReWild Ranch
- **YLC members discuss safety concerns** - with the OKIB Community Consultative Group (CCG) and collaborate with Cst. Neil Horne on westside road safety
- **What Happens Upstream** - YLC conference planning
- **What Happens Upstream** - Establishes the WHU planning committee and YLC chairs the quartly meetings starting in 2026
- **OKIB National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** - YLC joins community in the annual walk to remember the Children that did not make it home and the IRS survivors.
- **YLC art submission to CMHA/Foundry** - Artwork represents the 6 part series that YLC completed with Gurleen Jassi
- **Annual thank you artwork** - for the backpacks for the houseless (1 YLC member)
- **What Happens Upstream thank you artwork-** for the conference (1 YLC member)
- **MediateBC survey and Collaborative Decision-Making in Child Welfare Project** - YLC consults MediateBC with Youth engagment and information
- **YLC supports the Indigenous Youth Justice Project (IYJP)** - Vanessa C, Junior Youth Justice Advocate in partnership with the Toronto Metropolitan University. A collaboration with syilx Community Safety and the Indigenous Policing Services. YLC and community Youth gather with splatsin First Nation for cultural connection and stick games.

Engagements:

- **syilx Okanagan Nation Gathering 2025** – (1 YLC member)
- Consultation for the Family Wellness Room at **Vernon Jubilee Hospital**
- **This Space Belongs to You** – 2025 2SLGBTQI+ and BIPOC Youth Needs Assessment
- **Chief and Council Candidates Forum 2025** – Emcee Speaker, Vanessa C. YLC
- Spotted Lake Ceremony with the syilx Community Safety Team, **Nation Elders, and En'owkin Centre**
- **OKIB Community Wellness Edition** of "What Happens Upstream" – Information Day
- **OKIB Sun Valley Ranch Open House** – YLC Open + Information Booth
- "You Are Enough" – **Youth Wellness Conference, Westbank First Nation**
- Letter of Support for **This Space Belongs to You Open House**, where Vanessa C. smudged the new space, read, and delivered her letter to the board of directors
- **SPARK Event: IPV-BI,** covering Intimate Partner Violence and Traumatic Brain Injury, UBCO
- **Vernon Immigration District Community Services Society (VIDCSS)** – "What Happens Upstream" planning committee invitation.
- **City of Vernon:** Participated in a Climate Action Discussion and continuing to do so in 2026
- **What Happens Upstream Committee:** Connecting with local Youth and community partners

Continued...

Engagements:

- **OKIB Elders Christmas Dinner:** Volunteered for baking and serving meals
- **Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)**: Two YLC members engaging with the **Arts Council of the North Okanagan (ACNO) for the 2026 Sundog Arts and Culture Festival**
- **2025 OKIB komasket powwow:** Assisted in coordinating the stick games tournament and venue set up and take down over the three-days.
- **University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO)**: Collaborated with Youth Elders Horses and Health (YEEHAH), Stelkia Ranch, Rewild Ranch, Okanagan Wild Horse Society, and Nation Elders on syilx horse culture.
- **2025 OKIB Community Safety Engagement:** Discussed the Cannabis Bylaw and completed Youth surveys
- **2025 Grand Opening:** YLC member in the drum opening for the OKIB **Cultural Immersion School, nk̓maplqs Iʔ snm̓aṁaẏaʔtn Iʔ k̓l sqilxʷtət**
- **2025 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:** OKIB community walk and drum opening and closing at **komasket**
- **CBYST Community Meeting:** Engaged with Youth-serving organizations in Vernon at **North Okanagan Youth Family Services Society (NOYFSS)**
- **MediateBC Survey:** Focused on Child Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) and Child & Family Welfare
- **6th Annual Trunk or Treat at komasket:** YLC organized their trunk and handed goodies out to OKIB Youth along side Council member, Monica Louis.
- **Awaken Education Campus Share-Out:** Featured The Science Centre, where Youth shared their group presentations on Vernon History topics
- **shishal Nation:** New Youth Leadership Coordinator, Leandra, connected with YLC for consultation on forming a Youth Leadership Council for shishal Nation. YLC and shishal Nation will continue engagements in 2026.



Continued...

