

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY

**Traditional
Wellness Strategic
Framework**



The First Nations Health Authority would like to thank all the traditional healers, community members, health professionals, and others who participated in various engagements on traditional wellness, generously providing their input, feedback, and ideas into the development of this publication. We also raise our hands to all the traditional healers and health professionals who are working in a good way to improve the health of their communities.



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Traditional Wellness Strategic Framework

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Contents

4	<u>Introduction</u>	26	<u>Strategies for Success</u>
4	Project Overview	27	Partners' Responsibility
7	Methodology	29	Strategic Framework Overview
11	Organization of the Report	30	Objective One – Support Building Understanding
12	<u>Context</u>	32	Objective Two – Develop Knowledge Resources
12	Introduction to the First Nations Health Authority	32	Objective Three – Increase Knowledge Transfer
13	Overview of Traditional Wellness	34	Objective Four – Promote Partnership
18	<u>Partners and Collaborators</u>	38	Objective Five – Advocate and Support Traditional Healers and Communities
20	<u>Guiding Principles for Traditional Wellness</u>	40	Alignment with the First Nations Perspective on Wellness
22	<u>Vision and Mission for Traditional Wellness</u>	42	<u>Next Steps</u>
23	Mission for Traditional Wellness	43	<u>Appendix A Bibliography</u>
23	Vision	45	<u>Appendix B Key Informant Interview Questionnaire</u>
24	<u>Core Values for Traditional Wellness</u>	48	<u>Appendix C First Nations Perspective on Wellness</u>

1

Introduction

PROJECT OVERVIEW

BC First Nations are rewriting the way their health care is delivered and traditional healing will play a vital role in this new system.

Since the very beginning of its work, the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) has been made aware of and recognized the importance of traditional wellness in improving the health of First Nations peoples. Initially, the Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan committed the First Nations Health Council to lead the implementation of 29 health actions, with support from its tripartite partners, the Federal and Provincial Health Ministries.¹ These actions were subsequently affirmed in the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan.² In 2009, the FNHA conducted a traditional wellness environmental scan and asked BC First Nations communities their views on traditional wellness. Through this environmental scan, communities stated that:



- They want to hear more and engage in more discussion and development of traditional medicines and practices;
- Culture and spirituality are the foundation for community health programs;
- The connection to family and community is an important element in traditional healing; and
- There is a bridging of traditional and contemporary cultures. More First Nation specific programs and self-healing are taking place.

In response to a stated need by First Nations communities for support for traditional wellness, in 2009, a new health action item was added to the 29 health actions initially described in the TCA: FNHP: **“Support and advocate for Traditional Medicines and Practices.”** Direction to provide support and advocacy in this area was reinforced in the Consensus Paper: British Columbia First Nations Perspectives on a New Health Governance Arrangement (2011), which articulates the collective direction and feedback given by First Nations to the First Nations Health Council in their work to establish a new health governance arrangement. In the Consensus Paper, there are 7 Directives that describe the fundamental standards and instructions for the

¹ Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan. Between the Province of BC, the First Nations Leadership Council, and Government of Canada. 2005.

² Tripartite First Nations Health Plan: Between The First Nations Leadership Council, the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and The Government of Canada, and The Government of BC. 2007.

new health governance arrangement.

Directive 3 provides specific direction to the FNHA to “Protect, incorporate and promote First Nations knowledge, beliefs, values, practices, medicines and models of health and healing into all health programs and services that serve BC First Nations.” As a step toward supporting and advocating for Traditional medicines and practices, the FNHA set out to identify and

recommend a strategic approach to achieving the **Traditional Medicines and Practices** health action as mandated by First Nations in **Directive #3: Improve Services**.

The following strategic framework represents one of the many milestones needed in supporting the efforts of communities to protect, incorporate, and promote their traditional medicines and practices. It is hoped that the following strategic framework can serve as a guidepost in supporting the efforts of communities to move this important work forward.

