

Part 2

Concrete solutions to prosperity

Oct 26, 2018, www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/concrete-solutions-poverty-to-prosperity-498683031.html

First Nations in other provinces have used a helping hand from tax advantages to establish urban reserves producing economic growth, transforming Indigenous lives and benefiting surrounding communities.

On the other side of the country, the area known as Westbank, near Kelowna, B.C., features a similar array of businesses, from a Mark's clothing store to a Home Depot, Winners and 543 other companies.

Westbank is an urban reserve.

caption: Westbank First Nation has attracted private investment firms as joint ventures in two retail developments totaling 1.45 million square feet.

Tax advantages are a source of resistance for some non-Indigenous Canadians and business groups, such as the Canadian Tax Federation, who see the urban reserve as offering an unfair advantage to non-reserve neighbours. Those tax advantages aren't nearly as great as they seem.



As well, economic analyses of existing urban reserves, such as Westbank, suggest that not only do they provide a long-awaited economic foothold for band members, they contribute significantly to the economic well-being of their respective cities and provinces, as well as reversing the flow of money between the Canadian government and the First Nations.

“Wherever you see these developments, they end up making a positive contribution to the First Nation, to the city and to the province,” said Damon Johnston, president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. “It’s a win-win situation.”

A study of Westbank First Nation, which entered into a self-government agreement with the federal government in 2005, shows the area’s total annual tax contribution to federal and provincial coffers grew from \$53.1 million in 2005 to \$107.9 million in 2015. Those



figures are inflation-adjusted to 2015 dollars.

“It should be noted the fiscal benefits to Canada and B.C. are underestimated because they only include income, sales and corporate provincial and federal tax revenues,” says the analysis by Fiscal Realities Economists of Kamloops, B.C. “Despite this caveat, the cumulative fiscal benefits from Westbank self-government are even more impressive.”

More interestingly, the analysis shows that federal transfers to Westbank pale in comparison to federal taxes collected: over the same period, Westbank generated \$586 million in federal taxes compared to earning \$90 million in federal transfers, again in constant 2015 dollars. Another report, also by Fiscal Realities, estimates self-government has created 3,400 jobs in Westbank and generates \$36.3 million annually in off-reserve spending by band members. Of those 3,400 jobs, 1,190 were filled by reserve residents. Assessed property values in Westbank are nearly a billion dollars in residential, \$380 million in commercial and \$5 million in industrial.

“People drive through here all the time and have no idea,” said Sharon Bond, who owns Kekuli Café in Westbank. “They ask, ‘Is this an urban reserve?’ and they’re like ‘Wow!’ This is nowhere near what they thought.”

caption: Kekuli Café’s Sharon Bond (left) and her partner Darren Hogg own the Okanagan’s first and only Aboriginal restaurant and catering company.



Under its self-government model, Westbank issues its own building permits, occupancy permits and business licences, Bond said. She said Westbank is very prompt in issuing permits. “With West Kelowna, it can be a month or more, but with Westbank it’s like a week. They’re very well-organized.”

Westbank First Nation Chief Roxanne Lindley said the experience shows that given a chance, Indigenous Canadians can take their place in the economy, for the good of both the First Nation and the greater community.

caption: Westbank First Nation Chief Roxanne Lindley said her community’s efforts since achieving self-government in 2005 has created an economic powerhouse employing band members and inspiring entrepreneurs.



“Our members fought hard to get where we are



today,” she said. “Without the vision, drive and strength of our people, the success of our self-government agreement with Canada would not have been achieved.

“We structured our laws to accommodate development. Our members understand the need to work and profit, and this spirit has led our drive to develop.”

Lindley said in 2017, Westbank experienced \$45 million in construction, of which \$38 million was residential, \$6 million was commercial and \$1 million was institutional. As well, Westbank issued \$500 million in building permits during the past 10 years, and for the fiscal year ending in 2018, \$14 million in property taxes were collected from 4,310 property owners. She said this entrepreneurial spirit helps drive investment, Indigenous and otherwise, in the community.

“As a self-governing nation, we can cut through red tape and provide an effective and efficient system that gives confidence and security to developers and residents.”

caption: Westbank First Nation is one of Canada’s most successful urban reserves.

Two of those developers are Anthem Properties and Churchill International Property Corp. Both are from Vancouver and each entered into joint ventures with Westbank on developments totalling 1.45 million square feet in retail space.



As with Westbank, businesses locating on reserve lands have not all been Indigenous, he said. As well, he said the city is starting to notice some First Nations are buying land and deciding against pursuing reserve status, instead developing the land outside the provisions of the Indian Act. These urban holdings, as they’re called, are subject to the same city bylaws, taxation and zoning as other properties.

Going forward, Bond has plans to franchise, taking her bannock, coffee and Indian taco (her term) creations across the country, and already has another location, in Merritt, B.C. She’s not limiting her expansion to on-reserve locations, either.

“We hope to be the ‘Indian’ Tim Hortons.”



The 2016 Canadian Census provides further evidence of Westbank's prosperity: its median household income (\$70,561) is average for the area around Kelowna. It's not the highest (Okanagan East, at \$85,504), but it's also nearly \$20,000 higher than the lowest (Okanagan Indian Band, at \$50,987). Westbank has slightly higher unemployment (8.9 per cent) than surrounding areas, but of its 4,045 people in the labour force in 2016, 3,715 had jobs.

Westbank is a hotbed of small business; of the 287 companies with employees, 245 employ 19 or fewer people, according to the Business Patterns Survey conducted in 2017 by Statistics Canada.