Cultural Confidence:

- Three **Komasket pit house Youth drum circle nights** with Birch Creek Drum group
- Four **Youth stick game nights** YLC hosted at the OKIB syilx community safety office
- One **Youth stick game tournament: YLC vs. splatsin Youth**
- Four-day Youth Conference: Gathering our Voices 2025 – Workshops: **Elders don't bite, medicine pouch making, salve making, cedar bracelet making, stick games, bone games, and powwow teachings and dancing**
- Two-day **Youth colt starting camp** at Stelkia Ranch, Osoyoos
- One Team/YLC wellness: **sage harvest**
- One Team/YLC wellness: **huckleberry and siya berry harvest**
- One Team/YLC wellness: **blueberry and huckle berry harvest with the OKIB Elders group** in Revelstoke
- Two Team/YLC wellness: **sunflower and dandelion harvest**
- Two-day **dandelion salve creation, along with siya berry and huckleberry jam making**
- One Fintry Falls hike, focusing on **plant identification and photography**
- Outdoor mural project with YLC and Nizhoni, featuring **painting and woodburning**
- Three-day participation in the **komasket powwow:** YLC involvement in the **Elders' lounge, stick games, powwow dancing, and drumming**
- **Youth, Elders, Ecology, Horses, and Health (YEEHAH)** collaboration with UBCO and ReWild Ranch, with a focus on **Youth empowerment, equine connection, and syilx horse culture.**



Cultural Safety Education

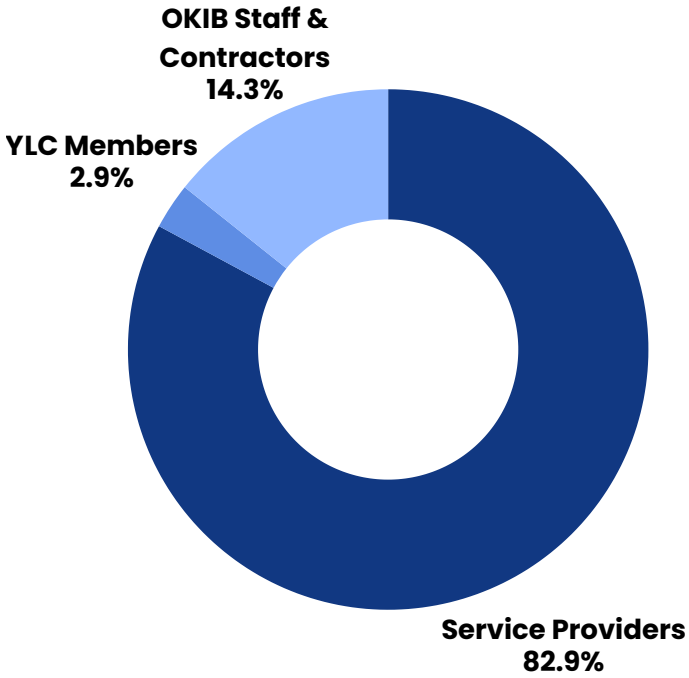
Cultural Safety Education provides information that supports the understanding of colonial impacts on Indigenous people past and present with specificities to syilx people. This education provides important knowledge on the inequities syilx and indigenous people across turtle island have faced so that we can reduce the barriers to care or services. This training asks participants to self-reflect to identify, acknowledge and address their biases when in relationship with Indigenous people at work or personally.

Mentorship:
Eric and Chris have been supporting the mentorship of facilitation skills and passing down their knowledge on Cultural Safety Education to the Youth Leadership Council. Each session in 2025 was supported by a YLC member or alumni.

"I still think about it often! The impact this left on me will stay with me forever; and I mean that in the best way. I found the content, the way it was organized, and who lead it to be very valuable to me in my profession, and also in general as a visitor living on stolen lands. I have taken other Indigenous-centered learning but none have even come close to being as immersive and raw, and the information given in other learnings tends to gloss over a lot of the history. I found the group itself to be incredibly non-judgmental, trauma-informed, and open to receiving all the really important information that I felt so privileged to be given. The feedback I took back to my organization was that this should be required training for all staff. Thank you for the experience!" - Victims Services Worker

Percentage Breakdown:

Total Participants **203**	
Service Providers **161**	OKIB Staff **30**
YLC members **7**	OKIB Contractors **5**



Cultural Safety Education Phase 2

Phase 2 of the Cultural Safety Education implementation training facilitated by Vanessa Mitchell (PhD Candidate) provided insight into the colonial narrative and its legacy in today's systems. The training supported building shared language, relational awareness, and practical tools. The cultural safety and reconciliation training focused on: Self Reflection & Humility, Knowledge & Wisdom, Courage & Influence and Transformation & Allyship.