The purpose of this document is to outline key objectives and strategies for the promotion, incorporation and protection of traditional medicines and practices, and to suggest some key objectives and strategies for further advancing this work.

This Strategic Framework, and the Traditional Healer’s Advisory Committee, is designed to serve as foundational support for the traditional wellness work of First Nations, the FNHA, and other partners and collaborators. This document will also serve as a basis for engagement with First Nations communities, whose continued input will be fundamental to the development of plans for traditional wellness.

At Gathering Wisdom V, when asked how important Traditional Wellness was in community health, 100% of respondents said it was extremely important.

METHODOLOGY

This Strategic Framework was created and is based on community and stakeholder engagement and secondary research. The following section provides further detail about how the research was conducted, including:

- Community Engagement
- Key Informant Interviews
- Document and File Review

1. Community Engagement

The FNHA initiated a number of different engagement activities with BC First Nations, and information gathered through these engagement initiatives informed the development of the Strategic Framework. These activities include:

- At **Gathering Wisdom I** (2007), communities were engaged and recommended that language and culture be part of the primary care initiative and expressed the need for a holistic, cultural and wellness focused perspective from physicians working in First Nation health.³
- At **Gathering Wisdom II** (2008), communities were again engaged and expressed the need for traditional medicines and practices and particularly for protection of and training for traditional wellness activities.
- An **Environmental Scan** was conducted over the fall of 2009 and information was gathered on traditional models of wellness from 91 First Nations health centres representing 167 of 203 communities. The majority of respondents supported the integration of traditional approaches into their health centres and health programming.
- At **Gathering Wisdom IV** (2011), community engagement revealed an overwhelming support to move forward with the establishment of a new FNHA, and more specifically with the Seven Directives outlined in the Consensus Paper, which unequivocally states that traditional medicines and practices are a priority for First Nations in British Columbia.

³ Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey. A Dialogue on the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan. Summary Report. April (2007).

- A **Traditional Healers Gathering** was facilitated in October 2011 at the UBC First Nations House of Learning on Musqueam territory. The gathering was attended by 131 people, including 68 traditional leaders and knowledge keepers from across BC. Attendees discussed strategies and long term goals to incorporate traditional healing practices into programs, communities and health systems.⁴
- During the **2008 to 2010 Regional Caucus Sessions**, health and traditional wellness in communities were discussed. These sessions revealed that First Nations see a need for holistic strategies including appropriate funding of traditional medicine programs.
- At **Gathering Wisdom V** (2012), the FNHA facilitated several engagement sessions on traditional wellness. Community and health representatives shared their thoughts on potential ways to incorporate traditional wellness into health programming; to increase awareness and acknowledgement of traditional healing practice; and to establish a Traditional Healer's Advisory Committee.

⁴ Traditional Healers' Gathering Report 2011: We Are Going Home.





2. Key Informant Interviews

In developing this Strategic Framework, the FNHA developed a traditional wellness interview guide and interview invitation letter to learn about First Nations traditional wellness needs. Thirteen individuals were interviewed, including seven Health Directors from First Nations across BC, four Traditional Wellness Planning Committee Members and two Health Council members. The FNHA made the first contact, contracted services and completed the interviews via telephone. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

3. Document and File Review

An extensive list of relevant secondary research, articles and reports were reviewed and analyzed in creating this Strategic Framework. For a comprehensive list of the sources reviewed, please refer to the bibliography in Appendix A.



ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This Strategic Framework includes the following chapters:

Chapter 2. <i>Context</i>	The first chapter of the Strategic Framework provides an introduction to the FNHA. The Context chapter also introduces the area of traditional wellness and summarizes the FNHA's work on traditional wellness to date.
Chapter 3. <i>Partners and Collaborators</i>	This chapter lists the different stakeholders and partners that interact and collaborate within the area of traditional wellness.
Chapter 4. <i>Guiding Principles for Traditional Wellness</i>	This chapter identifies guiding principles related to traditional wellness in BC from the Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan and other key documents and plans.
Chapter 5. <i>Vision and Mission for Traditional Wellness</i>	This chapter introduces the FNHA's traditional wellness specific vision and mission.
Chapter 6. <i>Core Values for Traditional Wellness</i>	This chapter includes a recommended list of core values in the area of traditional wellness.
Chapter 7. <i>Strategies for Success</i>	This chapter specifies five key objectives related to traditional wellness along with the strategies to successfully achieve each objective. This chapter also shows how the traditional wellness objectives fit within the FNHA's Holistic Wellness approach.
Chapter 8. <i>Recommendations</i>	This chapter provides direction for implementing the strategies for success outlined in this Strategic Framework.

