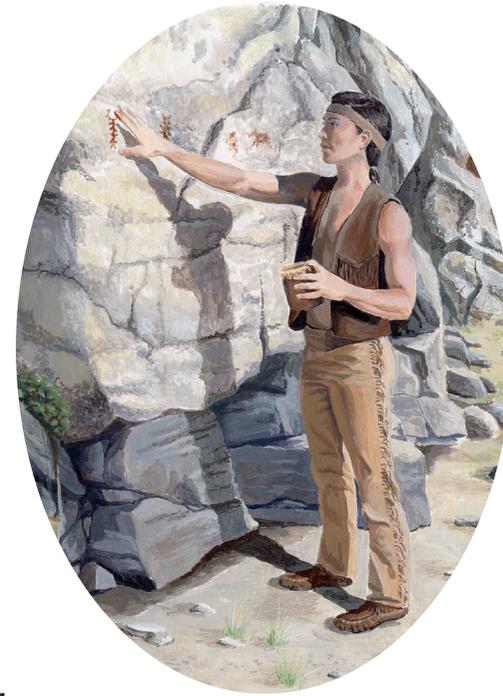


More about Wild Horse Canyon and Area

Syilx and Okanagan Territory and Wild Horse Canyon

This book is about one small part of the syilx traditional lands. The syilx people inhabit a large, unceded territory that extends from north of Revelstoke, British Columbia, in the north to Wilbur, Washington, in the south, and from the Nicola Valley in the west to the Kootenay Lakes in the east (see “Fur Brigade” map, p. 34). The syilx nation includes the *?uknaqinx*/Okanagan people (known as the Okanagan in the U.S.). Wild Horse Canyon is located within the Okanagan district. To learn more about the syilx people and the history and original meaning of the word *Okanagan*, see www.syilx.org and www.sncewips.com.

Before European settlers arrived in the Okanagan Valley, Wild Horse Canyon was known only as *x^watik* in the syilx language, *nsyilxcin*. Non-Indigenous people began referring to the canyon as the Big Canyon, then Wild Horse Canyon because of free-ranging horses in the area.



Pictographs

Pictographs are located throughout B.C. They were created using ochre, a natural mineral pigment, combined with plants, roots, and animal fat. The Okanagan people used a variety of resources to create pigments that have lasted for thousands of years. Pictographs are recognized as the first form of written material in the Okanagan and are instructions that inform the people how to live in balance with the environment and with each other.



Yellow (Ponderosa) Pine

The yellow pine is called *s?atq^wəlp* in the syilx language. The tree is sacred to syilx/Okanagan people in birth, life,

and death; often yellow pine is used to mark graves. A new name for the yellow pine—*Pinus ponderosa* or ponderosa pine—was proposed by botanist-explorer David Douglas in 1827. He chose this name because of the tree’s large size (*ponderosa* comes from the Latin for “weight,” like *ponderous*). Ponderosa pine trees can grow to 70 metres in height and live on average 125 years, but some can live 500 years or even longer. To survive drought, ponderosa pines develop wide-reaching roots close to the surface to access dew and any rain that falls, and a deep central taproot to access water underground.

A seedling’s taproot grows deeper than the tiny tree is tall. The mature ponderosa pine’s roots are widespread and keep the tree from blowing over in strong winds.



Trapping Wild Horses

The first horses arrived in the Okanagan well before the first explorers and were the descendants of European horses brought to Mexico by the conquistadors in the 1500s. Over time, some domesticated horses in the Okanagan Valley escaped to live wild.

The syilx people developed into a horse-based culture, at first using horses for transporting people and supplies,

such as woven baskets full of berries, and for riding in battles. Later, horses were used in farming and cattle ranching, and in sporting events, such as rodeos and racing.

Wild Horse Canyon was one location used by the Okanagan people as a wild horse trap. Some syilx people measured their wealth by the number of horses their family owned: on average twelve, but some owned several hundred. Overall wealth and economy were based on the health of the surrounding environment. If the land, resources, and water were healthy and all of the people were being taken care of, then the community was recognized as wealthy. While recognizing the idea of wealth and having possessions, syilx people considered the greatest wealth to be knowing how to use resources in the most respectful manner.

