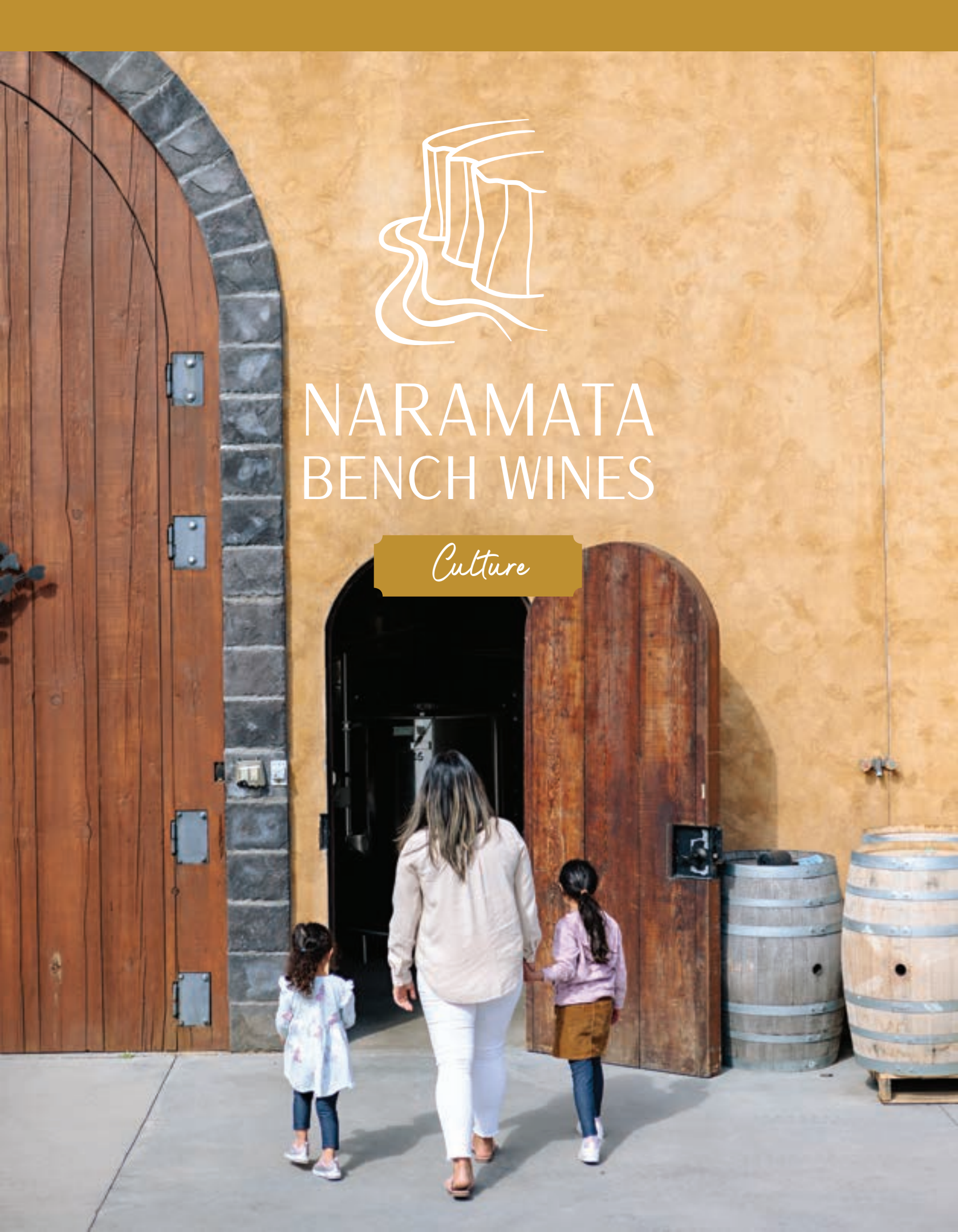




# NARAMATA BENCH WINES

*Culture*





## TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

The Naramata Bench is located on the unceded, traditional territory of the *Syilx* (Okanagan) people, whose territory extends over approximately 69,000 sq km. The *Syilx* (Okanagan) nation includes seven member communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia: Okanagan Indian Band, Osoyoos Indian Band, Penticton Indian Band, Upper Nicola Band, Upper and Lower Similkameen Indian Bands, and Westbank First Nation; and the Colville Confederated Tribes in Northern Washington State. The *Syilx* (Okanagan) people share the *nsyilxcən* language, culture, and customs, as well as the land.

