



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15th, 2015

MCRI monitors protect environmental and archaeological resources

As restoration work continues on Mission Creek between Casorso Road and Gordon Drive, we can rest easy knowing that natural and archaeological assets are being protected by monitors trained to identify and preserve them.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Okanagan Nation Alliance biologists are monitoring fish and wildlife habitat in and around Mission Creek during dike realignment to minimize any environmental impacts. Guided by government legislation, industry best practices, and the MCRI Environmental Protection Plan, they'll be watching for unnecessary habitat disturbances, fuel spills, and sedimentation.

Biologist Natasha Lukey explains that while construction is being undertaken during the creek's low-water months, and that the construction process itself is designed to minimize impacts, "monitoring ensures an added layer of protection, collaboration, and overall accountability." Creek disturbances, for example, can create erosion and sedimentation that could impact overwintering fish eggs. Monitors noticing any problem areas would work with other project partners to minimize the impacts of construction activities on that habitat.



Archaeological monitor Anita Swite (left) and environmental monitor Natasha Lukey are excited about the restoration that will enhance Mission Creek's historical, ecological, and recreational values.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Mission Creek and the surrounding riparian areas are culturally, socially, economically, and historically important to the Okanagan's Indigenous Peoples. Past and present cultural uses include harvesting fish from the creek, hunting wildlife from the surrounding riparian corridors, and gathering nearby plants for food, building materials, and medicines. Many archaeological sites and artifacts remain along the creek today.

During MCRI construction, these cultural resources are protected by the watchful eye of Anita Swite, who is highly trained to recognize Westbank First Nation artifacts such as burial sites; cultural materials (stone tools, midden, basketry, wet sites); culturally modified trees; rock formations; earthworks (mounds, trenches); rock art (pictographs, petroglyphs); subsistence features (food caches, fish weirs); transportation routes; and evidence of habitation such as pithouses and house pits.

While Swite’s personal past includes many monitoring assignments, she has a special connection to this particular project. Although she didn’t grow up here, it is dear to her heart because her father often hunted near Gallagher’s Canyon and fished along Mission Creek.

“I fished with him for trout after spring runoff, and for kokanee in the fall,” she recalls. “There were a lot of fish, and it was a lot of fun. There are still early fishing hooks attached to branches, if you know where to look.”

Why is Swite so passionate about artifacts, especially when monitoring is tedious and conditions are often wet, cold, and very messy? “To find things that earlier people held is a gift,” says Swite. “It has strong cultural meaning, and helps us see how our ancestors lived and thrived.”

Another gift, says Lukey, is “the opportunity to collaborate creatively to restore a highly degraded but incredibly important creek system.” She is “honoured to be working in Syilx territory,” and with professionals from all sectors who are committed to cross-cultural dialogue and collaborations.

“Mission Creek is central to local communities and economies,” she says, “so collaborative insights and ideas are critical to the success of this restoration.”

Please note that the dike on the south side of Mission Creek between Casorso Road and Gordon Drive is closed until spring. The dike on the north side of the creek is open during construction.

For up-to-the-minute information about MCRI visit www.missioncreek.ca or contact one of the following:

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