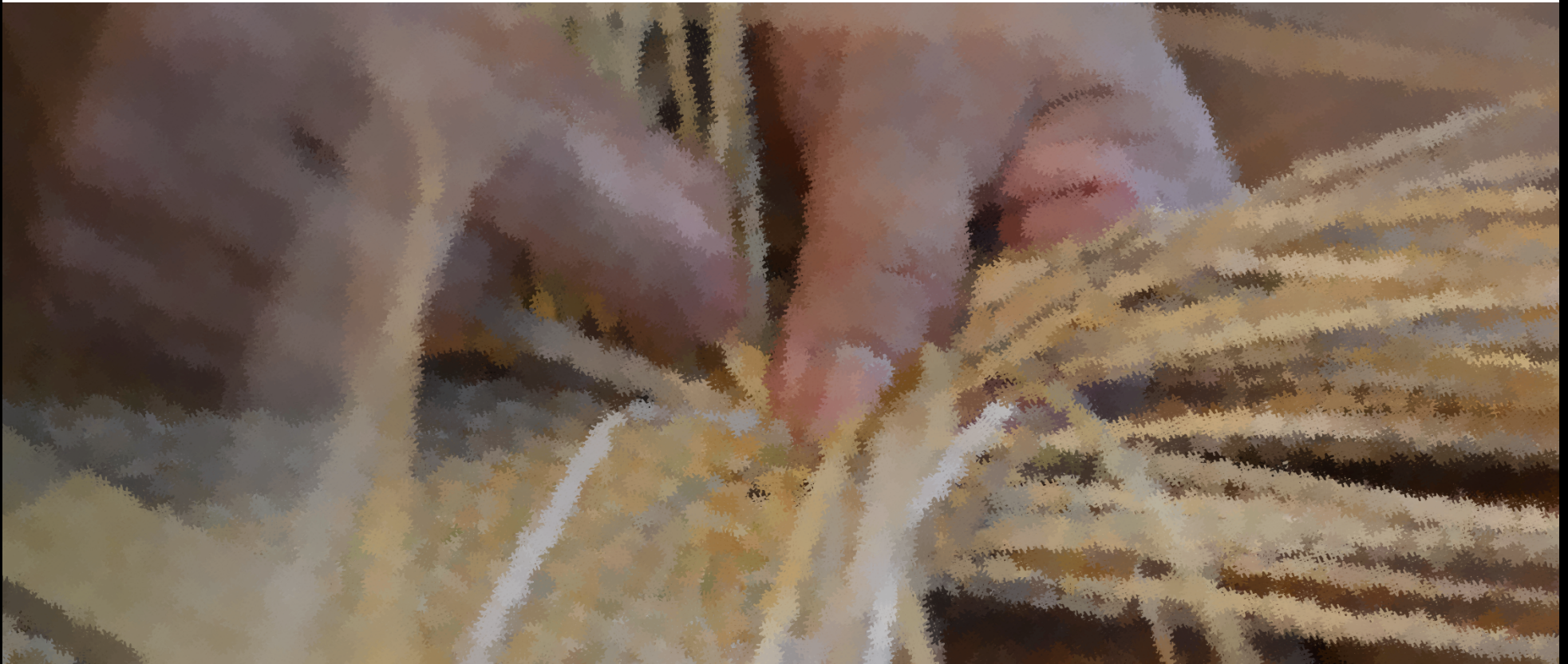


Weaving Our Collective Threads:
Offering a Pathway for Syilx Creativity Within the City of Kelowna



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Table of Contents

<i>Without Prejudice</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Building an Understanding of the Syilx/Okanagan Nation</i>	5
<i>Understanding Our Work</i>	7
<i>Guiding Principles</i>	8
<i>Key Considerations and Acknowledgments</i>	9
Partnerships	9
Opportunities	9
Strengths	9
Acknowledge	10
<i>A syilx Framework</i>	11
Gathering the Pieces	12
Putting the Pieces Together	13
Breathe Life Into It.....	13
Step Over it 4 Times	14
<i>Best Practices</i>	16
En'owkin Centre	16
IndigenEYEZ.....	16
City of Vancouver	17
City of Calgary.....	17
City of Saskatoon.....	17
Province of Ontario	18
<i>What We're Being Told</i>	18
<i>Pathway Forward</i>	20
<i>Concluding Thoughts</i>	22
Key Recommendations.....	22
<i>Bibliography</i>	23

Without Prejudice

This report is without prejudice and is not a stand-in for proper consultation. This report does not, and cannot be used to, speak for any First Nation in any capacity.

syilx

noun see - ee - ul – ks

: root word 'yil' - taking many strands and twisting to make one rope; a command for all strands of life to continuously bind and unify with the rest.¹ The Okanagan word for ourselves is sqilx^w. Which in a literal translation means “the dream in a spiral”. We recognize our individual lives as the continuance of human dreams. We know our lives to be the tools of the vast human dream mind which is continuing on into the future. At our very core, we honour our inherent creativity as our sacred connection to all of creation.²

¹ From the Okanagan Nation Alliance website www.syilx.org

² Armstrong, Jeannette.1991 “The Native Creative Process”, Penticton, BC: Theytus Books

Introduction

For syilx people, culture is not separate from the natural world, but rather one living and breathing entity. The methods of our survival have depended on our relationship with the natural world and expressing those relationships and resulting responsibilities through our creativity. The way that syilx people view arts, culture, and heritage is very different from the western perspective. The creative sector of Kelowna, through its Cultural Planning process, must make space for the voice and presence of the syilx people - the rightful caretakers of the lands and waters in which Kelowna is situated. The underlying and all-encompassing spirit that makes Kelowna such a beautiful place to live, work, play, and be, is the very same spirit that has sustained the syilx People since time out of mind.