2

Context

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY

The overall purpose of our strategy is to contribute to creating healthy children, healthy families and healthy communities.

Traditional medicine covers a wide variety of therapies and practices which vary from country to country and region to region.

The establishment of Canada's first provincial First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) was a key component of the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan (TFNHP) signed in 2007. The FNHA was established to set up a governance structure to

provide administrative oversight of health services to BC First Nations. The British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance (Framework Agreement) set the foundation for the FNHA to undertake the service delivery responsibilities formerly carried by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Pacific Region. The Framework set out four main components to the new health governance structure, referred to as the "four pillars." These four components are: The First Nations Health Authority, the Tripartite Committee on First Nations Health, the First Nations Health Council, and the First Nations Health Directors Association. Each of these four components has a specific role in the new health governance arrangement, and must work together and provide advice and feedback to one another as they carry out their roles and responsibilities. Each component also has a fundamental role in supporting traditional wellness, this is described in further detail in section seven.

OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL WELLNESS

Traditional wellness is a term that encompasses traditional medicines, practices, approaches and knowledge. Traditional wellness is based on a holistic model of health, and is often overlooked in the prevention and treatment of chronic conditions and in the promotion of health and wellness. Traditional medicines and practices are found worldwide in Indigenous communities. In many developing countries, it is the primary health option.⁵

Traditional healing services are particularly important in rural areas where access to appropriate and affordable primary health care is difficult and, at times, near impossible.⁶

5 Kyba, G. 2011. Models of Traditional Wellness in Canada, United States and Internationally. Prepared for the First Nations Health Council, FNHC. Unpublished Manuscript.

6 Ibid.



In some countries, 80% of the population depend on traditional medicine for primary health care.

The Tripartite First Nations Health Plan (TFNHP) acknowledges the importance of traditional wellness. One of the principles noted in the TFNHP is that “cultural knowledge and traditional health practices and medicines will be respected as integral to the well-being of the First Nations”. First Nations communities throughout BC have affirmed the importance of traditional wellness and have clearly stated that they want increased access to and use of traditional medicines and practices.

The importance of traditional wellness as a means of improving the health and quality of life for First Nations people is increasingly being recognized. There are a number of studies and reports that suggest incorporating holistic wellness into health services for First Nations communities will improve health and wellness. Holistic wellness is believed to lead to better long term results, not just for the health system but also for communities. A scan of the literature on this topic suggests that:

- Traditional healers are an important entry point on the pathway to care for people who use traditional health services.⁷
- Traditional medicine practices provide more health care alternatives to communities, and this may help in meeting the needs of community members and increasing their access to health care. It follows that increasing access to traditional medicines may decrease the need for acute care services because community members would have the opportunity to access health care options that they desire and feel comfortable with, which in turn increases their compliance to treatment and follow up management care.⁸
- Where there are integrated approaches to health care, i.e. where traditional wellness is combined with mainstream approaches to health, there appear to be positive results. In an integrated model, health care practitioners, medical and traditional, can work together by inter-referring to each other and co-managing patients, and they can share the responsibilities of providing health care.⁹

7 WHO: Promoting the Role of Traditional Medicine in Health Care Systems: A Strategy for the African Region 2001–2010. Harare: WHO regional Office for Africa; 2000.

8 Muller, Osterberg, Andrews & Georgia Kyba for the First Nations Health Council. Traditional Wellness Project Charter. Final Draft V 3.0. December 9, 2011.

