

# WFN recognized for leadership, innovation

By Westside Weekly Staff

Westbank First Nation has won a national award for exceptional leadership and innovation.

It received the inaugural Cities For People Award at the third annual National Congress on Culture in Edmonton.

“The award honours exceptional leadership and innovation in implementing a collaborative arts or cultural activity/project that aims to transform the livability of a community or fellow citizens,” said Chief Robert Louie.

“WFN participated heavily the past year in Culture Days as we saw an opportunity to highlight our language, art and culture in an inclusive and open way.”

The band was nominated for the award by Westside artist Julia Trops, and West Kelowna mayor and council “to recognize and showcase initiatives taken to engage the public in arts and culture during an annual Culture Days event (in 2014).”

Nationally, Culture Days was created in response to the growing recognition that a vibrant arts and cultural sector contributes directly to a healthy and stable society,” it says on the website.

“Culture Days also believes that the arts and cultural sector makes a vital contribution to the economic and social development of Canada and contributes to the overall health of the country.”

That happened on the Westside last year when First

Nation and non-First Nation artist works and workshops were held throughout Westbank and West Kelowna when WFN proclaimed Sept. 26-28 as Culture Days.

“There were no boundaries between WFN and DWK. It was about enjoying the company of one another and of celebrating our arts and culture; this is what ultimately led to the formation of the Suk’wt?msqilxw West Kelowna Arts Council in February,” said museum curator Tracy Satin, who, with heritage researcher Jordan Coble, accepted the Cities For People Award in Edmonton.

“The Snc?wips Heritage Museum hasn’t even been open for a year, but I truly feel that there has been a large impact on the community and those that have come in for a visit or have worked with us,” said Satin.

“Winning the award means that we are doing our job well, that our message about WFN and the Syilx Nation is getting out there and others see and recognize this. Our mission is to be the voice of the community and our vision is to educate and collaborate and this is what this award is all about.”

Last year was the first year WFN participated in Culture Days, which started in 2010. “When the Museum embarks on any type of initiative we really have to think about the WFN community and if it is something that the community could or would support,” said Satin, chair of the Canadian Association for Conservation of



Photo Courtesy of Edge Photography

**Shawn Van Sluys, executive director, Musagetes Foundation, Guelph, helps Tracy Satin, Westbank First Nation heritage officer and curator, and Jordan Coble, WFN heritage and curatorial researcher, celebrate winning the Cities for People Award and \$1,000 cash prize.**

Cultural Property Grants and Awards Committee.

“This was the perfect national venue for highlighting Westbank First Nation language, art and culture in an inclusive, open and respectful way.”

In Syilx, Snc?wips means a building or house image of multiple colours — a protector of First Nation heritage.

With new greater capacity and space to conduct a wider array of educational and public programming as well as permanent and rotating exhibitions, the museum shares the stories of the first people of the Valley.

Displays include some of WFN’s extensive collections such as archaeological artifacts, historical and contemporary art, archives, and utilitarian (baskets, tools).

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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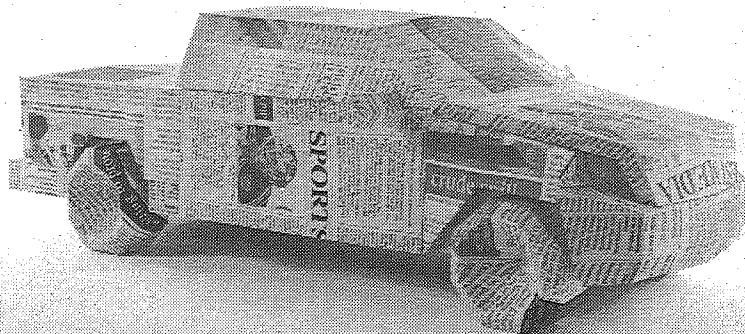
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