The city of Kelowna has an opportunity to be innovative and cutting edge in its approach to cultural planning. It is essential that respectful and reciprocal relationships are built between the creative sector of Kelowna and the syilx/Okanagan Nation that acknowledges the leadership and responsibility of the syilx People. In addition, the City of Kelowna has a duty to respond to the current gap it has in relation to understanding and acknowledging the space required for syilx expression that are being forgotten in this context. True innovation will require the creative sector of Kelowna to think outside the box for something meaningful that develops a new set of principles and commitments to syilx People.

If the primary goal of this new Cultural Plan is to nurture and promote cultural values in the city of Kelowna, then maybe a fundamental similarity exists which can provide a space of commonality to create a new approach to a higher, more restored level of Cultural Planning. Essential to this new approach is the meaningful contribution of syilx People in the creation and implementation of a new Cultural Plan. Specifically, leadership by syilx governments, communities, and organizations are key to the successful development of the City of Kelowna's new Cultural Plan. Supporting the syilx Peoples to share the driver's seat on cultural planning would constitute a step toward reconciliation, and importantly, reconciliation that is well outside of the status quo.

The syilx/Okanagan nation must have full and direct involvement throughout a cultural planning framework constructed through a lens of real partnership, reconciliation, and common understanding.

Through this new framework, the syilx Nation will not simply be responding to already crafted goals and strategies with little to no capacity to do so. As seen in many other municipalities, this after-the-fact approach does not work. Shared experiences will lead to greater understanding, appreciation, and support of the necessary and profound ways in which syilx People express and share their culture and creativity.

The idea of creating a plan for the creative sector of Kelowna that enhances and honours human creative expression has deep commonality with the syilx perspective and world view on what constitutes a healthy life – or, as we say - living the good syilx life. The City of Kelowna, on its journey of updating its Cultural Plan, should consider and centralize a way in which this new plan contains the space, support, and language that will open the door for syilx people to feel welcome to take their rightful places as hosts of this beautiful city located in the heart of unceded syilx lands and waters. Our world needs a more open and secure place – we all deserve to be free to express ourselves and celebrate our unique cultures and ways of being in this world. Artists will lead us all to that freedom. However, we have to take care of our collective hurt first, we

have to be brave enough to have the conversations and develop understandings that will open the space for our vision to be fully realized. The built environment that makes up the city of Kelowna remains a sacred and valued space within syilx territory. As the largest urban centre within syilx lands and waters, Kelowna holds a unique responsibility and opportunity to become a leading centre of excellence for arts and culture.

This report is offered as a resource only, it does not speak for any syilx community or organization. The intention is to provide an introductory overview and glimpse of some of the complexities that exist within the context of urban cultural planning.

Building an Understanding of the Syilx/Okanagan Nation

The syilx/Okanagan Nation are, to this day and every day forward, the rightful caretakers of our territory. We have never signed Treaty, ceded our lands, or relinquished any decision-making power or authority. The syilx People are the rightful title and rights holders, held within the collective. syilx/Okanagan territory spans both sides of the 49th parallel; colonialism, confederation and the establishment of the United States and Canada has never changed that nor divided us.

Excerpt from “We Get Our Living Like Milk From The Land”:

The language which arose from our learning about the land is called the nsyilxcen language. All who speak it are the syilx because the language carries the teachings of a very old civilization with thousands of years of knowledge of healthy living on this land. The laws are always taught by telling the stories to each child and to any adults who need reminding.

The land forms in the stories are teachings and are reminders to each generation that the land is at the centre of how we are to behave. The destruction of the story land marks and natural land forms are like tearing pages out of a history book to the syilx People. Without land knowledge we are endangered as a life form on that land and we in turn endanger other life forms there.

The syilx speaking people’s lands lie on both sides of the Okanagan River, east to the Selkirk Range, west to the Cascades summit, south into Washington bounded by the Columbia River and Lake Chelan and north up to Salmon River.

The syilx Territory had eight organized districts. All speak syilx and have the same customs and stories. They are one Nation and are now commonly called the Okanagan. These are the Southern Okanagan, Northern Okanagan, San Poil, Colville/Kettle, Arrow Lakes, Slocan, and Similkameen/Methow.

The communities of the syilx / Okanagan Nation are known as the Westbank First Nation, Okanagan Indian Band, Penticton Indian Band, Upper Nicola Band, Lower Similkameen Indian Band, Upper Similkameen Indian Band, and the Osoyoos Indian Band. Our governance structure operates in a way that situates our communities as autonomous governments working within and for – the collective syilx People. The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) is the collective tribal council which represents the member communities on areas of common concern. Each community is represented at the ONA through the Chiefs Executive Council (CEC).

It is critical that the City of Kelowna Cultural Planning team establish direct contact and connection with Westbank First Nation, Okanagan Indian Band, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance as a first step towards this work.

The principle from which we examine the Native creative process is an examination of the positioning of oneself from within. We seek to clarify rather than to pursue a comparison of external societal rules which focus on and stress ways to be or not be. An Okanagan phrase *i? sqilx^wlcawt* uses a term to describe this principle. The phrase means “our Native way”. The term refers to the things we do as specific individuals within our culture as a deliberate part of our existence. It is the deliberate part which is expressed as the creative process and the essence of being human and for which we have complete and utter responsibility.

