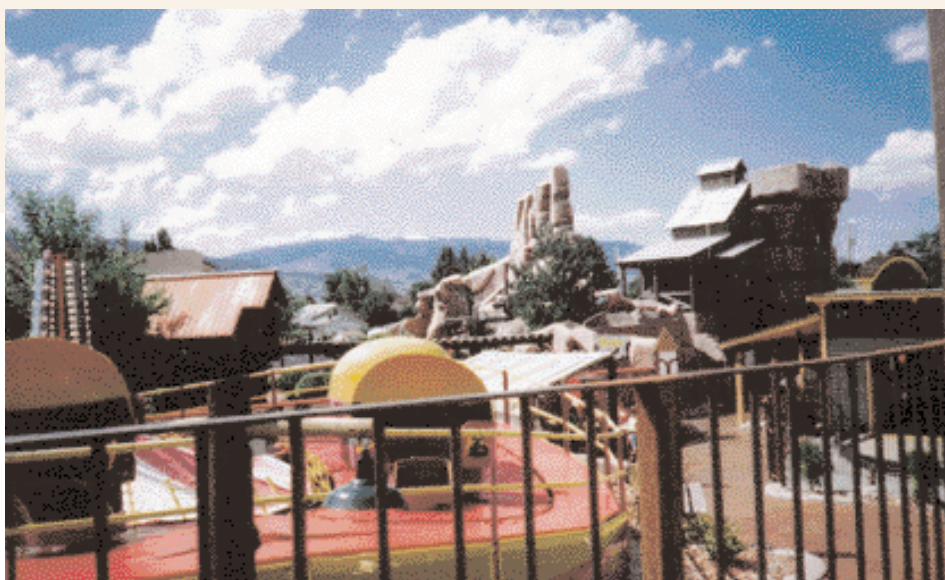


Osoyoos: Canada's Only Desert

> By Karen Dabrowska

Canada is famous for its breathtaking mountain scenery, snow-covered landscape, tranquil, magical lakes and pine forests. But it also has a desert which stretches about 20km at its widest point.

The desert, with its brushes and grasses, is home to rattlesnakes, mice, turtles, coyotes and Canada's smallest bird, the calliope hummingbird. One of the main attractions in Osoyoos, a desert town with a population of 4400, is the Desert Centre on 27 acres of the Antelope Brush ecosystem where visitors, serenaded by birdsongs, can walk through miles of dry land and acquaint themselves with unique animals such as Great Basin pocket mice, spade foot toads and tiger salamanders. They only come out at night but the daytime 90 minute guided tour provides a penetrating flash of insight into the wonders of the desert ecosystem. Osoyoos is also home of the Nk'Mip Indian Band (Canadian Indians don't use the word 'tribe' and the country's indigenous inhabitants are referred to as 'first nation' peoples). "There are 450 of us and we own 32,000 acres so why aren't we rich?" asked the renowned leader, Clarence Louie. "We are going to be rich", he decided. Clarence Louie was first elected band chief in 1985 after completing the Native American Studies programs at the Universities of Regina and Lethbridge. Since then he has been dedicated to creating self-reliance for the Band through establishing strong, diversified economic development while preserving traditions and building on lessons of the past. He set up the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation, which he currently heads. The Nk'Mip Desert & Heritage Centre enables the band to share its history and



The adventure playground and ice cream shop.

ملعب الأطفال ومحل المرطبات



Nk'Mip Desert & Heritage Centre. مركز الصحراء والتراث



معروضات حرفية في مركز الصحراء والتراث
Craft display at the Nk'Mip Desert & Heritage Centre.

traditions. There are cultural demonstrations and high quality native art and artifacts displayed like museum pieces in the tastefully designed building. Osoyoos also has one of the warmest lakes in Canada with sandy beaches and a grassy bank ideal for picnics. The displays in the modest museum focus on the natural and local history, orchards and irrigation. ■

Accommodation: Osoyoos has become a big resort for sun seekers in summer. In winter Canadians escape the treacherous cold of the parries where temperatures plunge to minus 40 and fill the motels. The Italian Garden, off main street, run by Maria and Jim is a delightful bed and breakfast with delicious home cooked meals. Tel: 001-250-495-7020