

# THE POWER OF INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

## THRIVING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY BUILDING

Before colonization, Indigenous communities across Canada were wholly self-sufficient and self-governing, making decisions in the best interest of their people. In 2005, after more than a decade of negotiations and referendums, the Westbank First Nation (WFN) Self-Governance Act came into force, marking the official return to community-based self-governance. Today, WFN is one of the most progressive and successful Indigenous communities in Canada, with continuous growth in the number of businesses—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous owned—and developments on its lands in the Central Okanagan.



A few years prior to achieving self-governance, WFN created the first Indigenous Economic Development Commission (EDC) in Canada, which prioritizes business retention, facilitation, and attraction, while also advising its Council. Thanks to its robust infrastructure, governance controls, decision-making power, and Land Title Insurance, WFN is a winning choice for investors. The community works collaboratively to manage its more than 5,000 acres of reserve lands and protect its resources, environments, and watersheds, looking to drive prosperity for future generations.



# 21%

POPULATION GROWTH  
FROM 2016 TO 2021  
EXPERIENCED BY WFN

# 1,000+

BUSINESSES ON WFN LAND

# 4,200+

HOMES HAVE BEEN  
DEVELOPED ON  
WFN LAND

# SUCCESS IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN



## KEKULI CAFE

Established in 2009, Kekuli Café is a pioneer of Indigenous cuisine in the Okanagan Valley, blending fast-casual and grab-and-go concepts. Kekuli Café Founder, Sharon Bond-Hogg, a proud member of the Nooaitch First Nation, realized her dream of owning a restaurant through perseverance and strategic planning.

With locations in Westbank, Kelowna, Merritt, and Kamloops, and plans for further expansion, Kekuli Café has become a community cornerstone. The café promotes Indigenous artists and



community initiatives, embodying inclusivity and entrepreneurship.

Sharon's dedication and hard work have been recognized with awards including National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Businesswoman of the Year in 2020. Kekuli Café honors Indigenous heritage while providing a welcoming space for all, ensuring a lasting legacy.



Niche Wine Co., nestled in the scenic hills of West Kelowna in the Central Okanagan, epitomizes a deep-rooted connection to the land and community. Founded by James and Joanna Schlosser, the winery embodies a philosophy where wine is grown, not just made. With multi-generation farming heritage and Indigenous ancestry, their approach to winemaking reflects a commitment to sustainability and seventh-generation thinking.

Their award-winning wines and integrated tasting room offer guests an authentic behind-the-scenes experience. Support from the community has been instrumental in the winery's growth and success, and has helped them through challenges like the devastating 2023 wildfires. Diversifying with sustainable initiatives and agri-tourism experiences, Niche Wine Co. exemplifies a holistic approach to winemaking, rooted in family, sustainability, and community.



Named after the Spring Salmon Food Chief, symbolizing resilience and economic issues, Ntityix Development Corporation has been driving growth in Westbank First Nation since 1973. Originally established as the Westbank Indian Band Development Company, the company has diversified

its portfolio over the years to include real estate, forestry, construction, and professional services.

Aligning business objectives with community goals, Ntityix fosters prosperity and well-being for Westbank First Nation members. Notable achievements include partnerships in commercial real estate and accolades for sustainable forestry practices. With a focus on community enhancement and sustainable growth, Ntityix explores innovative projects while prioritizing Indigenous employment and environmental stewardship.

## HELPFUL LINKS

Okanagan Nation Alliance  
[syilx.org](http://syilx.org)

Westbank First Nation  
[wfn.ca](http://wfn.ca)

Westbank First Nation Business Directory  
[wfn.ca/directory\\_landing.aspx?RD=1](http://wfn.ca/directory_landing.aspx?RD=1)

Okanagan Indian Band  
[www.okib.ca](http://www.okib.ca)

Sncewips Heritage Museum  
[sncewips.com](http://sncewips.com)

Indigenous Tourism BC  
[indigenoustourism.ca](http://indigenoustourism.ca)

Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada  
[indigenoustourism.ca](http://indigenoustourism.ca)

Indigenous Business Development Services  
[ibdsbc.ca](http://ibdsbc.ca)

First Nations Finance Authority  
[fnfa.ca](http://fnfa.ca)

All Nations Trust Company  
[antco.ca](http://antco.ca)

## ARE YOU READY FOR A CHANGE OF SCENE?

# OKGO

QUESTIONS?  
[OK-GO.CA](http://OK-GO.CA)

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