Dr. Jeannette Armstrong³

³ Armstrong, Jeannette.1991 “The Native Creative Process”, Penticton, BC: Theytus Books

Understanding Our Work

Creating frameworks and approaches that are meaningful, relatable, and relevant for syilx people are essential components of strong and long-lasting bridges between the City of Kelowna and the syilx / Okanagan Nation. Part of this work requires that a co-created vision be developed between the City of Kelowna and the syilx People. A fundamental principle that must be interwoven throughout every aspect of this work is safety and freedom – more specifically, freedom from exploitation and tokenism. To visually and meaningfully portray syilx culture, art, and expression, a strong and secure foundation is required – in other words, the unseen, systemic barriers, oppressive policies, exclusive decision making, and othering must be acknowledged and addressed in order to get to the place we all want to be. To better illustrate these points, the following chart provides an introductory overview of how embedded perspectives and systemic barriers impact the outcome for syilx artists and creators:

Underlying Beliefs	Inherent Actions	Direct Outcomes
<p>syilx culture is an optional component <i>where we are starting from</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No identified, dedicated, or adequate budget embedded in workplan • Not included in planning framework • No meaningful role in process • No cultural relevancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syilx voice erased and absent • syilx voice, art, and perspectives situated within a tokenistic and/or exploitative context • Plans, strategies, and opportunities proceed without syilx voices unless shrunken down, convenient, low cost
<p>syilx culture is essential to the core of our work <i>what a meaningful strategy and plan can accomplish</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-create work plans and proposals • visibility and active presence around decision making tables • having brave conversations • acknowledge and honour the deep-rooted syilx creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syilx People are co-creating a safe and free creative environment • a re-infused syilx presence • syilx people will be seen by all – everyone will know we are still here • our place in the city is affirmed and held up • challenge ourselves towards an inclusive and creative Kelowna • syilx creators are free to express themselves in a safe and welcoming environment
<p>we are a better community when we work alongside each other as equals <i>where we want to get to</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-creation of true Kelowna culture and heritage • the City takes a leadership role in educating public and sector partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising our collective consciousness through new knowledge and understanding • increased number of visitors and newcomers • a safe and welcoming environment for all • a unique and thriving City that reflects and honours its syilx hosts • creative prosperity and connection

Guiding Principles

The City has identified a number of principles to help shape the renewal of the Cultural Plan. For the purpose of this report it is important that in the work going forward, consideration be given on how each of these principles would be applied in a syilx context and perspective. By applying a syilx lens to these principles, a fuller and more comprehensive approach to cultural planning would arise. Often times, Indigenous values and ideas are provided their own category awkwardly and haphazardly tacked on. Below are brief examples of additional principles or options for application that might be included through a syilx lens:

1. Accessibility, diversity, and inclusion
 - a. syilx creativity is the original art of this land and continues to be today
 - b. acknowledge that this must be a dynamic and ever evolving process
 - c. acknowledge that the syilx perspective and worldview is not the same as western concepts and methods of cultural planning
 - d. equity and access – fully commit to understanding what equity means in a syilx context
 - e. fair and equitable support
 - f. syilx culture is seen as a central asset to the City
 - g. syilx people are not subject to external judgements of value or worth
2. Accountability and fiscal responsibility
 - a. acknowledge that there is not deeper or more authentic culture in Kelowna than syilx culture
 - b. that the circle of sharing is closed – meaning – that when syilx people, organizations, and/or governments provide input, city officials report back on how, where, and if their advice was applied
 - c. meaningful partnerships are co-created with syilx organizations and/or governments
 - d. adequate and equitable resources are provided to syilx partners as acknowledged and essential partners
3. Innovation
 - a. commitment to truth-telling and shining light on inequities to envision a bold new future for arts and culture in Kelowna
 - b. all partners are willing to explore and experiment
 - c. bring our curiosity and creativity forward to find creative solutions, if not here, then where?
 - d. raise a principled approach: Art vs art, creativity, survival
4. Partnerships and collaboration
 - a. meaningful partnerships with syilx governments, organizations, and people
 - b. examine existing power structures and dynamics
 - c. identified ways of redressing the history and fully acknowledging and understanding where we've come from in order to effectively mark out where we want to go.

Key Considerations and Acknowledgments

It is critical to the success of the Cultural Plan that syilx People are meaningfully included in the process. In order to do this, there a number of key considerations and acknowledgments that must be taken into account. The cultural planning process is well underway, the vehicle is headed down a road to a destination that has yet to be determined, however, the vehicle and road have been chosen without syilx input - a critical consideration that should be fully understood through consultations with syilx organizations and governments. **Moving forward, syilx people must be acknowledged as essential partners, in that if they are not meaningfully included, then there is no plan.** It is critical that the scope and context of the work is identified including the space that we're currently sharing. **A pragmatic approach to this planning process must be based on hope for the future while firmly grounded in the reality of where we are today.**

Partnerships

1. Co-creating respectful relationships with local syilx governments and organizations that reflect and address critical challenges and opportunities
2. The initial phase of this work is about the City of Kelowna gathering the pieces, and building an initial understanding of where to begin
3. Understand that creating equitable partnerships means including equitable resources
4. Always come from a place of redress and repatriation to undo the inherent, systemic, and ongoing damage
5. See the need for an urban co-existence framework in order to set the right path towards co-creation

