

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
ON PARTNERSHIP & INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

**BETWEEN:**

**Westbank First Nation (WFN) / stqá?tkʷtɬniwt sqilxʷ**

Located in south central British Columbia, Canada, Westbank First Nation (WFN) / stqá?tkʷtɬniwt sqilxʷ is one of eight syilx Okanagan Nation communities and is the only Self-Governed community within the syilx Okanagan Nation. The syilx traditional territories extend from the south-central interior of B.C. to north central Washington State. The syilx people are a division of the Interior Salish, speak the nsyilxcən language, and have inhabited the syilx traditional territories for thousands of years. WFN believes it is of fundamental importance that every WFN Member is provided with the resources and support needed to achieve their targeted educational and employment opportunities and outcomes.

and

**Okanagan College (OC)**

The Okanagan College (OC) in British Columbia, Canada, is committed to decolonizing its campuses and becoming a leader in reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities. As part of this commitment, OC aims to integrate Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and worldviews into its curricula, programs, and services, and to provide relevant training for those teaching and interacting with OC students. OC also seeks to build and maintain meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, provide resources and programming for Indigenous learners, and establish culturally relevant spaces that accommodate Indigenous services and events at OC. Through these efforts, OC aims to enhance recruitment, mentorship, and retention of Indigenous learners, reduce attrition through encouraging self-confidence and program completion, and to overall support Indigenous students in achieving their educational goals.

**OBJECTIVES**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the partnership between OC and WFN which aims to enhance the recruitment, mentorship, and retention of syilx learners at OC. As part of the recommendations released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, educational institutions were called upon to be leaders in reconciliation, and OC is committed to working towards fulfilling this role. The parties agree to work collaboratively to achieve the following objectives:

1. Embrace the spirit and intent of reconciliation and associated national and regional calls to action by jointly working on projects, planning, and development. This will ensure that Indigenous learners have access to post-secondary education, while contributing towards building the professional capacity of the WFN Membership. The parties will work collectively towards implementing the OC Indigenization in Action Plan (attached as Schedule "A") by integrating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and worldviews into curricula, courses, and programs.
2. Collaborate on projects and programs that will benefit syilx learners attending OC and increase their access to post-secondary education. The parties are committed to working together to provide continued learner support for the Indigenous community at OC. These efforts will include enhancing Indigenous student recruitment efforts and expanding the level of service provision for WFN students, including consistent cultural programming and one-on-one advisory engagement to build educational plans. It is the intention that the strengths of each party to this MOU can be harnessed to better support one another and all syilx learners through increased collaboration.
3. OC will continue to seek guidance and advice from WFN staff and knowledge keepers on how syilx ways of knowing, doing, and being can enrich the educational, organizational, and cultural fabric of OC. The parties will also work to establish culturally relevant spaces that accommodate Indigenous services and events.
4. WFN and OC will support each other on proposals and projects that require partnership with the syilx community.

5. The OC Indigenous Services Department and the WFN Education Department will work together to support WFN students in their education journey at OC. This includes assisting WFN learners in navigating the OC environment, addressing student concerns, and liaising with other internal and community support services to access resources, programs, and supports.
6. This MOU will be used to build collaboration, support communication, and strengthen relationships for the broader purpose of enhancing efficiencies to reduce duplications, gaps, and conflicting mandates that related to WFN learners attending OC and the use of syilx ways of knowing, doing, and being.
7. The parties will also work together to understand any unique barriers and pathways to post-secondary education for WFN students, identifying gaps, and supporting education planning for the transition into OC.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Access and Control of Knowledge**

- a) The Right to Education: WFN and OC recognize and understand that the syilx peoples have the right to establish and control education systems, including Indigenous traditional knowledge systems and syilx ways of knowing, doing, and being. WFN and OC recognize the need to foster, not circumvent, Indigenous peoples control over and access to Indigenous-centered educational practices.
- b) Control Over Intellectual Property: WFN and OC recognize and understand that the syilx peoples have the right to maintain, control, and protect syilx traditional knowledge systems and the intellectual property of their culture, language, and ways of knowing, doing, and being. Both WFN and OC acknowledge the need to support WFN Member access to and control over the intellectual property of syilx culture, language, and ways of knowing, doing, and being.

### **2. Communication and Consultation**

WFN and OC recognize that building and maintaining open channels of communication and consultation between WFN and OC on matters relating to Indigenous- and syilx-specific program development and course offerings is imperative to the protection and continued use of Indigenous intellectual property.

### **3. Appropriate Use of Indigenous Knowledge**

WFN and OC agree that Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize and disseminate their ways of knowing, doing, and being. Indigenous peoples have the right to be educated in their Indigenous languages, cultural practices, and teaching and learning methods. While non-Indigenous peoples can interface with Indigenous traditional knowledge in respectful and appropriate ways, appropriation of Indigenous knowledge often results. Both WFN and OC will actively discourage such cultural and knowledge appropriation and recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to transmit their knowledge systems.

### **4. Relationships Formed Through Mutual Respect**

Indigenous peoples have the right and responsibility to establish and control their education systems, and for these systems to exist free from forced influence or assimilation. The OC recognizes and supports WFN's pursuit of academic autonomy, and both parties acknowledge that their broader relationship is to be based on the foundation of mutual respect and authentic communication.

5. Representation

WFN and OC recognize the importance of the meaningful inclusion of WFN representation in decision-making processes that impact syilx peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems at the OC.

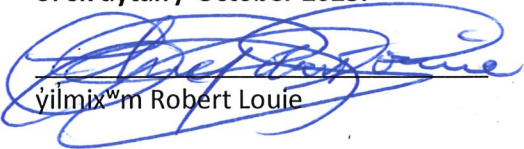
6. Determining Research

- a) Research: WFN and OC recognize that historically academic research concerning Indigenous peoples has been used to reinforce colonial agendas. The parties agree to work collaboratively to develop and implement processes to remedy these harms, including, but not limited to, promoting the repatriation of sacred objects and the revitalization of knowledge systems that have been taken and used inappropriately by researchers without the consent of Indigenous communities.
- b) Revitalization and Consent: WFN and OC agree that Indigenous peoples have the right to practice, revitalize, and maintain cultural laws, customs, and traditions, and to provide free and informed consent prior to the approval and implementation of any project or program that affects their people, community, traditional lands, and its resources.
- c) Determining Research: WFN and OC recognize that research with Indigenous communities should be framed by methodologies and practices that ensure free, prior, and informed consent. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the parameters of research projects to reflect the realities, needs, and interests of their communities.

This MOU is intended to provide a framework for a mutually beneficial partnership, and will be taken into consideration by OC on all matters relating to governance, curriculum, course development, and research that concerns Indigenous peoples, communities, and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being.

This MOU will be reviewed every three (3) years to ensure that it continues to fully reflect the parties' priorities and expectations. The parties will use the review process to assess progress and identify areas for further collaboration and improvement.

The parties agree to abide by the above understanding and sign this Memorandum of Understanding on this 30<sup>th</sup> day of sk'aytan / October 2023.

  
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səx<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>inmaʔm Andrea Alexander

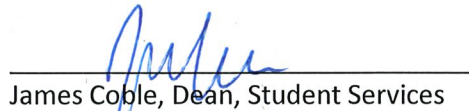
  
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