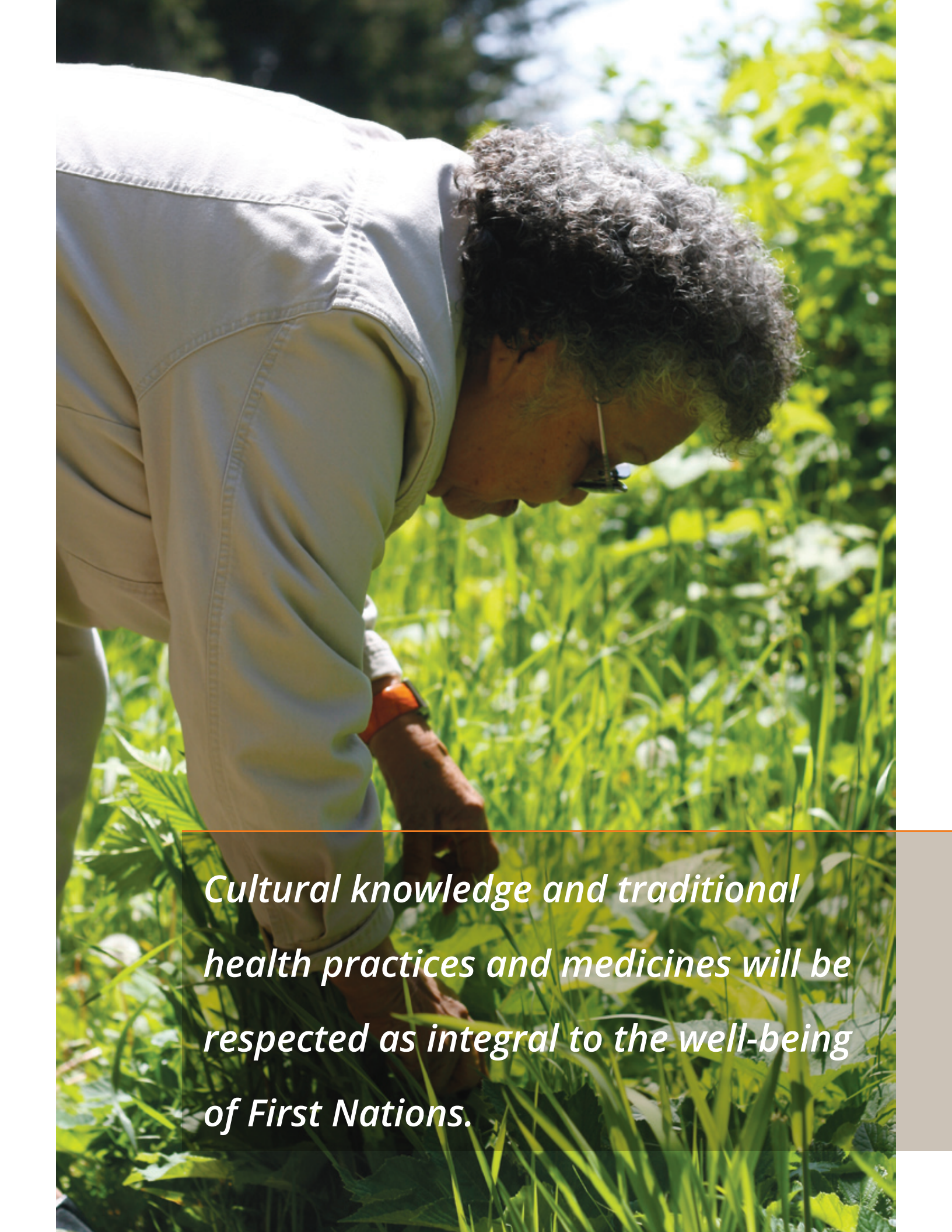
9 Ibid.

In sum, research and engagement with BC First Nations reveals that traditional medicines and practices have the potential to improve overall health and wellness, strengthen culture and pride, prevent chronic conditions, support First Nation decision-making, decrease health care costs, increase access to health care and reconnect First Nation people to their territories.