Opportunities

1. Ask and work through the question: what is it like to live on someone else's land?
2. How can the prosperity from Kelowna arts and culture benefit syilx people?
3. Commit to move passed adornment and tokenism by providing skills, access, and opportunities to syilx artists
4. Identify ways in which intangible syilx cultural heritage can be included

Strengths

1. Prioritize syilx participation but not at the expense of anything else – a syilx principle of doing this work honourably – syilx are inclusive people, not exclusive
2. This is our collective history – the vision includes everyone
3. syilx artists are held in high esteem – art is a connection to spirit
4. Reclaim space as syilx does not mean removing others from it – this is not the syilx way, this is the colonial way, it might look like:
 - a. place-name changes
 - b. removing harmful colonial markers
 - c. telling the syilx story

Acknowledge

1. We are working within a colonial context that does not allow or provide the necessary space for full and meaningful inclusion of syilx people, lands, and waters
 - a. we need a decolonial systems change
 - b. expand the geographical scope and limitations of policy and procedures
2. Urban planning has acted as a tool of colonization
3. Consider how the built environment that is the City of Kelowna promotes and perpetuates the erasure of syilx people
4. We are working within a western framework that acknowledges the City of Kelowna as the power holder and decision maker
 - a. examine and assess power relations
5. Central to this work are strong relationships – we have to commit to do what it takes to create the relationships this place needs us to have
6. Definition of culture is very different from the syilx perspective – it's important to be mindful and spend time knowing and deeply understanding this difference
7. Cultural ecology – understand that this intrinsically includes indigeneity
8. The planning process utilized to date is constructed through a settler lens and rooted in colonial methodologies and western worldviews
 - a. this includes the methods of engagement and public input
 - b. the process was not built for indigenous people
 - c. colonial processes value colonial responses and approaches
9. Heritage protection work has been focused on settler heritage - it should be called as such, or restructured to include syilx heritage
10. syilx culture and heritage need the same funding, recognition, and protection as settler heritage

A syilx Framework

As syilx people, we have a knowledge and teaching system that has existed for countless generations. Captikwl (ancestral stories) informs and shapes our thought processes, decision making methodologies, and ways of gathering information – these stories have been alive since time out of mind. This report aims to follow the teachings found within our Eagle, Fox, and Coyote captikwl. Dr. Bill Cohen, a Syilx scholar and educator, teaches that our syilx knowledge is not static, rather, it must be renewed in a continuous thread moving forward through time - this is what keeps our people strong. He theorizes that the story of Eagle, Fox, and Coyote exemplifies this teaching and can provide the pathway to renewing our knowledge. The framework that follows is based on and inspired by Dr. Cohen’s teachings.

Coyote was watching Eagle one day. He saw Eagle soaring on up drafts near a high cliff at Ashnola. Eagle would swoop down, scream, and ride the drafts back up, really enjoying himself. Coyote watched and watched. Then he said to himself, “Those are my ways.” In this frame of mind, he climbed all the way up the cliff... all the while watching Eagle, and thinking to himself, “Those are my ways.” It was hard work, but he was determined to get to the top. Finally, after climbing all day, he got to the top of the cliff. He walked to the edge and jumped off, intending to catch an updraft and soar. With his skinny arms and legs, however, he just plummeted down. He tried frantically to flap his arms and twirl his tail, but nothing helped him fly. He continued to plummet down the sheer cliff face. He became so afraid that he screamed and pooped all the way to the bottom, where he was splattered to pieces. A large white streak remains on that cliff to remind us of Coyote’s journey. Sometime later, Coyote’s brother, Fox, came along. Fox had heard that Coyote’s foolishness had caused his death again. Fox carefully gathered up all the bits and pieces of Coyote that he could find, a few hairs, a tooth, a piece of bone and so on. When Fox was satisfied that he had all the bits it was possible to find, he breathed into the assemblage, and then stepped over it four times. The pile then transformed itself into Coyote. Coyote sat up, rubbed his eyes, and chastised Fox for waking him up. Coyote said to Fox, “I must have dozed off for a few minutes, and then you’re waking me up!” Fox just shook his head, as Coyote carried on his way as if nothing had happened.⁴

There are many teachings that can be found within syilx captikwl, our responsibilities and ways of knowing are embedded in story. The non-linear nature of the syilx worldview are also represented in our stories. For the purpose of this discussion, we focus on the role of fox as he has shown us a way forward through new circumstances and opportunities. In this story, Fox picks up the pieces of Coyote after he has fallen to the ground while following someone else’s way. Once he has gathered all the important pieces, he puts them in a pile, blows onto it, and steps over it four times. In the context of Cultural Planning and finding ways to work together, we must find and compile all the necessary and important pieces, we will breathe life into it through dialogue and discussion, then we will bring it to life by honouring our new findings in a symbolic way embedding it into a new collective awareness.

³ *School Failed Coyote, so Fox Made a New School: Indigenous Okanagan Knowledge Transforms Educational Pedagogy*
Dr. Bill Cohen’s PhD thesis: University of British Columbia, 2010

Gathering the Pieces

When we embark on this process, it is important that we truly understand the work we are to do with one another. This might include identifying the parameters, scope, roles, responsibilities, necessary resources and support systems. The purpose of ‘gathering the pieces’ is to establish a collective starting point where the necessary space is made for meaningful direction and participation from syilx people. It is also holds learning opportunities for all parties to more fully and genuinely engage with one another. Finally, this phase allows for all parties to collaboratively identify goals, timelines, and necessary action steps.

Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set our intention together – what is the purpose of syilx inclusion? how can we make this mutually beneficial – this will lead us to co-production of new understandings and knowledge
Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking the same language • Understanding Creativity from through a syilx lens • What does the built environment mean to syilx people? • What is Culture? • Hearing the syilx story – we are a people of stories – it is who we are
Community Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the gaps of inclusion? • What is the community saying? • Teachings that come from this land – language, stories, non-human kin • syilx customary rights and responsibilities
Identify Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can be in place to better include Syilx People? • Acknowledge TRC recommendations (all 94) through a municipal lens and ask where can we start? • Intangible cultural heritage
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address how discrimination is systemic • What metrics are being utilized to identify goals and priorities? How might these metrics be contributing to the ongoing erasure of syilx people within Kelowna
Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory bodies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making roles • Understand and identify commonalities and differences of what success looks like, how it's achieved, and how to measure it • Acknowledge the foundation and framework this work has been built on so far
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Putting the Pieces Together

Once the first step is complete, it is then necessary to find ways that all gathered pieces can fit together in way that makes sense, is respectful, and ensures safety. Questions such as, "What did we learn?", "How can we justify our pieces so that they fit together?", or "How can we be better together?", may come up throughout this step in the journey – this is where the growth and innovation happens.

Assess and analyze what was gathered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what best practices would be a good fit • Commitment to keep the pile together – policy change – embed within decision making framework • Authentic relationships • Vulnerability in truth telling • Communications
Interpret Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we create safe spaces for syilx People? • Build a history and syilx foundation section into the cultural plan that identify clear commitments and goals and how they will be actioned
Put forth new understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our collective vision? How can we get to a place where we will have one? Is this appropriate? • Create a safe space syilx creators • Build the toolkit for syilx relationship building • Find a collective voice with the City of Kelowna and syilx partners

Breathe Life Into It

This step in the journey is all about sharing and discussing the new understandings that have occurred so far. It also includes finding new ways to talk about this work, to listen to each other, and build the proper supports around this work so as to ensure that it will last and thrive. This step is also about identifying what can be put into place so as to honour and uplift the hard work that has been done ensuring its survival and perpetuity.

Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss new understandings with partners • Identify short term commitments with syilx communities, organizations, governments • Cultural training – ongoing and consistent • Cultural competency training for city staff and citizens – ongoing and consistent • Ground this work in Kelowna’s history – it needs connection to its roots • Consider if additional sections embedded within cultural plan, or if a parallel and connected syilx arts and culture strategy is appropriate
Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen connections and relationships • Affirm this new understanding within the City of Kelowna’s administrative teams
Present New Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the what has been heard with syilx communities and general public

Step Over it 4 Times

The final step on this journey – ritualizing the new understandings, processes, commitments, and acknowledgements, and collaborative working relationships into the collective understanding and broader vision. This piece of the work is about collaboratively finding ways that new understandings will be embedded into daily practices and decision making. It’s about ritualizing our elevated ideas of what Kelowna can accomplish.

honour new understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the story • Creating safe spaces • Develop syilx specific supports for creators • Calling on City team to be change agents! • Change the name of the plan – i.e. Creative Kelowna Strategy • Acknowledge and address inherent power imbalance when non-Indigenous planning professionals work with Indigenous people • Honour the potential and possibilities of what can be achieved together
present new space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify new opportunities • Annual public event that focuses on syilx creativity and inclusion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities and circumstances where more productive relationships between syilx communities and city staff and city arts community • Create inclusive spaces • syilx perspective reflected – well-resourced for syilx to participate fully • Build syilx perspectives and ways of knowing and being into the pillar of sustainability • Increase the visibility of the syilx community through public art, place names, and urban design and projects • Call in instead of call out: commit to having difficult and growth encouraging conversations in a safe and empowering environment
<p>adopt new knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to the ongoing work • Establish and hire a syilx curator for the City of Kelowna • Audience accommodation plan – find new and innovative ways to create an open and welcoming space for syilx people • Restore the face of the syilx people back on this part of the territory • syilx arts and culture fully and meaningfully reflected in the city chamber • Ensure embedded syilx specific policies – conditions that respect and ensure syilx leadership

Best Practices

A cursory review of existing initiatives, policies, and ideas undertaken in other municipalities have highlighted a number of potential avenues the City of Kelowna may wish to explore with its syilx partners. Although the context for these ideas vary depending on the location, host nation, and available resources, some may prove be in line with what is possible or desirable for Kelowna. Specific approaches and solutions may vary per region and municipality but the core of what drove many of these initiatives is similar to what has been heard so far in the syilx context. It may be recommended that the City of Kelowna utilize these best practices to inform their approach in developing its partnerships with syilx communities.

En'owkin Centre

The En'owkin Centre, located in Penticton, BC, is a renowned institution that offers educational opportunities unique and specific to the syilx people. Many different workshops, trainings, and seminars can be accessed through the En'owkin Centre that would greatly benefit the efforts within Kelowna's cultural planning process. From their website:

The En'owkin Centre (hereafter referred to as En'owkin) is a dynamic institution, which puts into practice the principles of self-determination and the validation of cultural aspirations and identity. An Indigenous cultural, educational, ecological and creative arts organization, En'owkin plays a lead role in the development and implementation of Indigenous knowledge and systems, both at the community and international levels.