The rules for running urban reserves are startlingly similar to the rules for any land transaction: in the case of a First Nation establishing a presence on non-reserve land, any land sales must be on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis. In the case of Westbank, its self-government agreement turns the band into a municipality like any other.

Mason and Janice Barry, an urban planning professor at the University of Waterloo and an adjunct professor at the University of Manitoba, both said co-operation on land-use planning with surrounding municipalities is a must for an urban reserve to succeed.

Barry said the successful urban reserves are those that are "contiguous with the rest of the city. You hardly know where the municipal boundaries stop and the urban reserves begin.

Westbank's Lindley said the success of the First Nation has been a source of pride for band members - including winning the 2015 national Communities in Bloom title for communities with population between 20,001 and 50,000 residents. The nation invests in housing, sports facilities, language and cultural programs, a new youth centre and in safety and urbanization.

As well, an economic development commission advises band councillors and is working to build an environment that will provide employment for youth and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs.

"I am very proud of our members and our community," she said.



Westbank First Nation approves annual budget

Apr 7, 2018, www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/West Kelowna/Westbank First Nation approves annual budget/

Westbank First Nation (WFN) council gave its final approval to the 2018-2019 annual budget on Monday, March 26, 2018.

Prior to approval by Chief and Council, the local government and property tax budget was reviewed and accepted by WFN's Advisory Council, representing more than 9,000 residents on WFN lands.

In 2018, property tax revenues are expected to total \$14.5 million, representing a 5.2% increase from 2017.



With average gross taxes increasing by 2.8%, 4,361 taxable residents will likely pay about \$1,435 after WFN's Homeowner Grant.

For 2018, BC Assessment showed 3.7% growth in new construction on WFN lands, totaling \$60.7 million.

Assessments increased by 10.3% due to market values. Total residences increased from 4,226 in 2017 to 4,361 in 2018. Combined with about 400 businesses, assessed taxable property on WFN lands totals \$1.8 billion.

WFN property taxes cover the following services for its residents:

- \$2.3 M in Protective services (fire protection, law enforcement)
- \$1.9 M in Local services (transit, regional parks, community centres, library)
- \$0.6 M in Recreation and youth programs
- \$1.8 M in Financial reserves (capital project and contingency reserves)
- \$1.5 M in Community development (engineering, planning, public works)
- \$4.6 M in General government (administration, governance, finance)
- \$1.8 M in Homeowner Grants

Property tax notices will be mailed by late May and the final deadline for payment without penalty is July 3, 2018.

Residents on WFN lands are invited to the Advisory Council AGM on Apr. 18 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Sensisyusten House of Learning Gymnasium, 1920 Quail Lane, Westbank. The annual update will be delivered by Chief Roxanne Lindley and Advisory Council Chairperson, Terry Turcan.



WFN sees increase in building activity

Jan 19, 2018, www.kelownacapnews.com/news/westbank-first-nation-reports-an-increase-in-building-activity/

Duplexes in the Elkridge residential community on Elkridge Drive, WFN

2017 was the fourth busiest year for building on WFN reserves since 2005.

The Westbank First Nation says it saw significant building growth on its reserves in 2017, processing 169 building permits with a total construction value of \$45 million.

That marked a 23 per cent increase in the number of building permits approved, and a 96 per cent increase in total construction value, compared to 2016. Last year, the WFN reports \$38 million of residential construction, \$6 million of commercial construction and \$1 million of institutional construction.



Permits for 149 new residential dwellings were approved in 2017, including single family homes, multi-family units, and secondary suites. This is a 64 per cent unit increase from the 91 residential units approved in 2016. Major projects included Elkridge, Sage Creek, Nancee Way Village, West Harbour, Sierras Westside, and Brookside Villas.

Since gaining self-government 2005, the WFN has processed 2,203 building permits valued at more than \$500 million. Last year was the fourth busiest year for WFN in terms of building permit approval since 2005, with the highest number of annual building permit approvals occurring in 2007.

Building and business growth aligned with continued population growth on WFN lands, which increased 28 per cent from 2011 to 2016 according to Statistics Canada. The increase in building and population growth also accompanied an increase in approved business licenses. The WFN approved 69 new business licenses in 2017, increasing the total number of businesses operating on WFN lands to 457.

“The immediate development growth within WFN lands is anticipated to carry on at a strong pace as we continue to receive a good mix of residential and commercial development inquiries,” said Joe Mocilac, WFN director of development services.

“New developments continue to come forward and existing projects are looking to build additional phases.”

According to the WFN, new master servicing plans are being finalized for all major infrastructure and a new land use law will be completed in the next few months. The new plans and law will help guide, assess and plan current, and future, infrastructure upgrades.

“As a growing and developing community, WFN looks to continually improve local infrastructure by installing more sidewalks, lighting, utility corridors, pathways and bike lanes,” said Chief Roxanne Lindley.

“WFN also strives to showcase our vibrant culture and heritage through the incorporation of syilx art and language where possible throughout the community.”



Central Okanagan businesses on the growth trend

Nov 8, 2017, www.bcclocalnews.com/news/central-okanagan-businesses-on-the-growth-trend/

According to this year's business walks in Kelowna, West Kelowna, WFN and Lake Country, things are good.

The Central Okanagan's business climate is strong with plenty of growth, however companies are having a hard time finding staff.

Those were among the results of the 6th Annual Small Business Walk held across the Central Okanagan earlier this year by the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission and the various community Economic Development staff and commissions.

According to the results of the business walks in Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, Westbank First Nation and in Lake Country 78 per cent of the 221 businesses surveyed indicated that business is growing.

