

Funds will bring Syilx view to water management



By Kelowna Capital News

Published: **September 07, 2012 05:00 PM**

Updated: **September 07, 2012 05:15 PM**

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A grant of \$400,000 from the Royal Bank of Canada's Blue Water Project will allow the Okanagan Nation Alliance and White Valley Community Centre of Lumby to embark on a four-year project to gather the thoughts of the Syilx people about water and translate them for the rest of the world.

James Pepper, natural resource manager for the ONA said he will begin with more than a year of community engagement, travelling throughout the Okanagan Nation, on both sides of the international border, to interview the elders and the knowledge-holders, hold meetings, workshops and focus groups.

That information will then be written down in a way than can be understood by Western people so that the indigenous people's perspective can be integrated into contemporary water management, he explained.

Syilx knowledge-holder Leon Louis explained to those attending the Okanagan Basin Water Board's annual meeting Friday in Kelowna, that his people have been in the Okanagan for thousands of years and had been managing the land well until the rest of the world came.

"Today we use water in a dis-respectful way. If we want this water to be here for the future, we need to take care of it.

"Our people have a lot of knowledge. We want to share it," he said.

Pepper said the Syilx nation has been caretaker of the water for thousands of years and the way they look at the land is different from how the Western world looks at things.

He intends to take that view and translate it into a way that will be understood by the Western world so that its management becomes something all can work on together.

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