Guide to PUBLIC ART

Community. Leadership. Pride.
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.
Veterans Memorial
Smoker Marchand, 2014
1900 Quail Lane

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’iƛ̓ləm (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’kliʔ, the trickster and teacher; kiláwnaʔ; n̓x̌aʔx̌ ʔitkʷ; and Okanagan Lake.

qʷačiʔ 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 / tukʷtânilx.

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.
n̓xaʔx̌ʔitkʷ
Smoker Marchand, 2013
525 Hwy 97 (Okanagan Lake Shopping Centre)

The sacred spirit of the lake, n̓xaʔx̌ʔitkʷ, lives in the water but can also move to the land and air. n̓xaʔx̌ʔitkʷ reminds us to be mindful of our resources; if n̓xaʔx̌ʔitkʷ 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, n̓xaʔx̌ʔitkʷ, 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.
Prior to 1876, before colonization and the imposition of the Indian Act, the syilx were a self sufficient, self-governing people.

Charlie swkǝ́c̓ut was the Village Chief of the Mission Creek area when the Okanagan faced both an influx of settlers and the imposition of the Indian Act.

He was a modest individual with a high regard for peacekeeping and community balance, playing a vital role in maintaining communication that was vital to the syilx lifestyle. His Chieftainship correlates with the arrival of Father Pandosy, who came to the Okanagan in poor health, fleeing American Mercenaries and was nursed back to health by the syilx people.

During his time as Chief, swkǝ́c̓ut maintained the central idea of peace between syilx people and settlers while balancing all aspects of community to his people.
The artwork is inspired by the captíkʷɬ and sqilxʷcaw̓t (ways of being). We celebrate this gift as we continue to work towards creating a more respectful and inclusive society for all people.

The syilx/Okanagan people have been placed here by k̓ʷl̓n̓cutn̓ (creator) to care for the tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ uɬ siw̓ɬkʷ (land and water) and all that is connected to it. captíkʷɬ (creation stories) are passed down from one generation to the next and contain sacred laws and teachings about living as a part of tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ.

For the People
Smoker Marchand, 2015
Big White Ski Resort Ltd

This sculpture was created by Okanagan Nation member, Smoker Marchand, and is a reflection of the Westbank First Nation (WFN) logo. It is a gift from WFN to Big White Ski Resort Ltd. in acknowledgment of the positive relationship that has been embraced and continues to benefit people of all walks of life.

“For the People” symbolizes the history, culture and capcâptîkʷəɬ (legends) that are the foundation of the Okanagan/syilx peoples’ ways of being. The inclusion of skamxist (bear), sen̓klip (coyote) and n̓x̌ʔx̌ʔitkʷ (Spirit of the Lake, Ogopogo) acknowledges that the Okanagan peoples’ history began during a time when only the plant and animal people walked this earth. It was the world before this world.

sənsisyustən House of Learning
Janine Lott, 2019
1900 Quail Lane

The artwork is inspired by the captíkʷɬ and sqilxʷcaw̓t (ways of being). We celebrate this gift as we continue to work towards creating a more respectful and inclusive society for all people. The syilx/Okanagan people have been placed here by kʷl̓n̓cutn̓ (creator) to care for the tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ uɬ siw̓ɬkʷ (land and water) and all that is connected to it. captíkʷɬ (creation stories) are passed down from one generation to the next and contain sacred laws and teachings about living as a part of tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ.
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.”
sncəwips Heritage Museum
525 Highway 97 South

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.
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<tr>
<td>Dinah Littlechief</td>
<td>Culture textile</td>
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<td>Dorothy Clough</td>
<td>Crafts/textile</td>
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<td>Ernie Michele</td>
<td>Carvings</td>
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<td>George Fosbery</td>
<td>Leather crafts</td>
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<td>George Michele</td>
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<td>Janine Lott</td>
<td>Gourd Art</td>
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<td>J &amp; N Catering</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>250 707 1765</td>
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<td>Little Miss Chief</td>
<td>First Nations Food &amp; Beverage (wholesale)</td>
<td>250 768 6977</td>
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<td>Marion Radawetz</td>
<td>Jeweller</td>
<td>250.768.3762</td>
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<td>Pam &amp; Wilfred Barnes</td>
<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Rick Sagayadan</td>
<td>SAGAcom Production</td>
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<td>Rose Lube</td>
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<td>Syilx Creations</td>
<td>Dancing/Drumming/Crafts</td>
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<td>sncâwips</td>
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<td>201-1979 Old Okanagan Hwy</td>
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