Forty-one per cent of those businesses also cited staffing challenges with positions in demand ranging from entry level to highly skilled.

“The Business Walk continues to be a valuable tool for the COEDC and its partners and stakeholders to connect directly with businesses in the region to identify their needs, and identify areas for future programming,” said Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission manager, Corie Griffiths.

The COEDC and 13 partner organizations embarked on the region's 6th annual Small Business Walk where volunteers went door to door to businesses in communities from Lake Country to Peachland to listen to business owners and ask a few key questions to capture the pulse of the small business community.

This year's walk included questions about employee retention and recruitment challenges, as well as the impact of fires and flooding in the region.



Waiting lists for top retail locations

Oct 27, 2017, www.kelownadailycourier.ca/business_news/article_f8f162c4-baa4-11e7-a7df-e7c1d766cfe2.html

Report describes Kelowna as a retail hotspot, but retailers may have to wait to find their ideal space.

Highway 97 frontage may still be king. However, nodes nowhere near the thoroughfare have their place, too.

All this, and more, is outlined in the just-released Spark Retail Report by Colliers International, the diversified real estate company that also does a lot of retail leasing.

“There are more than 600 retailers in the Central Okanagan, so the region is well served by virtually every retailer, wholesaler and franchise,” said Colliers leasing and sales associate vice-president Chris Wills, who co-authored the report with Colliers market intelligence co-ordinator Gillian Satherstrom.

“However, great retail opportunities are scarce in the Central Okanagan. Lots of retailers are on waiting lists for the best locations.”

What qualifies as best location varies depending on who the retailer is and what customer base they want to tap into.

Besides Lakeview Heights and the airport-UBCO areas, the report identifies North Glenmore and Rose Valley-West Kelowna Estates as prime regions for neighbourhood commercial development and leasing.

The six main urban centres for retail in the Central Okanagan are midtown-Highway 97 (where Orchard Park, Spall Plaza, Central Park, Kelowna Crossing, Orchard Plaza and Dilworth Shopping Centre are); Capri Centre Mall-Landmark (with its six office towers); South Pandosy; downtown Kelowna; Rutland along Highway 33 between Hollywood and Rutland roads; and the **Westbank First Nation** Economic Centre along Highway 97 where six power centres have big-box tenants.

“The Westside retail development along 97 over the past 10 years is interesting in that it brought in anchors and really over-retailed the area to start with,” said Wills.

“But those anchors attracted other retailers to locate around them and attracted shoppers, too, proving if you build for five, 10 and 15 years down the road it can work.”



Helping businesses thrive in the Okanagan

Sept 27, 2017, www.kelownacapnews.com/news/helping-businesses-thrive-in-the-okanagan/

The annual Business Walk is held Oct. 4 in Kelowna, WFN, Lake Country, West Kelowna and Peachland

October is a good month for local businesses.

The sixth annual Central Okanagan Business Walk will help launch Small Business Month in the Central Okanagan with volunteers representing business stakeholder organizations throughout the region, which are ready to hit the pavement to connect with up to 400 businesses, according to a Central Okanagan Business Walk release.

The walk takes place from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in Lake Country, Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna and Peachland Wednesday, Oct. 4, including Economic Development Officers and Commissions from each of the five communities.

Through a brief conversational survey, the Business Walk gathers important information that identifies program and service opportunities aimed at helping Central Okanagan businesses grow, said the release. This year's walk will include questions about employee retention and recruitment challenges, as well as the impact of fires and flooding in the region.

To date, more than 2,000 Central Okanagan businesses have participated in the Central Okanagan Business Walk program. One-on-one follow up assistance has been provided to businesses related to such topics as signage, zoning, parking, exporting and B2B connections. Opportunities to support business growth have been communicated to municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement areas throughout the region, said the release.

Business owners and managers are encouraged to be at their business the morning of Oct. 4 when the Business Walk teams are out.



WFN: Supporting the community through economic development

Sept 14, 2017, www.saobserver.net/news/wfn-youth-centre-is-huge-success/

When Westbank First Nation opened its Youth Centre in January, they knew it would be popular, but the uptake has been beyond the community's expectations.

The \$5.5-million, over 1,200-square-metre facility hosts a range of programs for hundreds of youth, including 27 different programs, a youth council, Youth Works program, homework support, recreation and sports, cooking classes, driver training, various cultural workshops, youth fitness and movie nights — just to name a few.



The centre has become a new focal point and welcome addition to the community, and is preparing to add an outdoor cultural kitchen. More than 800 people have toured the facility in the first three months of operations.

“The Youth Centre is an investment in tomorrow’s leaders, offering safe and healthy living, and leadership opportunities for youth,” said WFN Chief Roxanne Lindley. “We want to mentor youth and give them opportunities, so they in turn will become mentors.

“When our young ones see that we take our youth seriously, it gives them a sense of belonging, of being part of the community. And although the building is a youth centre, it is a place for intergenerational connections, with babies upstairs and Elders coming in regularly.”

The Youth Centre is a product of WFN’s meticulous and inclusive planning, plus the fact that more than a quarter of its members are younger than 30 years old. WFN members brought their ideas and passions to help forge the facility, with an end result that is the envy of any community.

WFN is perhaps best known for its progressive leadership, business acumen and strong governance.

Its reserve lands are home to more than 400 businesses across more than 130,000 square metres of shopping and entertainment space, which include major retailers and banks, and provides 3,900 direct jobs. More than 9,000 people live on Westbank land, in 4,200 homes, with the vast majority of residents being non-First Nations. WFN has pioneered a type of long-term lease that provides security to those investing and living on Westbank land.