Through this training the syilx Community Safety Team was able to:

- Define and articulate our individual and collective "why" (why cultural safety and truth and reconciliation matters to us)
- Explore the distinction between knowledge and wisdom in leadership
- Examine how fear shows up in leadership and its impacts
- Build awareness of colonial narratives and ideologies
- Strengthen understanding of transformational approaches to leadership and allyship

Expected Outcomes as we continue on our learning Journey through Phase 2

- **Culturally Safe Leadership:** Leaders feel grounded in their purpose, understand their role in advancing cultural safety and reconciliation, and support Indigenous peoples the corporation serves with clarity, humility, and relational accountability.
- **Individual Awareness and Practice:** Leaders recognize their own biases, understand the roots of systemic inequity, and feel confident applying culturally safe practices in their day- to-day work.
- **Aligned and Purposeful:** Leaders have a clear, shared vision, understand how their efforts contribute to it and are aligned in how they move forward together.
- **Reflective and Accountable:** Leaders can begin to recognize and track meaningful shifts in relationships and practice, personally and professionally.

syilx Community Safety Team's guiding principle to Cultural Safety:

"We unite to be good Ancestors to strengthen our community identity and belonging so we are able to live out our thoughts, visions and dreams."

Education, Advocacy, Prevention, Awareness 2025-2026

Healing Circles: 3 healing circles and 22 participants in total. We hosted healing circles to define healthy boundaries, and to take care of self by speaking our truth. The healing circle is a safe place, all participants are on equal ground to share their story, explore strategies for reconnecting, work through conflict and complete relationships (personal and/or professional).

March 8th – What Happens Upstream Community Wellness Information Day. This day brought community and service providers together for information sharing. Presentations were made by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society & MMIWG, the Harm Reduction and Wellness Hub, Youth Leadership Council, syilx Community Safety, Indigenous Policing Services, Red Road Recovery Treatment Centre, ReWild Ranch and Marnie Gregoire. Round Lake Treatment Centre and the Native Court Workers Association were also present with resource tables. This event brought in 36 community members.

May 9th + 10th - Sun Valley Ranch Open House : The syilx Community Safety Team hosted a booth at the Sun Valley Open House, sharing information about our projects, services and programming.

Education/workshop: **“Child Sex Trafficking and How to Stop”** The workshop was held in-person and virtually. The facilitator, Cathy Peters, describes the progression of sexual exploitation of children in Canada. She raises awareness about the issue of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and child sex trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. Cathy relates the biggest problem in Canada is that the public is unaware of the issues. Women, Youth, children, the marginalized and vulnerable will become potential targets and victims unless we do something to stop it. Total participants: 96

WELLBRIETY MEETINGS: Wellbriety was brought back at the end of 2025 where weekly meetings occurred. Wellbriety is a culturally based healing philosophy that extends beyond mere abstinence from substances. It encompasses mental, physical, and spiritual balance. The movement addresses the whole person within the context of their family and community, promoting long term health and cultural reconnection.

- Dec 2025: 44 Participants
- Jan 2026: 70 Participants
- Feb 2026: 84 Participants
- March 2026: 56 Participants

Whats Next 2025-2030

Summary of 5-year Grant Funding

Project Title: Indigenous Empowerment through Cultural Reconnection and syilx Safety Protocol

Project Summary: The Indigenous Empowerment through Cultural Reconnection and Safety Protocols project is designed to address specific needs within the community highlighting Youth Leadership, focusing on reconnecting cultural ties, improving communication to address misinformation, and enhancing community safety to prevent crime. This project aims to build a more connected, informed, and resilient community by fostering cultural pride, ensuring comprehensive communication, and promoting a safe environment. Initiatives within this project includes:

