

## Salley Bull, Candidate

### Okanogan County Commissioner, District # 3

***I want to define Okanogan County's rural identity and unite us by recognizing our diversity.***

**ISSUE #1:** JOBS - Okanogan County is a poverty county with unemployment rates historically being twice as much as state rates. We are over 9% unemployed: 1 in ten needs a job. Our poverty and unemployment rates have been discussed for over 50 years with very little positive results countywide. We need to pull ourselves out of this hole and stop thinking that some government agency or single industry can change this problem. This will take a combined effort to support our local businesses while we reach out to new businesses to relocate here. County Commissioners can help effect a positive change by being proactive and tenacious for the benefit of our neighbors. We have many things going for us: relatively cheap land and electricity, well-travelled Hwy. 97 with its Canadian-Alaskan connection and short-line rail access that could service light industries.

**ISSUE #2:** WATER - Okanogan County's long history of rural lifestyle, rooted in our fruit orchards, cattle ranches, and logging, is short in comparison with our brothers and sisters of the Colville Confederated Tribes' history of fishing, hunting and supporting their families here. We are a desert valley with high forested hills and our livelihoods, home lives and recreational activities are closely knit with, and dependent upon, the waters of our rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. Our multi-faceted economy is dependent upon the quality and quantity of our water. Careful planning is not only a requirement by the state, but imperative if we are to continue in a sustainable way, so our children can inherit what we have enjoyed.

**ISSUE #3:** LOSS OF LOCAL SUPPORT - Our local year-round residents lend a helping hand to their neighbors; they buy locally, see the local doctors here, and send their kids to our schools. Now we are experiencing a loss of families, who move to where jobs are paying better and are year-round. Less families mean less students in our schools; results in less money to the schools. Stores and medical complex also lose dollars. It is a vicious cycle, but one that can be staunched by appropriate job training

and educational opportunities. We are an attractive location for light industry, especially one with an appreciation of our readily available recreational opportunities and who share our rural lifestyle.

**ISSUE #4:** CONTINUED POVERTY – Since the 60's Okanogan County has been troubled by double digit unemployment, with 30% of families are living below the poverty level. More than 90% of our school age children qualify for free or reduced lunches and breakfasts. Minimum wage seasonal work is the most common form of income. Young families, especially single parent families, have a very difficult time paying for daycare for their children. Daycare facilities are generally filled-to-capacity: more are needed, and are needed seven days a week, year-around, for those parents working weekends. Teen-pregnancies and STDs are more than double state average, and drug abuse is a huge problem for families and the court system. These terrible numbers have been continuing for decades. It is time we look seriously at our poverty and realize that it is not just something to discuss again, but the turning point to improve our employment opportunities for the next generation's sake.

**ISSUE #5:** LOSS OF KINSHIP - We used to have sister cities' relationships with BC and parades, baseball games, horseshoe and lake events were jointly engaged. There needs to be a better communication relationship with BC and realize that agreements concerning milfoil treatments, water quality/quantity, and business promotion cooperation could be beneficial for both sides of the border. We should not be strangers as we have become – with each side going in separate directions. Right or wrong, our PUD is going ahead with their plans to raise the old Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River 5 feet and re-power it. And our BC neighbors are starting talks to siphon the same Similkameen River, pumping it through the mountains to Oliver, which needs this same water. Communication is lacking.