Despite a strong focus on economic development, WFN hasn't lost sight of what's important — community comes first. This is reflected in the priorities of WFN's strategic plan: culture and history, early childhood development, youth and Elders come first. Economic development is farther down the list as a means to support those ends.

Lindley said WFN is focused on ensuring that revenues from development and business partnerships are sustainable and benefit its approximately 840 members. WFN invests heavily in health and wellness, community infrastructure, education and employment, and recreation services. Beyond the Youth Centre, WFN has recently opened a new public beach park and renovated its day care. In 2014, it opened a heritage museum, fostering tourism, and supporting its culture and history.

“Westbank invests in growth and prosperity, and we also invest in our language and culture,” said Lindley. “The Sncewips Heritage Museum is a protector of our heritage. It shares the stories of the first people of the valley.”

WFN governance is built on a foundation of both a land code and self-government agreement, which provide WFN full jurisdiction over its lands and resources. A modern taxation system, lands registry and a secure land tenure system has given the WFN and its business partners the certainty and security needed to invest for the long term.

“WFN is the first reserve in Canada supported by Land Title Insurance, which means our land tenure system is guaranteed and provides absolute security in investment,” Lindley said.

It's also set the stage to look beyond residential and commercial development. In collaboration with the Upper Nicola Band, the Penticton Indian Band and InstarAGF Asset Management, WFN has invested in two wind farms in the Okanagan, developed by Zero Emission Energy Developments, which came into operation in April this year.

The 10 turbines of Okanagan Wind are generating enough clean energy to power 2,500 homes through a 40-year purchase agreement with BC Hydro.

“Westbank has always had strong ties with sustainability,” said Lindley. “Through the Okanagan Wind project, we are pleased to continue a commitment to clean energy initiatives. We are proud to be a part of the process since development through construction and now in operations alongside other local contractors to ensure the best results for our future.

“Our partnership and collaboration on these facilities helps to harness the natural wind energy supplied by our region, while bringing tangible benefits for our community members.”



WFN: Using property tax revenues to build a vibrant future

Sept 1, 2018, http://sp.fng.ca/fntc/fntcweb/CTP_2017_fall_ENG_web.pdf

Recently *Clearing the Path* had the opportunity to meet with Ernest Jack, surveyor of taxes for Westbank First Nation (WFN) to discuss how property tax revenues are helping the First Nation achieve community visions. Westbank First Nation has a long taxation history under a local government services model used by many municipalities. Adapting this local government services model into a hybrid model proved a wise decision and WFN is now able to direct tax dollars to services and infrastructure that offer the most benefit to all members of the community.

In 1990, taxation generated \$750,000 in revenues. They currently estimate revenues for the 2017 - 2018 taxation years will approach \$14 million. One of the pivotal points for change in the community was the decision to sign a self-government agreement in 2005. This helped to increase tax revenues as the Self-Government Agreement provided certainty to investors with clear guidelines regarding business practices, leasing agreements, tax rates, and what they can expect in return from WFN in doing business.

In 2005, Westbank's assessments on commercial values were \$39 million; commercial values now top \$380 million. Today, WFN is currently rank 58th among BC municipalities with a total assessments worth of \$1.6 billion. They have over 400 businesses on WFN land including Home Depot, Canadian Tire, Walmart, Superstore and three Tim Hortons. The Westbank First Nation also has a strong aboriginal sector of 60 businesses including many artists, a trucking company, general construction company and restaurants such as Kekuli Café Coffee and Bannock. The core to successfully administering the taxation revenue lies with WFN working closely with the Westbank First Nation Tax Advisory Council. The advisory council reviews tax administration budgets, including recommendations to the Chief and Council regarding tax laws and amendments.

They also play a leading role in the preparation of the local government services budget, which sets property taxation rates and distribution of tax dollars. The council prioritizes funds towards worthwhile endeavours in education, public works, recreation, programming, development and administration. Recent projects include new sidewalks, the sports court, repaving, water system upgrades, the Lakeside trail, landscaping and equipment. However, the crowning glory is the new Youth Centre opened in December 2016. The concept for the Youth Centre began in 2012. Rapid community growth filled the gymnasium, soccer fields and ball parks to capacity. Demographics indicated a young Westbank membership, and many young families in the area. The Chief and Council approached the Advisory Council and proposed the



new facility to accommodate the young demographic. They recognized an investment in youth forges strong leaders, creates a healthy community, and guides the Nation and all residents towards its long-term goals.

The 13,000 square foot Youth Centre is now a place for youth to explore leadership opportunities and enjoy a healthy, active lifestyle. The \$5.5 million facility features a learning garden, outdoor kitchen, amphitheatre and green heating and cooling systems. Eventually, the centre will house ten offices and multi-use areas. It will also provide youth programming and mentoring space for Elders to interact with youth. Of course, the core of a successful, growing community relies on other considerations too. Planning, development, maintenance, health and safety are also important.

The upcoming budget includes monies to safeguard the environment, develop the lands wisely, and service the infrastructure that provides WFN residents with comfortable lifestyles. An additional \$1.9 million provides law enforcement, fire protection services, and residential tenancy needs. Westbank First Nation continues to look ahead. Every year the annual budget sets aside money in a reserve for contingencies and capital projects. It also allocates money towards the complex administrative tasks necessary for all growing communities. Managing their tax jurisdiction continues to open doors.

Prudent development, effective management, and strong leaders create a worthwhile and sustainable community. Money from taxation funds transforms worthwhile ideas into reality, creates community, and ensures a strong, happy Nation.