<http://www.enowkincentre.ca>

IndigenEYEZ

Although outside of the municipality planning context, IndigenEYEZ was chosen as an example of a best practice because of the creative facilitation and training that is offered to build meaningful relationships, create connections, and foster brave truth-telling dialogue. The idea of 'calling in instead of calling out' fosters safe spaces where honest challenges and perspectives can be shared in ways that are effective and create deeper understandings. IndigenEYEZ offers an arts-based methodology that is grounded on the notion that it is 'medicine for relationships'.

As Indigenous people, our capacity for healthy relationships is in recovery. That is why our programs focus on strengthening four essential relationships: with self, with others, with nature, and with culture. Our holistic approach engages the heart and the mind. We draw on the land and the awareness that nature offers, to enhance our senses and intuitions. We encourage communities to explore their own cultures and to think deeply about what traditional values mean in the contemporary world.

It takes consistency and ongoing engagement with one another to create meaningful and long-lasting change. IndigenEYEZ uses a process that fosters creative networks through creative methodologies making a special and safe environment for everyone.

<https://indigeneyez.com>

City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver is currently underway with the development of its Creative City Strategy. A number of best practices and engagement approaches can be gleaned from this process. In particular, a Creative City Symposium was held that examined and discussed Indigenous visibility and voice on the land, reconciliation, access and equity, securing cultural spaces, and cultural reconciliation and redress through public art. Further, the guiding principles that are driving this work are simple but powerful words that can be applied to both the City and the Indigenous context:

bold / daring / brave / humility / fairness / transparency / accountability / experimentation

<https://vanculture.wordpress.com/2019/02/01/creative-city-strategy-symposium/>

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary, in consultation with Indigenous people, has created an Indigenous Policy and Indigenous Policy Framework to promote reconciliation and redress in a number of ways throughout the work of the City. In addition, they have created a Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee with equal representation from City staff and councillors and Calgary's Indigenous population whose role is to address issues pertaining to Indigenous residents of Calgary.

<https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/First-Nations-Metis-and-Inuit-Peoples/First-Nations-Metis-Inuit-Peoples.aspx>

<https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/First-Nations-Metis-and-Inuit-Peoples/Calgary-Aboriginal-Urban-Affairs-Committee/Calgary-Aboriginal-Urban-Affairs-Committee.aspx>

City of Saskatoon

The City of Saskatoon has acknowledged that the consciousness of the city is changing. They have committed to exploring ways in which reconciliation and the TRC Calls To Action can be applied across City practices. The City has committed to sustained and deliberate engagement with Indigenous People to promote visibility and equity.

https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/community-services/community-development/culture-plan/2018_culture_plan_refresh.pdf

Province of Ontario

Although outside of a municipality context, the Province of Ontario has undertaken an initiative that could inform the work within the City of Kelowna's cultural planning context in terms of principles, engagement tools, and commitments. Ontario has created and Urban Indigenous Action Plan that is meant to support reconciliation between urban Indigenous communities and the government:

Today's policy leaders in and outside of government must realize that the legacy of colonialism continues to reverberate throughout public policy and programming, extending a legacy that works to impede reconciliation. As such, all Ontarians are tasked with breathing life into reconciliation, particularly by prioritizing respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples led through example by the province. The Urban Indigenous Action Plan supports reconciliation between urban Indigenous communities, the provincial government and the broader public service by:

- Recognizing relationships and culture as the foundational requirements for policy and program development; and,
- Guiding government and the broader public service to develop responsive, inclusive policies, programs and evaluations with, and that meet the needs of, urban Indigenous communities

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/urban-indigenous-action-plan#section-6>

What We're Being Told

During the development of this report, the author gathered input and advice from a number of syilx artists, influencers, and leaders. The guidance and direction received from these individuals informed and guided the shape and content of this report. The following is a summation of key themes, ideas, and perspectives that may help to form the initial steps of the critical work ahead. There were three consistent recommendations that were heard throughout almost all conversations that are worth highlighting here: 1. the need for a safer environment for syilx people to participate, 2. address accessibility on all fronts, and 3. ensure that space for syilx truth-telling is always present.

Protocols

ensure that conversations with syilx artists, organizations, and governments include a discussion on what protocols are appropriate in this context:

- ⇒ first and foremost, this is syilx Territory and syilx People are the hosts
- ⇒ incorporate and honour the syilx principle of reciprocity within this work
- ⇒ advocate for and establish a syilx inclusion clause in every relevant aspect of the City's work
- ⇒ ensure syilx governments are positioned as decision makers and influencers
- ⇒ commit to meaningful inclusion based on what syilx governments determine as such
- ⇒ regular, ongoing, and consistent learning opportunities for City staff and partners

Principles

while we work to acknowledge the systemic issues that may be embedded in the current planning structures, efforts may be applied to establish principles to guide ongoing work together:

- ⇒ interconnection
- ⇒ meaningful to all parties
- ⇒ calling back syilx people
- ⇒ visibility
- ⇒ recognition of unceded territory
- ⇒ Truth and Reconciliation Calls To Action
- ⇒ UNDRIP articles
- ⇒ share our collective reality: settler, immigrant, and syilx

Innovations

the very notion of this work calls for creativity and innovation – it is imperative the creative spirit be called upon and acknowledged as the key to finding new ways to move forward together:

