

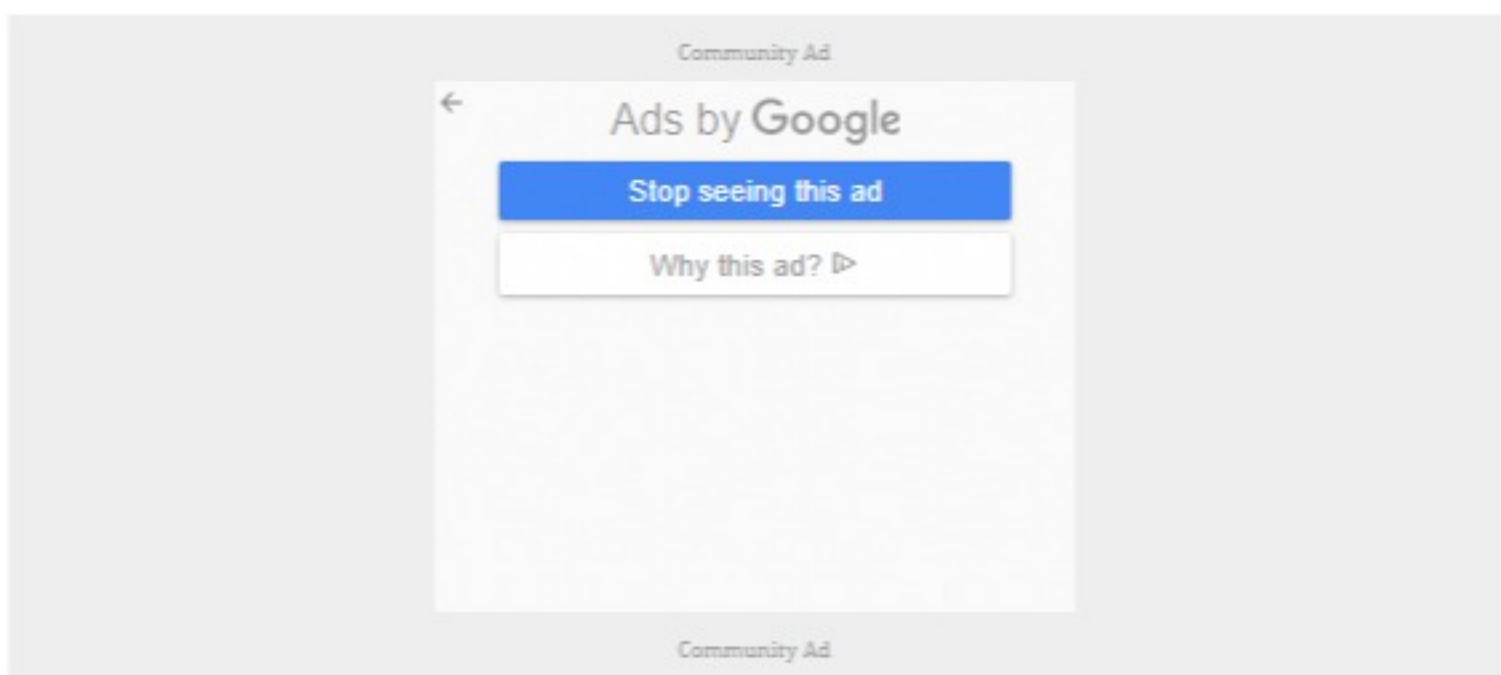
Kelowna posted Mar 1, 2022 @ 07:00pm by Cheyanna Lorraine

ONA representative given equal voting powers on Okanagan Basin Water Board

The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) representative on the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) has received equal voting powers.

Following conversations in July 2021, the three regional district boards of the Okanagan decided to vote to change the board's governance structure to ensure that the syilx nation's seat had equal voting rights.

The province gave approval for the change in January, 2022.



In a news release sent out on Tuesday, Mar. 1, the vote amends a provision that has been in place since 2006 when the ONA seat on the board was introduced.

The provision limited that representative's ability to vote on financial matters.



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"I'm pleased that the ONA now has equal voting powers consistent with the regional districts, allowing the Indigenous voices of the Okanagan to be heard," said Chris Derickson, Westbank First Nation chief and ONA director.

"Syilx people have a deep rooted and sacred connection to siwɪkʷ. It is our living relative and it is our job to protect it. We need the voices of Indigenous people to do that."

Derickson added that the OBWB has recognized that it needed a more diverse perspective and hopes that the voice of the ONA will help expand understanding around the Okanagan's water sources as well as the actions needed to protect it.

Water Board chair, Sue McKortoff, said that the OBWB was happy with the decision and remains "committed to building a better relationship with the ONA."

For more information on the OBWB, its purpose, its history, and more, visit www.OBWB.ca.