Therefore, it is a priority to support the incorporation of traditional medicines and practices into health policies, programs and practices and to do this in a way that is safe and relevant for First Nations communities.

Recently, the FNHA undertook a number of initiatives to support traditional wellness, including:

- Establishment of the Traditional Wellness Working Group and the Traditional Healers Advisory Committee
- Traditional Models of Wellness Environmental Scan in BC (2010) – a report summary is available on the FNHA website
- Paper on Models of Traditional Wellness: Canadian, American and International Practices (Draft, 2011) – a report summary is available on the FNHA website
- Traditional Wellness Project Charter (Final Draft Version 3.0)
- Traditional Wellness Policy Paper (Draft)
- Traditional Healers' Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (Draft, 2013)
- Launch of the First Nations Perspective on Wellness (Appendix C)
- Development of a number of other resources for communities that provide a traditional holistic perspective, including the Health and Wellness Diary, Corporate Wellness Calendar, Community Toolkit and Facilitator Guide, ADI Resources Booklet, Traditional Approaches Poster and First Nations Traditional Foods Fact Sheets. Available on the First Nations Health Authority website: www.fnha.ca

A person with curly grey hair, wearing a white lab coat and glasses, is leaning over a field of tall green grass. They are wearing an orange wristband and appear to be examining the plants. The background is a bright, sunlit field of green foliage.

Cultural knowledge and traditional health practices and medicines will be respected as integral to the well-being of First Nations.

3

Partners and Collaborators

The FNHA works together with a variety of partners and collaborators, each of whom has a critical role in supporting traditional wellness.



Interaction and collaboration with these groups is fundamental to the overall success of the Strategic Framework. Traditional wellness partners and collaborators include, but not limited to:

- First Nation Communities and Members
- Practitioners/Healers
- Elders
- First Nations Health Council (FNHC)
- Health Directors
- First Nations Health Directors Association (FNHDA)
- First Nations Leadership Council
- Hospitals
- Health/Medical Centres
- Health Associations
- First Nations and Inuit Health
- BC Ministry of Health
- BC Health Authorities

For more information on everyone's involvement in traditional wellness, please take a look at Section 7 and Appendix C.

4

Guiding Principles for Traditional Wellness

The Seven Directives outlined in the Consensus Paper: British Columbia First Nations Perspectives on a New Health Governance Arrangement (2011) describe the fundamental standards and instructions for the new health governance arrangement.

The Seven Directives also serve as guiding principles for the traditional wellness work.

- Directive 1:** *Community-Driven, Nation-Based*
- Directive 2:** *Increase First Nations Decision-Making and Control*
- Directive 3:** *Improve Services*
- Directive 4:** *Foster Meaningful Collaboration and Partnership*
- Directive 5:** *Develop Human and Economic Capacity*
- Directive 6:** *Be Without Prejudice to First Nations Interests*
- Directive 7:** *Function at a High Operational Standard*

In particular, **Directive 3: Improve Services** directs:

- **“Protect, incorporate and promote First Nations knowledge, beliefs, values, practices, medicines and models of health and healing into all health programs and services that serve BC First Nations.”**

The traditional wellness work is also guided by the following:

- A principle in the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan that “cultural knowledge and traditional health practices and medicines will be respected as integral to the well-being of First Nations.”
- The definition of health in the Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan and the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan as: “Health for First Nations encompasses the physical, spiritual, mental, economic, emotional, environmental, social and cultural wellness of the individual, family and community.”
- The commitments in the British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance, including that the Parties wish to work together to build a First Nations Health Governance Structure “that reflects the cultures and perspectives of BC First Nations and incorporates First Nations’ models of wellness” and that the FNHA will be responsible to “incorporate and promote First Nations knowledge, beliefs, values, practices, medicines and models of health and healing into the First Nations Health Programs, recognizing that these may be reflected differently in different regions of BC”.