Land base learning and cultural exchanges: Colonization has exacerbated race dissonance and internalized oppression within the syilx people by embedding racial hierarchies and prejudices into societal norms and institutions. This initiative seeks to reconnect individuals with their cultural ways and the land, restore internation relations, addressing the disconnection caused by colonization among indigenous communities. By emphasizing land-based education, language restoration, and cultural exchanges, it aims to heal intergenerational trauma caused by colonization and strengthen community bonds through shared cultural practices and knowledge. Internation cultural exchanges

A Comprehensive Communications Strategy: This initiative is centered around enhancing information flow within the community. By diversifying communication methods and ensuring accessibility, the initiative seeks to bridge information gaps, reduce misinformation, increase community fact checking skills and foster a greater sense of kinship and engagement among community members, both on and off reserves and within neighbouring Nations. Collectively, these initiatives highlight the importance of cultural identity, effective communication, and collaborative safety efforts in empowering the community and ensuring its long-term resilience and prosperity.

What Happens Upstream Conference
As part of our project for 2025-2030, YLC will be hosting this conference every year until the funding for this initiative ends. **Save the date!** Youth Leadership Council will host the 3rd Annual What Happens Upstream Youth conference on **Oct 20th, 2026.**

Whats Next 2025- 2030

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – SYILX RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM
Introducing syilx Restorative Justice Program:

My name is **Michael Ochoa**, my mother is Penny Lawrence of the Okanagan Indian Band, my father was Michael Ochoa the first of the Klamath Nation. My grandparents were Mary Jane and Joe Lawrence from the Okanagan Indian Band. I was the Youth Justice worker for OKIB recently until my contract ended. I sit on the Board of directors for the Native Court Workers and counselling Association in which I am the director for the Okanagan, and I am also a certified drug and alcohol counselor. The syilx Restorative Justice Program will be a community led, syilx approach to justice that centers healing over punishment. Grounded in syilx laws and the enowkinwixw consensus process that views harm as a violation of relationships and focuses on repairing those relationships through dialogue, cultural guidance, and meaningful accountability.

Since December 2025 the Restorative Justice Coordinator engaged with community members and justice workers to support the ongoing development of the Restorative Justice Program.

- Elders Lunch – 66 Participant Elders
- CCG - 13 Participants
- Land-Based healing / Justice Indigenous Court Workers National Gathering – 285 Participants
- Clients support and referrals - 4

PROBATION AT THE SYILX COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICE
Probation at the syilx Community Safety Office every Tuesday from 8:30 – 12:00

Introducing **Leya**, an adult probation officer at Vernon Community Corrections. Leya has been a probation officer for over ten years. She worked in the North for the first eight years of her time with Community Corrections and returned to the Okanagan in 2023. Having been born and raised in the area, Leya was delighted to return home. *"I look forward to working in this region for many years to come and hope to be helpful to those having to navigate the justice system and community supervision. It is my hope that being available in the OKIB community will provide folks with more convenient and comfortable access to our services."*

What is a probation officer: A probation officer wears two hats. They administer the orders their clients receive from court but also offer support to clients who are on those community supervision orders. It is always the goal to support clients in successfully completing their term of community supervision and fulfilling the requirements of court-issued conditions in a way that's culturally relevant, meaningful for the individual, and in a way that contributes to their healing journey. They can assist in connecting clients to resources, in helping clients to establish communication with other agencies, answering questions about community supervision orders, and collaborating with clients who want to make change.

Acknowledgements

Jami Tonasket, OKIB Community Safety Manager

Verlynn (V) Mariano, OKIB Community Safety Projects Coordinator

Odessa Clough, OKIB Youth Leadership Coordinator

Michael Ochoa, OKIB Restorative Justice Program Coordinator

Vanessa Clough, Junior Youth Justice Advocate

OKIB Youth Leadership Council, Kayla (Co-Chair) Emmarie (Co-Chair) Akasha, Cruz, Reed, Gabriel, Shelbe, Saasin

Cst. Neil Horne, Indigenous Policing Services, RCMP

Eric Mitchell & Christina Marchand - Cultural Safety Education Facilitators

Vanessa Mitchell - Cultural Safety Education Phase 2 Facilitator

We are grateful for the support from community members and collaborative partners who keep us strong in our purpose. Thank you to all who visit our office, share their stories and take care of the community.

Our work would not be possible without the generous funding provided by:

Public Safety Canada - Crime Prevention Fund

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Thank You



Okanagan Indian Band
syilx Community Safety

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