The low-down on purchasing a home on leased land

May 7, 2018, [www.kelownanow.com/news/news/Sponsored/The down low on purchasing a home on leased land at West Harbour in West Kelowna/](http://www.kelownanow.com/news/news/Sponsored/The_down_low_on_purchasing_a_home_on_leased_land_at_West_Harbour_in_West_Kelowna/)

When purchasing a home, unless it's a condo or apartment, you will also typically own the property on which the home resides. However, this is not always the case.

Another option that exists for homeowners is to purchase a home on leased land - a relevant topic due to the amount of land owned by Westbank First Nation.



How does leased land work?

Essentially, purchasing a home on leased land means that you own the home but not the land on which it resides. This land is owned by some other person or entity, such as a First Nations Band.

"Lease land should be looked at like a leased property; a contractual obligation is signed between the 'landlord' and 'tenant' for the use of the property given period of time," said Susann Czekus, Sales Manager at West Harbour, a community which resides on leased land in West Kelowna.

The leases are long-term, often 50-100 years long. The homeowner must pay monthly lease fees or pay for the lease upfront, and can often negotiate a new lease once the current term ends.



Because the property isn't being purchased, leasehold homes are often significantly less expensive than a similar freehold home would be, which means that homeowners are able to purchase their ideal home in a location that they could not normally afford.

Leasehold properties are usually expansive and contain several homes within one community. This may grant homeowners access to shared amenities like landscaping, maintenance, pools, tennis courts and so on. These luxuries may be accompanied by Homeowners Association fees, similar to strata fees.

West Harbour is a community on Westbank First Nation leased land. As a well-recognized band across Canada, Westbank First Nation has several leased land agreements, including agreements with large corporations like Walmart, London Drugs and Canadian Tire.

The homes at West Harbour include a 99 year prepaid lease agreement, which means there are no monthly payments necessary. As well, the leases are all registered with the federal government, which means that there is no way that the land can be repossessed by the landowner during the time of the lease.

"Buyers may be concerned that since they do not have fee-simple ownership of the land, the lessor has the right to terminate the lease at any given time before the lease expires," said Czekus. "Here at West Harbour, buyers do not need to be concerned as the lease is a federally-registered, pre-paid lease."

In addition to the fund, buyers at West Harbour can save thousands of dollars in taxes as they do not have to pay PST, GST, property transfer taxes and are also not obligated to pay the new speculation tax. To put this in perspective, on a \$800,000 home, the tax savings from PST, GST and PTT are roughly \$55,000.



Conference showcases WFN's unique economic strength

April 02, 2017, <https://infotel.ca/newsitem/conference-showcases-wfns-unique-economic-strength/it41284>

Westbank First Nation held an Economic Development Conference today showcasing to over 120 business delegates its unique and continued economic strength, and plans for future growth.

“WFN is heavily involved in the business community, and recognizes Economic Development as vital to our long-term success as a self-determining First Nation,” says Chief Roxanne Lindley. “Business, employment, taxes and services generated on WFN lands greatly contribute to the local, regional and provincial economies, and will continue to grow stronger in the coming years.”

WFN has experienced more residential and commercial development and the most lease and land transactions over the last ten years, compared to other First Nations in Canada, along with more than three times the population growth rate in the last five years compared to the Central Okanagan average.

Attributed to a strong and stable leadership, prime location, secure Self-Government Agreement with Canada, and a commitment to building and maintaining successful relationships with the Central Okanagan Regional District and neighbouring municipal governments, WFN is confident it is one of the most attractive places to do business in Canada.

“Our model of growth and development is based on inclusivity, and that is why we held this conference,” says Chief Lindley. “We wanted to hear and learn from the community on what it is they want to see in terms of future economic development, and how we can all play a part in it, together.”

From transit to road networks, parks and trails, density rather than sprawl, and continued engagement, conference delegates from across a variety of business sectors, including neighbouring municipal representatives, had the chance to discuss and provide feedback on many topics with Chief Lindley, Council and a panel of knowledgeable legal and development experts. Lindley says WFN is committed to continually raising development standards and promoting WFN as the culturally rich and unique business community that it is.



Boom time for WFN

Mar 30, <https://okanaganedge.net/2017/03/30/big-developments-westbank/>

If you think development in the Westbank First Nation has taken off in the last ten years, just wait for the next ten. That was the message provided to a crowd of about 120 at the WFN Economic Development Conference.

There's a "strong foundation in place" to support major growth in Westbank, and the appetite among developers to make it happen, wasn't overly mind-blowing, but the extent of the development he predicted was.

WFN could see as much as 200,000 square feet of additional commercial space created over the next 10-15 years, and about 2,200 units of residential housing (including dense, multi-family developments) on top.



WFN will account for seven or eight per cent of the region's growth, ballooning to a population of about 14,000 over the next 15 years. "What we're going to see here is, in my belief, significant and continued growth."

Since WFN's self-government agreement was enshrined into law in 2005, finally giving it the ability to make its own laws, the First Nation has seen substantial growth. Thanks in large part to good governance, WFN has had the most commercial development of any First Nation in Canada over the past decade.

Since 2006 it's issued about \$450 million worth of building permits, and now boasts 1.35 million square feet of retail development, valued at about \$1.4 billion.

Conditions are right in the Okanagan for even more growth, and WFN is perfectly poised to take advantage.

Right now there's a "significant amount of land that is available for development. We know that there are WFN members that are open, either now or in the future, to allowing some of their lands to be developed.

