

# *Ki?lawna?* in the Okanagan

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## Biocultural Diversity

Grizzly bears, *ki?lawna?*, play an important role in the Okanagan landscape and are the subject of many *Syilx* laws and protocols.

However, habitat fragmentation and ecosystem degradation have led to the extirpation—local extinction—of grizzly populations.

### How do we study a locally extinct species?

Studying *ki?lawna* in the Okanagan requires understanding the significance and role of the grizzly in the environment and its relationships with the *Syilx* peoples who have occupied these lands and co-existed with it since time immemorial.



Ellen's work is grounded in Indigenous methodologies to better understand the divergent processes of thought, knowledge, and information surrounding Grizzly presence in the Okanagan and the critical habitat they require for survival.

Ellen is working with the *Syilx* community and the Okanagan Nation Alliance, who have been historically excluded from core decisions that are made regarding *ki?lawna?*, to ensure culturally and ecologically relevant conservation efforts.

To explore the ecological relationships of grizzly, Ellen has started by looking at neighbouring populations to better understand the species as a whole, while mapping the Okanagan region for plants—in particular black huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*)—and animals that sustain these bears.



**Biological and cultural diversity are intrinsically linked. Science and policy need to be built using an innovative model that involves collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.**

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