



Hello [Name,fallback=Subscriber],

Fundraising Campaign for Okanagan Rail Trail Northern Gateway

For the first time since funds were raised to build the Okanagan Rail Trail almost two years ago, Okanagan residents and visitors are invited to donate to make the trail even better. The Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail are launching the first fundraising campaign to support development of a 'signature northern gateway' at Kilometre Zero of the trail.

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Donations from communities and trail users will be added to grants from the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO), Okanagan Basin Water Board and TD Friends of Environment Foundation to initiate site development this fall.

"Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail (FORT) were awarded the first grant from a new RDNO Trails and Natural Spaces grant program", says Mike Fox, General Manager of Community Services for RDNO. "The grant requires that FORT match the RDNO contribution, and given the increased use this year, it is obvious that the rail trail has a lot of community support. RDNO also heard enthusiastic support for the Kilometre Zero Concept Plan at open houses last fall."

Work with the Okanagan Indian Band is uncovering some of the rich stories of this area called K'ək'mapłqs or 'Little Head of the Lake'. "K'ək'mapłqs was important to our people for fishing, hunting, and harvesting, and remains of pit houses have been found in the vicinity," says Byron Louis, Chief of the Okanagan Indian Band. "The Okanagan Rail Trail was originally part of a larger interconnected network of trails utilized by our People to access all parts of Northern Syilx Territory to undertake essential sustenance, societal and spiritual activities."



The Okanagan Band will continue to be an active partner in discussions on how to develop and manage the route, including the stories to be shared. Indigenous knowledge is also helping to shape plans for native plant restoration and plants important to the Syilx culture. One of those plants is smúkwa?xn, or Arrowleaf Balsamroot, the iconic yellow spring wildflower that many of us refer to as Okanagan Sunflowers. This beautiful flower is also the theme for the fundraising campaign.

"We did not expect a global pandemic when we prepared to fundraise for this site last spring", says Laurie Postill, chair of FORT fundraising. "Although plans were put on hold, these past few months have highlighted the importance of the rail trail to our community and the gratitude of trail users. We would be thrilled to see donor support for the complete concept plan", says Postill, "but are taking a modest approach given the challenges of Covid 19. Our target is to raise funds for the first phase of site development, starting with the 'Okanagan Sunflowers' and other native plants, and the Syilx stories."

[Read more](#) on proposed developments at the Kilometre Zero gateway, and the 'Sunflower Campaign'.



Vernon Silver Star Rotary held the first fundraising event to support construction of the Okanagan Rail Trail in 2016. In 2018, the club hosted the last fundraising event which contributed towards the target of \$7.8 million required to build the trail. The generosity of over 5000 individual donors made the dream of the Okanagan Rail Trail come true. Today, the Silver Star Rotary says, 'thumbs up' for the campaign to create a signature northern gateway to the Okanagan Rail Trail.

[The Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail](#) wish you a happy and safe BC Day weekend!

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