Most of that land is "easily accessible," and "relatively easy to service." On top of that it's already zoned to support mid to high density development.

The Okanagan Lake Shopping Centre and Westbank Shopping Centre both have a "phase two" planned that will "come forward sometime when it is appropriate."

All the development will mean WFN's population will grow by about 4,000 in the next 15 years, and housing developments will follow. That will mean more and more multi-family units concentrated around retail spaces and amenities.

Continued development on WFN land will entice Kelowna residents to leave the city and cross the bridge to do their shopping.



Our home on native land: Residents flock to WFN reserve

Feb 9, 2017, www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_61c1ec30-ef51-11e6-9d47-039e07bd59d0.html



A Westbank First Nation sculpture stands at the west end of the William R. Bennett Bridge. Data from the 2016 census shows the population of the WFN reserve rose 28 per cent during the past five years.

Population growth on Westbank First Nation land is more than three times the Central Okanagan average, new data from the 2016 census shows.

There are now 9,028 people living on band land, up from 7,068 in 2011.

The growth rate of 28 per cent compares to an 8.5 per cent rise in population for the greater Kelowna area, according to Statistics Canada.

“WFN’s development permits over the last five years total \$155 million and can be attributed mainly to residential developments, including new phases in West Harbour, Sonoma Pines, Sage Creek, and Elkridge,” WFN Chief Roxanne Lindley wrote in an email.

Most of the people who live on WFN land are not aboriginal. The band itself had 666 members in 2010, according to a band document, and there were 510 registered status Indians living on WFN lands.



Between 2011 and last year, the number of private dwellings on WFN land grew from 3,677 to 4,264, an increase of 16 per cent, according to information from the latest census.

Non-aboriginal WFN residents pay property taxes directly to the band, but they cannot vote in band elections. Their interests are represented by a residents council.

Despite not having a say in band affairs, living on band land can be appealing because homes and condos generally sell for 10-15 per cent less than comparable properties on freehold land.

As well, Lindley says the band is committed to raising the standard of development on WFN lands.

“WFN will devote \$2 million this fiscal year towards new capital housing projects and improvements, and will continue to invest in sidewalks, street lights, bike lanes and pathways,” she wrote in the email. “This helps bring WFN’s lands to a consistent urban standard and increases safety for its residents, tourists and businesses.”

Several shopping centres and big-box retailers have opened on WFN lands in the past decade, and 42 per cent of the band’s taxes come from commercial enterprises.

Using that tax revenue, the band has made improvement to beach parks, opened a new youth centre, and is considering an expansion of the WFN’s school, the Sensisyusten House of Learning, Lindley says.

Reflecting its determination to open up more development lands, population growth on WFN lands also greatly exceeds that experienced by other Okanagan First Nations. The number of people living on the Penticton Indian band reserve rose seven per cent, to 1,783, while the number of people living on the Vernon-centred Okanagan Indian band reserve rose 10 per cent, to 2,869.

The City of West Kelowna, which surrounds Westbank First Nation, now has a population of 32,655, up from 30,892 in 2011, for a 5.7 per cent increase.

West Kelowna is the fourth-largest city in the Okanagan, after Kelowna (127,380), Vernon (40,116) and Penticton (33,761).



WFN planting the future with TD Tree Days

Sept 25, 2018, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4486596/planting-the-future-with-td-tree-days-in-west-kelowna/>

Community volunteers dug in their heels and shovels on Tuesday as part of the seventh annual TD Tree Days in partnership with Westbank First Nation.

“It’s a great community event to get involved in and green our environment,” said TD Tree Day volunteer Andrea Macintosh.

Green the environment . . . by planting 300 indigenous shrubs along Sneena road below bridge hill on Westbank First Nation lands.

“We’re planting some trees for Mother Earth,” said Sensisyusten House of Learning student Yecica Michella Cisneros.



But TD Tree Days is much more than just planting some trees.

“We want our kids to grow up with a tremendous amount of respect for this beautiful sacred Mother Earth,” said Westbank First Nation Chief Roxanne Lindley.

“I really care about the environment and I want my son to as well, so we have to take care of the land, don’t we?” TD Tree Days volunteer Danielle Lalonde asked while looking at her two-year-old son Rafiel.

“And as well, the traditional owners of the land, making sure the we understand who this land belongs to and that we help keep it green,” said Lalonde.

This year, the event opted out of the traditional tree planting for fruit bearing bushes.

“Raspberries, blueberries, blackberries and Saskatoon berries,” said Sensisyusten House of Learning student Haylie Demoan.

“It’s giving back to the environment and building the future,” said TD Trust Canada’s Jennifer Kristen.

A message that was not lost on the kids who took part.



WFN flag welcomed into Regional District boardroom

Sept 6, 2018, www.kelownacapnews.com/news/westbank-first-nation-flag-welcomed-into-regional-district-boardroom

The flag symbolizes the strong relationship between the two bodies.

The Westbank First Nation flag now sits in the Regional District of Central Okanagan boardroom.

The flag was set into its stand by Tom Konek, WFN councillor who is a non-voting member of the regional board and Gail Given, Kelowna city councillor and director at the Regional District on Sept. 27 to symbolize the unity between the WFN and the Regional board.



Konek says that he will not forget the special moment when it was brought into the room and looks forward to taking more steps with the regional district to strengthen their relationship further.

“This really strengthens our friendship and partnership it was a really nice moment and it something I won’t forget.”

Konek says that Brian Reardon, regional chief administrator, was instrumental in organizing the flag’s induction to the boardroom. “It was his idea, he asked if this would be okay.”

