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## OKANAGAN NATION GETS EQUAL WATER **VOTING RIGHTS**

Posted by Tracy Sim | Mar 3, 2022 | Featured, Oliver, Osoyoos, RDOS, Regional | 0 .



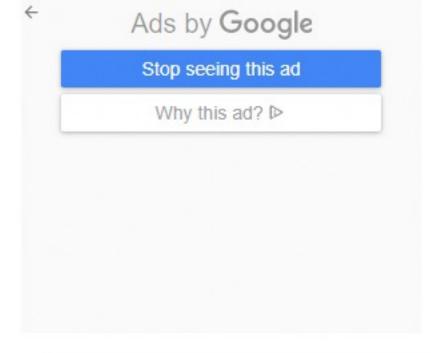
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## Tracy Sim, Times-Chronicle

The Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was granted equal voting powers and governance by the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)'s three regional boards. ONA has held a seat on the water board since 2006 but were previously limited in their ability to vote on financial matters.

ONA Director, Chris Dickenson, says he's pleased that the ONA now has equal voting rights with the regional districts, allowing Indigenous voices of the Okanagan to be heard. "We need to improve the way siw\(\frac{1}{2}\)kw (water) is managed within the Syilx territory so it will be there for our future generations and all living things," said Dickenson.

Osoyoos Mayor and Water Board Chair, Sue McKortoff, is pleased with the arrangement as well, adding her support and OBWB's support to build a better relationship with the ONA, describing it as one important step forward in their goal of reconciliation in the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and Syilx rights.





The decision timeline dates back to 1970 when the OBWB was initially formed by the Regional District of North Okanagan, Regional District of Central Okanagan, and Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen to provide

leadership on water issues such as water quality and population growth. 2005-2006 saw a growing number of water issues, including concerns about the effect of climate change on

water supply. The board then launched the Water Management Program to improve water science, policy, and communications to better support decision making. This program included the creation of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC), a technical advisory

body to the OBWB. New directors were added to the OBWB in recognition that the board would be stronger, and that their decisions would reflect a broader perspective. Fast forward to 2022, the board has now recognized that the ONA representative should have the same standing as the local government appointees," added OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. "It's the

right thing to do – advancing reconciliation while building genuine, meaningful partnerships to address water

issues in the Okanagan."