5

Vision and Mission for Traditional Wellness



MISSION FOR TRADITIONAL WELLNESS

Building on the Seven Directives, feedback from the traditional healers' gathering, and the shared vision and mission of the FNHA, the FNHC and the FNHDA, the mission for traditional wellness is derived from the inherent goal of communities to protect, incorporate and promote traditional medicines and practices.

Traditional Wellness Mission:

Supporting First Nations in protecting, incorporating and promoting their Traditional Medicines and Practices.

VISION

Building on the Seven Directives, feedback from the traditional healers gathering, and the shared vision and mission of the FNHA, the FNHC and the FNHDA, the Traditional Wellness Vision is:

Traditional Wellness Vision:

To improve the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing of First Nations while strengthening the traditional health care system through partnership between traditional healer practitioners and the Western medical system.

6

Core Values for Traditional Wellness



The holistic Vision of Wellness Model outlines the core values reflected in traditional wellness:

RESPECT

Respect is about honouring where you come from, your culture, your traditions, yourself. It is intergenerational, and is passed on through one's community and family. It is the driving force of the community because it impacts all of our life experiences, including our relationships, our health, and our work. It is defined as consideration of and appreciation for others, but there is recognition that respect is so much more in First Nations communities – it entails a much higher standard of care, consideration,

appreciation and honour and is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our people. There is an intuitive aspect to respect, because it involves knowing how to be with oneself and with others.

WISDOM

Wisdom includes knowledge of language, traditions, culture and medicine. Like respect, wisdom is an understanding that is passed on by our ancestors from generation to generation and has existed since time immemorial. It is sacred in nature and difficult to define.

RESPONSIBILITY

Every person has responsibility to self, families, communities and the land. Responsibility extends not just to those that we come into contact with or relate to, but also to the roles we play within our families, our work and our experiences in the world. There is also a mutual accountability and reciprocity aspect to responsibility. Responsibility intersects with so many areas of our lives, and involves maintaining a healthy and balanced life and leadership through modelling healthy behaviour and wellness.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are what sustain us. Relationships and responsibility go hand in hand. Like responsibility, relationships involve mutual accountability and reciprocity. Relationships are about togetherness, team-building, capacity building, nurturing, sharing, strength and love. It is recognized that relationships need to be maintained strongly within oneself as well as with those around you.

7

Strategies for Success

There are five important objectives that have been identified as important in protecting, incorporating and promoting traditional wellness. This section highlights these objectives, the suggested strategies and the partners involved.

PARTNERS' RESPONSIBILITY

Collaboration and relationships are essential to accomplishing strategies for success. Partners and collaborators involved in the political, strategic, planning and implementation phases of the strategies for success are as follows:

Partners	Role in Traditional Wellness
1. First Nations Communities/ Traditional Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop their own community planning on traditional wellness services that are implemented• Evaluate traditional wellness work implemented from a community perspective
2. Traditional Healers Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advise and support the FNHA on increasing access to traditional healing
3. First Nations Health Council (FNHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and recognize traditional medicines and practices (e.g. policy and legislation, intellectual property, protection of plants and medicines)• Advocate with all partners to ensure the vision of collaboration is realized.
4. Health Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide support to those administering health programs on traditional wellness (e.g. cultural training, knowledge transfer)
5. First Nations Health Directors Association (FNHDA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support traditional wellness education, knowledge transfer, professional development and best practices for health directors and managers of First Nation Health Providers• Advocate for traditional wellness in First Nations communities, including increased access to First Nations traditional healers and practitioners• Provide advice on traditional wellness research, policy, program planning and design as it relates to the administration and operation of health services in First Nation communities.

