Guide to PUBLIC ART
Public Art Program

Westbank First Nation’s ("WFN") Public Art Program, established in 2014 by the WFN Public Art Committee, is a collaborative, collective, creative process between WFN, practicing artists, and community members.

Public art creatively addresses the needs and aspirations of the WFN community and acknowledges WFN and syilx/Okanagan heritage.

The Public Art Committee works to promote syilx culture through the arts; provide advice and support activities that advance public art; and administer a selection process for commissioning and purchasing public art.

Heritage

Westbank First Nation features other programs, celebrations, events, and art not necessarily classified as “public art.” For example, aspects of syilx culture have been woven into the design of many buildings, structures, and signs throughout the community.

The síyaʔ celebration, held annually on the first Friday in June, is an opportunity for the community to celebrate and honour our school children and the role of women in our community, as well as give thanks for the past year and blessings for a fruitful year ahead. This celebration, similar to a powwow, features drumming, dancing, singing, and the sale of local Indigenous art, jewelry, and crafts.
Seven Generations
Smoker Marchand, 2013
WFN Elders Hall, 3255D Shannon Lake Road

Seven Generations honours residential school survivors, their families, and those who have passed on. The Elder symbolizes the passing of knowledge, and the drum symbolizes resiliency and the heartbeat of our lives.

Medicine Bear
Smoker Marchand, 2011
3604 Carrington Road (snyatan Shopping Centre)

Artist statement: “The bear was strong medicine because he was the strongest and most powerful of the animal people and known for his courage and protectiveness. There is nothing more dangerous than a bear protecting its family, which I believe is a symbol of First Nation efforts to bring life and a healthy environment to our community.”

Elk
Smoker Marchand, 2013
2180 Elk Road

For centuries, those who successfully hunted elk were recognized as important leaders of traditional practices. Quite often, the best hunters, or those whose families were great hunters, have been recognized as those fortunate enough to adorn the porcelain teeth of the elk.

Community Reader Board
Clint George, 2013
1902 Pheasant Lane

The digital reader board, framed by public art, contains rotating notices that help share information about community events and initiatives.

The sculpture depicts Chief siyaʔ, one of the Four Food Chiefs.
Approximately 7,000 Indigenous people served in the Canadian Armed Forces during the First and Second World Wars. This monument honours both Westbank First Nation veterans and all who have served, and continue to serve, in the Canadian and American Armed Forces.

Artist statement: “I wanted to show a strong Indian man. I wanted to show a strong Indian woman. And I wanted to show a soldier who could be any soldier—he could be Native, he could be any soldier—because I think it’s important to represent all our people. My uncle said that when they got into the trenches, they were a band of brothers. There was no colour. There was no difference in who they were. They fought together, and I think that’s really important.”
The Four Food Chiefs, Chief siyaʔ (saskatoon berry), Chief sp’iƛ̓łəm (bitterroot), Chief ntityix (spring salmon), and Chief skəmxist (black bear), represent various protocols, social order and life lessons that traditionally guided the way of life of the syilx people prior to outside contact.

This sculpture features elements of the WFN logo, which captures the essence of syilx teachings, culture, and history: sen’klip, the trickster and teacher; kiláwnaʔ; nuxaʔx̌ʔitkʷ; and Okanagan Lake.

qʷačiʔ (Pit House) were traditionally used during the winter months, utilizing geothermal energy, the warmth of the mother earth, to keep the people safe. They were well kept, as they were more than a resting place; they were also a space to share stories and celebrate. When spring arrived, the syilx people would travel with portable summer tule mat dwellings / tukʷtənilx.

This monument depicts Turtle Island, the Four Food Chiefs, and the four elements of water, earth, wind, and fire. Turtle represents a peaceful, liberated society, providing compassion for all, and brings vision, knowledge, and peace to the people.
The sacred spirit of the lake, nxaʔxʔitkʷ, lives in the water but can also move to the land and air. nxaʔxʔitkʷ reminds us to be mindful of our resources; if nxaʔxʔitkʷ disappears due to pollution and misuse of the water, so do the plants, medicines, trees, and foods that sustain us.

Harmonizing Mother Earth
Graham Pettman, 2004
515 Hwy 97 South (WFN Government Office)

Graham Pettman is known for intertwining nature and spirit in his artwork.

This piece intertwines the Creator with Mother, Child, Bear, Eagle, Coyote, Mouse, nxaʔxʔitkʷ, and Drum.

Four Food Chiefs Wall Mural
Smoker Marchand, 2013
515 Hwy 97 South (WFN Government Office)

This mural depicts the Four Food Chiefs, which are the foundation from which Okanagan culture has grown and developed.

For this reason, the Four Food Chiefs form the cornerstone of WFN’s governance structure and strategic plan.
These two monuments, found on either side of William R. Bennett Bridge entrance, showcase a coyote and grizzly bear paw. sen’k’lip (coyote) was sent by kʷuləncútn (Creator) to help our people survive on this land.

A plaque at the site states: “The Okanagan people are observers of the beauty of nature, and active participants in the protection of this area. The Okanagan people used this place as a village and lake crossing for thousands of years.”
To learn more about Indigenous and syilx history and culture, drop in for a tour at the sncəwips Heritage Museum.

The museum, operated by Westbank First Nation, features the living culture and history of the syilx/Okanagan people. Friendly staff offer a wealth of information and are happy to share their knowledge with visitors.

sncəwips Heritage Museum also hosts the annual siyaʔ celebration, which is open to the public and held annually on the first Friday in June.

Open Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. www.sncewips.ca
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Pamela &amp; Wilfred</td>
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<td>Coralee Miller</td>
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<td>Leather crafts</td>
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<td>Gourd art</td>
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<td>Ernie Michele</td>
<td>Carvings</td>
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<td>George Michele</td>
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<td>Will Swite</td>
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