Currently the RDCO recognizes the traditional Sylix territory at the beginning of each meeting however having more visibility was important to Konek, the board and Given.

“It’s quite an honour to keep moving forward in our relationship building,” Given said. “It’s (the flag) respect for the Westbank First Nation as an order of government— For me it’s important that these steps taken are authentic steps and that it doesn’t have an ask that comes after it. From my perspective we will be continuing conversations with the Westbank First Nation.”

Given says she cherishes the closes relationship between the Regional District of Central Okanagan and Westbank First Nation.



WFN pumped for park

Aug 21, 2018 www.castanet.net/news/West-Kelowna/234470/WFN-pumped-for-park



Westbank First Nation is celebrating the opening of a new multi-use sports park.

The \$700,000 park includes a multi-use sports court with basketball and hockey nets and player box seats, a pump track for bikes, skateboards, scooters and rollerbladers, along with a skate bowl.

It's located adjacent to the WFN Youth Centre at 1880 Quail Lane.

“Outdoor recreational spaces play a lasting role in building healthy, family centered communities,” says Chief Roxanne Lindley.

“Over the last several years, council has moved forward with several investments in our community core, including construction of a \$5.5-million youth centre and current \$9-million renovations to Sensisyusten School.”

The park ties in nicely with nearby recreation facilities, including soccer fields, a pavilion, and baseball stadium, notes advisory council chair Terry Turcan.



Westbank First Nation invites all to the síya? celebration

May 28, 2018 www.kelownacapnews.com/news/westbank-first-nation-invites-all-to-the-siya-celebration/



Wade Werstiuk was one of the young Westbank First Nation dancers who participated in Friday's WFN Siya celebration

The celebration is an opportunity to honour the land, resources and achievements of children.

The Westbank First Nation and the sn̓c̓w̓ip̓s Heritage Museum invites all community members to the 28th annual síya? celebration on Friday.

The síya? celebration provides an opportunity to honour the land, resources, as well as the achievements and hard work of the school children as they near the end of the school year. This year, the public is invited to attend and experience traditional syilx dancing, drumming and singing, as well browse local arts, jewelry and crafts for sale.

The first annual síya? celebration took place in 1990, when Westbank First Nation School (now Sənsisyustən House of Learning) first opened, and was later named to síya?. Since time immemorial, syilx people have celebrated natural land resources, and this celebration is one way that syilx people continue to do so. We welcome the public to share in our very special tradition.

The celebration will begin at 9 a.m. and go until 3 p.m. at Pine Stadium in Westbank.

A few reminders:

- During ceremony and prayers, there is to be no photography, recording, or filming
- Always ask before touching and photographing dancers' outfits
- During presentations, please listen and do not disrupt
- Bring cash for vendor table purchases, food truck and concession



The Valley's 10 most influential women

May 14, 2018, www.kelownadailycourier.ca/life/article_27bc8604-5787-11e8-9749-63ebc4b6ac01.html

On a weekend where we celebrate the great women in our own lives — our moms, grandmothers, and mothers-in-law, we felt it would be an appropriate time to offer a list of our picks for the Okanagan Valley's 10 most influential women.

Another reason why . . . because it's 2018.

This list includes representation from business, politics, social agencies and education. Selections made by The Okanagan Weekend's editorial department include the following.

ROXANNE LINDLEY **Westbank First Nation**

Often described as being Canada's most progressive Aboriginal community, Westbank First Nations marked another advance with the election of their first female chief in September 2016.

Roxanne Lindley is the daughter of the band's first chief, John Lindley, who was elected after it split from the Vernon-based Okanagan Indian Band in 1963.

She has been president of an international development foundation named for her father, and has worked in fields such as education, taxation, archeology, and culture.

Lindley defeated long-time chief Robert Louie by 175 votes to 141. She presides over a band that is relatively small in membership, at about 800, but which has an annual budget of about \$40 million.



On the band's 5,300 acres on the Westside are located more than 400 businesses, from big box stores down to small family-owned shops. The population is about 10,000, most of whom are non-natives living in homes and condos built through long-term leasing arrangements. The band's population growth is about three times faster than other Central Okanagan communities, attesting to its appeal as a desirable place to live under the WFN's leadership.



Peachland, WFN establishes working relationship

May 8, 2018, www.kelownacapnews.com/news/peachland-westbank-first-nation-establishes-working-relationship/



The District of Peachland and Westbank First Nation have formed signed a Memorandum of Understanding to represent the mutual commitment to establish a working relationship.

The MOU will support the interests of both communities and is an opportunity to encourage information sharing on initiatives including economic development, economic growth, and crown land referrals, according to a District of Peachland news release.

The MOU is intended to establish a lasting, working relationship in the best interests of both communities, based on mutual respect, honour and recognition.

This framework for relationship building demonstrates a mutual commitment to help establish consistent communication and encourages the councils to work together more cooperatively.

WFN Chief Roxanne Lindley, Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin and their respective councils agree that together, through strong leadership, they can provide an environment that will strive to support healthy vibrant communities and ensure all residents of Westbank First Nation and the District of Peachland are able to benefit from their initiatives, said the news release.

This agreement is the result of the work highlighted at the community-to-community forum held on March 19 which provided each government with the opportunity to meet and familiarize themselves with the community initiatives in neighbouring municipalities.



\$8.9 million upgrade for WFN school

March 16, 2018, <https://infotel.ca/newsitem/89-million-upgrade-for-wfn-school/it50986>

The Sensisyusten House of Learning will soon get an almost \$9 million upgrade.