We are grateful to grow grapes and our families on this land.



## VINES & ORCHARDS

Settlers of European descent were the first to plant orchards on the Naramata Bench. John Moore Robinson acquired 3500 acres from the South Okanagan Land Company and divided it into 10-acre fruit tree lots to sell to farmers. Our nascent farming community was connected to Summerland via ferry, until an overland road connected Naramata and Penticton in 1907. The grand Naramata Hotel was built by Robinson in 1908, supporting the warm hospitality we are still known for to this day.

Vines for table grapes were planted on most farms, but it wasn't until the 1970s that *vitis vinifera* vines were planted with the primary intent to make wine. Grape growers, most notably the Osoyoos Indian Band, first started experimenting with varieties such as Riesling, Scheurebe, and Ehrenfelser in the Okanagan Valley, and in the mid-1970s further cold-tolerant varieties were planted, such as Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer. The establishment of the the North American Free Trade agreement saw an end to planting hybrid varieties on the Naramata Bench as well as most of the valley. Today, 250 hectares (617 acres) of grapes are planted on the Naramata Bench.

Both orchards and vineyards on the Naramata Bench are commonly irrigated as many of our soils are sandy and free-draining. The original irrigation system was established by Robinson in the beginning of the 1900s, and consisted of wood flumes and sluice gates. By 1913, the first supply dam for the benchlands was built, to capture snowmelt in the mountains. Today all irrigation water for our vineyards and orchards is sourced from the same Okanagan Lake we swim in, which is in turn fed by mountain snowmelt each spring.



## LIFE ON THE BENCH

Life on the Naramata Bench is rural, family-oriented and purposeful. We choose to live, work and play on the Naramata Bench because of the quality of life it offers for our families.

According to the 2021 census, over 3,800 people live on the Naramata Bench, although almost half live within a five minute drive of the city of Penticton. Many of us that work in the wineries and other businesses on the Bench live in Penticton, as it's a short commute and breathtakingly beautiful drive.

Family living is common among the vineyards on the benchlands, and our population is growing each year. This is one of the few places in our

busy world that neighbours gather regularly for potluck dinners, volunteerism is a top pastime, and community health is valued above all else.

In fact, the village of Naramata is one of the four “slow communities” designated by Cittaslow in Canada. The village’s pledge echos our broader community commitment to a purposeful, quality-focused way of life, built on local food and wine, cultural diversity, community traditions, and a healthy lifestyle. Life is slower, more calm, and more purposeful here. We work hard, but play and replay together, not taking for granted this extraordinary place we share with each other.



## CRAFT & COLLABORATION

As a young wine region without the constraints of appellation laws, our approach is less conventional and more collaborative. We are learning, and constantly improving our wines together.

Our member wineries make wines from Naramata Bench grapes, but also from other Okanagan Valley vineyards. In our association, we welcome craft ciderhouses, breweries, distilleries, as well as wineries using other fruit than grapes. In this new world, lines between craft beverages are blurring, and collaborations are common.

Our fermenting, brewing and distilling methods vary, yet we all share a commitment to quality over quantity, showcasing the bounty of the Naramata Bench, and creating something beautiful in each glass. After all, we are all neighbours.

Visitors to the Naramata Bench notice how many craft beverage producers (over fifty!) we have in such a small place, but it doesn't mean wine lovers have a whirlwind trip. In fact, we invite our guests to taste slowly, taking time to SUP on the lake and bike in the hills, wander the village and savour the long-table dinners we share in the vineyards.



## NARAMATA BENCH WINERIES ASSOCIATION

We are a membership association, working towards our vision for the Naramata Bench to be globally recognized as Canada's most charming wine community, crafting consistently delicious wines.

Even though our association has existed for decades, we are currently riding a wave of enthusiasm and energy. Our membership is growing, and we are delighted to be including new winery and craft beverage producers. Naramata Bench staff, owners and consultants are contributing their passion to our volunteer board and driving our marketing focus to media and trade, and our quality focus through education and collaboration. It's an exciting time for the Naramata Bench, and for all of us.

## REFERENCES

History: Sylix (Okanagan) Nation Alliance, Okanagan Historical Society, Okanagan Archive Trust Society, Wine Growers BC..

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