- ⇒ create food forests: reclaimed natural spaces that honour and acknowledge the syilx relationships to foods and medicines
- ⇒ transform green spaces to reclaim our syilx relationship with them by moving towards indigenous plant species and systems
- ⇒ success in process (exclusion from rigorous requirements to participate in granting or board opportunities), i.e. living within the city limits should not be a requirement for syilx people
- ⇒ establish a syilx Arts Council
- ⇒ establish a central arts hub for syilx / Okanagan Nation to oversee
- ⇒ work together with other municipalities throughout syilx territory to create a connected network for syilx arts and culture
- ⇒ redefine what heritage means in the city of Kelowna
- ⇒ re-tell the story of nxa?x?itkw

Actions

it is important to put into motion tangible actions that would propel this work forward and move it beyond discussion into meaningful action showing commitment and authenticity:

- ⇒ contact and co-planning with syilx artists
- ⇒ develop and implement a plan to open up space for syilx people to be back on the land
- ⇒ develop and implement a plan to produce syilx productions, performances, and showcasing
- ⇒ enhance understanding and dismantle fear for the citizens of Kelowna by creating and showcasing a timeline that goes from pre-contact to now

Pathway Forward

There are a number of opportunities available to the City of Kelowna to move forward in a mutually beneficial and respectful way with the syilx Nation and People. The chart below is an example of how a pathway forward could look and is intended as an option and starting point for discussion. This information may form the basis of conversation that the City will be able to utilize to inform their approach, preparation, and planning for a better City that is reflective of the its syilx hosts.

	Acknowledgments/ Commitments	Relationships	Cultural Safety	Decolonize
<p><i>Short ideas and recommendations that may be used as suggestions and guides upon moving forward in collaboration with syilx organizations and governments</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> develop and require training for city staff and partners: cultural safety, engagement, Indigenous rights, syilx history and reality, etc. create syilx accountability framework to protect against tokenism identify shared roles and responsibilities across all sectors within the City administration for syilx partnerships acknowledge the holistic nature of syilx creative expression rename the cultural plan to creative city plan acknowledge the creative potential inherent in the syilx lands, waters, and people 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> establish and nurture new partnerships and relationships with syilx hosts create plans to enhance syilx visibility within Kelowna champion syilx creators by elevating the essential nature of syilx arts and culture increase awareness and participation of syilx people in Kelowna Arts and Culture through low cost and targeted access dedicated and resourced strategy to engage with syilx governments to develop an analysis of what is working and where the gaps are – create a report card from a syilx perspective 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> create space within the City of Kelowna for syilx voice and expression demystify and simplify city processes in the context of arts and culture create an accessibility plan for syilx youth develop syilx creativity lens 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> expand the notion of ‘cultural ecology’ to include the land and syilx people work with syilx people to understand and tell the story of nxa?x?itkw (wrongly named Ogoopogo) work with syilx people to re-tell the history of Kelowna develop a process for evaluation and monitoring to ensure that expectations, needs, and outcomes are on track identify natural spaces within the city that can be utilized as art spaces for syilx people – identify collaborative opportunities to reunite syilx people with these places create and embed principles to establish a critical path towards indigenizing Kelowna’s Cultural Plan develop a decolonizing strategy for the City of Kelowna’s Arts

		6. protocol agreements with syilx organizations and governments		and Culture department, plans and strategies 8. establish a syilx Arts Council
<i>Medium ideas and recommendations that may be used as suggestions and guides upon moving forward in collaboration with syilx organizations and governments</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> develop tool to ensure that syilx culture and visibility is built in to ever new developments and projects within the city – expanding public art opportunities in addition to requiring developers to include in their budgets for syilx visuals included in projects as part of the developer tax – go directly to fund syilx projects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> identify a plan to action and implement the land recognition through the arts create new syilx specific funding opportunities for creativity and expression find ways to engage syilx youth by connecting them through their preferred methods (i.e. myuseum of Toronto) 	1. support established cultural institutions to act as incubators for emerging syilx artists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> create way to ensure city venues are accessible for use by syilx creators identify syilx heritage conservation areas within city analyze and assess existing cultural grants through a lens of syilx inclusivity and priority <ol style="list-style-type: none"> establish adequate policy relating to granting polices, requirements, and adjudication assess wording and language used in granting application process to ensure inclusivity, relevance, and relatability adjudication should be a panel of equal representation
<i>Long ideas and recommendations that may be used as suggestions and guides upon moving forward in collaboration with syilx organizations and governments</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> develop a code of ethics and professional practice framework increased investment and leadership opportunities for syilx creators syilx arts administrator <ol style="list-style-type: none"> syilx cultural manager syilx artist internships/residencies/mentorship programs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> develop a syilx arts and culture policy framework <ol style="list-style-type: none"> guided by TRC and UNDRIP focus on reducing barriers support advancement of syilx artists co-authored policy making 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> have syilx history visible and accessible to all syilx arts festival dedicated syilx creative space (natural and built) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> create a syilx arts and culture centre establish Kelowna as a true cultural destination that is syilx artist centered syilx art council syilx art co-op rename Pandosy street

Concluding Thoughts

There are vast amounts of untapped creative potential within the City of Kelowna that could elevate its citizens, landscape, and visitors in such a way that could only happen here. The uniqueness that is syilx culture and creativity is directly tied to these lands which hold power and presence found nowhere else. The outcomes of true partnerships and relationships with syilx people would benefit all citizens in myriad ways.