A Westbank First Nation elementary school will soon get an almost \$9 million upgrade.

Students and staff at the Sensisyusten House of Learning will be getting new classrooms, a learning assistance room, expanded

administration, lighting, roofing, insulation, building exterior, outdoor classroom spaces, more washrooms and a new entry and reception area, according to a Westbank First Nation media release.

Improvements will enhance safety, student learning, teaching capacity, and language and cultural programming.

The First Nation says the project will cost over \$8.8 million with the majority of funds coming from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Members voted yesterday, March 15, to approve spending roughly \$1.5 million of their own money on the project.

“Sensisyusten students are so happy about the outcome,” Chief Roxanne Lindley says in the release. “I love seeing the spirit of our future leaders.”

Construction is set to begin later this year and finish winter of 2019.

Construction finished on a \$5.5 million youth centre last year and work begins this year on a \$700,000 public skateboard park and sports court.



Cultural Connections: WFN history

Jan. 26, 2018, www.kelownacapnews.com/news/carlis-cultural-connections-westbank-first-nation-history/

Photo: Jordan Coble, Sncewips Heritage Museum, is featured in the 2nd edition of Cultural Connections

Indigenous peoples have occupied the Interior for thousands of years.

Jordan Coble is the cultural and operations administrator at the Sncewips Heritage Museum. He spoke with the *Capital News* about the culture and history of the Westbank First Nation, from before settler times to today, as part of our video series called Carli's Cultural Connections.



Q: When did the Westbank First Nation form in the Central Okanagan?

A: Westbank First Nation became a recognized community in October 1963, but we are a part of a greater nation since forever, based on our oral histories. Scientifically speaking, our people have been in existence on these lands for over 12,000 years..

Q: How does WFN fit in with other Aboriginal communities in the Okanagan?

A: WFN is one of eight communities that comprise the entire Syilx nation. In the Okanagan Valley, we're part of the Okanagan district, but the territory as a whole is comprised of many different districts.

Q: Where can people go to find more information about culture and history of the Westbank First Nation?

A: The Sncewips Heritage Museum is a recommendation. We really pride ourselves in creating a safe space. Everyone that walks in gets a hands-on tour. We put all of our collection items into context, historical and cultural so that people understand all the things of the past still contribute to our daily lives, our daily cultures today.

Visit the Sncewips Heritage Museum, 1979 Old Okanagan Hwy, www.sncewips.com



WFN celebrates National Veterans Aboriginal Day

Nov 8, 2017, www.kelownadailycourier.ca/gallery/collection_ad1e71de-c4cc-11e7-afb8-73cc437286d8.html

National Aboriginal Veterans Day was celebrated by Westbank First Nation at their Veterans Memorial on Wednesday. The event included an opening prayer by a WFN elder, singing of Okanagan Song, Soldier Boy and Woman's Warrior Song, reading the names of Aboriginal Veterans, reciting the poem: In Flanders Fields, laying of wreaths, and 1 minute of silence.



WFN care home showcases high-quality healthcare in recent survey

August 09, 2017, <https://infotel.ca/newsitem/westbank-first-nation-care-home-showcases-its-high-quality-healthcare-in-recent-survey/it45067>



Pine Acres Home, a residential care home in the Westbank First Nation community just successfully passed its Accreditation Canada Survey, with the lowest possible risk rating.

A Westbank First Nation residential care home received the lowest possible risk rating in a recent Interior Health Licensing Survey.

Pine Acres Home runs on a social care model, and provides care to residents with physical or cognitive challenges.

“According to Accreditation Canada, Pine Acres exudes quality service and strives for continual improvement,” said Westbank First Nation Chief Roxanne Lindley in a press release. “Resident and staff safety initiatives are evident and residents’ needs are considered in combination with professional standards.”

Pine Acres Home, located at 1902 Pheasant Lane in West Kelowna must pass the Accreditation Canada review every four years, in order to meet global health care standards established by the International Society for Quality in Health Care.

According to the release, a flexible meal schedule - where all meals are cooked in house - plays an important role to the overall resident-centered approach.

Additionally, offered services including social functions, recreation therapy, social work services through Interior Health, nutrition and dental services, as well as attending the annual Siya celebration, add to the program’s success, according the release.



Okanagan wind farm up and running

Apr 6, 2017, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3361468/okanagan-wind-farm-up-and-running/>

After many years of development, and nine months of heavy lifting, the 10 Sevion 3.2 M114 CCV wind turbines are now providing power to the province's electricity grid.



The Pennask project is located just west of Pennask Summit, north of Highway 97C and the Shinish Creek project is located 30 kilometres west of Summerland.

The two facilities are on Crown land and were developed in connection with the Penticton Indian Band, and the Westbank First Nation, Upper Nicola Band.

“Through the Okanagan Wind projects, we are pleased to continue a commitment to clean energy initiatives. We are proud to be a part of the process since development, through construction and now in operations alongside other local contractors to ensure the best results for our future,” Chief Roxanne Lindley of the Westbank First Nation said. “Our partnership and collaboration on these facilities helps to harness the natural wind energy supplied by our region, while bringing tangible benefits for our community members.”

The clean energy generated by Okanagan Wind is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in B.C by 60,000 tonnes a year.

“I would like to thank Okanagan Wind, the past PIB leadership and our staff who worked hard to conclude this agreement. The Penticton Indian Band affirms our responsibility to take care of the land and all living things within our ancestral Title lands,” Chief Chad Eneas of the Penticton Indian Band said.

The projects represent about six per cent of the province's wind energy, enough to power approximately 9,000 homes.