Key Recommendations

1. Establish a connection with the Westbank First Nation, Okanagan Indian Band, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance to begin discussions on creating a beneficial, reciprocal, and meaningful pathway to partnership - create a strategic pathway forward.
2. In collaboration with local syilx governments and organizations, establish a new position within the City of Kelowna Cultural Services Department to hire an Indigenous Arts and Cultural Planner.
3. Assess how this planning process is contained within a western framework and work to deconstruct and rebuild in a holistic way that includes other departments, plans and strategies to guide the city's efforts and investments to better support syilx art and culture.
4. Centre a key statement and acknowledgement that speaks to the necessary and essential inclusion of the syilx people, and that without proper and meaningful partnership with the syilx people, this plan is not complete.
5. Commit to a separate and distinct syilx pathway that is directly connected and embedded within the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan.
6. Commit to establish short term goals to enhance syilx visibility within the City of Kelowna.
7. syilx people cannot be seen as volunteers and/or equal to non-syilx citizens. Consider the concept of equity from a syilx perspective and context given the history and current realities; adequate resources and compensation must be embedded in any meaningful relationship with syilx people.
8. Establish regular, consistent, and ongoing cultural sensitivity and relationship building training; a committed process for building relationships and finding new ways to have conversations and build partnerships that continually work to identify and break down the barriers.

Bibliography

Armstrong, J. C., Okanagan Rights Committee, & Okanagan Indian Education Resource Society. (1993). *We get our living like milk from the land*. Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books.

Cardinal, D., Armstrong, J. C., & Young-Ing, G. (1991). *The native creative process*. Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books.

School Failed Coyote, so Fox Made a New School: Indigenous Okanagan Knowledge Transforms Educational Pedagogy
Dr. Bill Cohen's PhD thesis: University of British Columbia, 2010

Wild Salmon Caravan

The main purpose of the Wild Salmon Caravan is to build capacity of coalitions and campaigns that link Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, artists, food systems networks, individuals, organizations, and communities who are working to protect, conserve and restore wild salmon and its habitat in the Fraser Basin and Salish Seas corridor.

<https://wildsalmoncaravan.ca/about/>

kama? Creative Aboriginal Arts Collective

Their purpose is to advance and promote traditional/ contemporary art and culture through aboriginal media arts, fine arts and performing arts. Their key objectives are to support creative communities through partnerships, public exhibitions, training, workshop facilitation, and advanced media literacy skills. It is also to support the work of artists through project creation and production in all disciplines for the individual artist and as a collective. Finally, to support upcoming, emerging and established artists through artist residencies, collaborative exhibitions, mentorships, artist marketing workshops and interdisciplinary multiplatform storytelling.

https://business.facebook.com/pg/KamaCreative/about/?ref=page_internal

Suk'wtemsqilx'w West Kelowna Arts Council (SWAC)

Supports both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and cultural bodies within and surrounding the City of West Kelowna and Westbank First Nation in Okanagan BC, also referred to as the Westside. They are interconnected with both communities weaving in and out of land, business and home.

<http://www.swac-arts.com>

City of Winnipeg

The Indigenous Relations Division (IRD) was established in March 2013 and is housed in Corporate Support Services; who collaborates to build a skilled, diverse and healthy workforce, to develop innovative technology solutions, and to provide the best services and information for citizens.

IRD strives to provide leadership and experiences from an Indigenous perspective on civic programs, services and initiatives that support and address the needs of Winnipeg's Indigenous community; now and into the future.

<https://www.winnipeg.ca/indigenous/whoweare.stm>

Vancouver looks to honour Indigenous culture in plan for downtown park

Vancouver's focus on incorporating Indigenous elements into the park design is a first for a major city park in the region.

<http://pwlpartnership.com/our-news/2018/vancouver-looks-honour-indigenous-culture-plan-downtown-park>

The Indigenous Heritage Circle: Advancing Indigenous Cultural Knowledge

In an Indigenous context, cultural heritage refers to ideas, experiences, objects, artistic expressions, practices, knowledge and places that are valued because they are culturally meaningful, connected to shared memory, or linked to collective identity. Indigenous cultural heritage is not separate from Indigenous identity and Indigenous life. It is inherited from ancestors as a gift to next generations, but it can also be created by this generation as a legacy for future generations. Each Indigenous group speaks for cultural heritage that is unique to them. For this reason, Indigenous cultural heritage is an inherent right that colonial frameworks (heritage laws, programs and policies) are unable to address.

Indigenous peoples have a right to identify their own cultural heritage, interpret its meaning and determine its disposition. They must also have a voice in shared heritage – the places and stories that are important to Canada and Canadians as a whole. In keeping with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous rights are not affected by Indigenous groups choosing to participate “in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.”

<http://indigenousheritage.ca>

From the UNESCO site on Intangible Cultural Heritage

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 31 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic

resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

The City of Kelowna should be considering how it will implement and action all of the TRC's Calls To Action in a relevant and guided manner in partnership with the syilx People. For the purposes of this report, it is recommended that #83 might be a good place to start:

83. We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

[http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls to Action English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

Aboriginal arts research initiative: Report on consultations.

A report written by France Trepanier for the Canada Council for the Arts. <http://canadacouncil.ca/~media/files/research - en/aboriginal arts research initiative aari/aarifinalreport.pdf>

“Art can be medicine, a survival tool, an antidote. Art is our identity, our place, a sign of our presence on this planet. It is medicine as it helps healing because we’ve been through so many things. Art is for the people. It can help build our communities.”

- unnamed Indigenous artist (Trepanier, 2008, p.15)