Partners	Role in Traditional Wellness
5. First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for traditional wellness in First Nations communities, including increased access to First Nations traditional healers and practitioners • Provide technical (e.g. policy) and coordination support to the fulfillment of the traditional wellness health action • Advocate for traditional wellness related funding
6. Provincial Government Entities including the Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policies to support traditional healing practices and increase access to traditional healers • Promote the shift from an “illness” model to a “wellness” model (e.g. integrating traditional approaches into mainstream care and best practices)
7. Federal Government Entities including Health Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policies to support traditional healing practices and increase access to traditional healers (e.g. revision of Health Canada – NIHB and other program “rules” and develop funding mechanism) • Promote the shift from an “illness” model to a “wellness” model (e.g. integrating traditional approaches into mainstream care and best practices)
8. Health Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with First Nations to identify how provincial services work alongside communities and increase access to traditional healers

First Nations have always known a high quality level of health includes physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellness. These four equal parts are closely interconnected and each must be nourished and balanced for an individual to be healthy.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Objective 1: Support Building Understanding

- **Strategy 1:** Bring Communities Together
- **Strategy 2:** Support Cultural Competency Training
- **Strategy 3:** Build Understanding of the First Nations Perspective on Wellness
- **Strategy 4:** Help Fill the Knowledge Gap between Western and Traditional Practices
- **Strategy 5:** Model Traditional Wellness in the Workplace

Objective 2: Develop Knowledge Resources

- **Strategy 1:** Develop a Resource List
- **Strategy 2:** Support the Development of Tools and Resources

Objective 3: Increase Knowledge Transfer

- **Strategy 1:** Encourage the Engagement of Youth
- **Strategy 2:** Encourage the Engagement of Elders
- **Strategy 3:** Support Development of Community Protocols
- **Strategy 4:** Document Best Practices
- **Strategy 5:** Encourage Utilization of Communication Media Including Technology
- **Strategy 6:** Help Improve Access

Objective 4: Promote Partnership

- **Strategy 1:** Start with Communities
- **Strategy 2:** Support the Development of Intellectual Property Rights
- **Strategy 3:** Support Policy Development
- **Strategy 4:** Serve as a Liaison
- **Strategy 5:** Support the Development of Protocols

Objective 5: Advocate and Support Traditional Healers and Communities

- **Strategy 1:** Support Recognition of Traditional Healers
- **Strategy 2:** Develop and Support Traditional Healers Advisory Committee
- **Strategy 3:** Advocate for Funding
- **Strategy 4:** Support the Establishment of Healers Networks
- **Strategy 5:** Advocate for the Protection of Plants and Medicines

The following objectives have been identified as essential in supporting and advocating for Traditional Medicines and Practices. Each Objective outlines strategies to move the traditional wellness work forward. The next step will be for the partners to identify their specific roles and responsibilities under each strategy.

OBJECTIVE ONE –
SUPPORT BUILDING
UNDERSTANDING

It is important to bring together wisdom and experience to improve health and healing in First Nations by nurturing tradition, culture and holistic wellbeing in the current health system. This ranges from understanding traditional practices and medicine to cultural competency training.

“We need to start with cultural awareness for health staff across the province. We need to give them a historical context and educate them on current factors affecting Aboriginal people.” – Community Elder

Strategy 1: Bring Communities Together

First Nations communities are asking for space to be created for traditional wellness and for healers, practitioners and communities to come together to share ideas, build knowledge and develop strategies for wellness. Activities and gatherings that involve youth, Elders and families, such as talking circles, drumming and basket-making, provide space to do this. An annual wellness gathering has been suggested as a means for communities to consult with their members and gather feedback that may be shared with the FNHA to inform further work in traditional wellness. This opportunity will be explored further.

Strategy 2: Support Cultural Competency Training

Cultural competency training has been noted by First Nations communities as a priority. In particular, cultural awareness needs to be promoted as a fundamental component of education programs, particularly for those working in the health field.

There are opportunities to build on existing strengths to support cultural competency training, by focusing on First Nations history and current health issues that First Nations communities face. The Provincial Health Services Authority has developed cultural competency training and other efforts are being explored to build understanding and raise awareness about culture.



Strategy 3: Build Understanding of Holistic Wellness

Another area that is seen as a priority is that of building understanding of holistic wellness. The FNHA Wellness approach provides a way to help share and build understanding of what wellness means to First Nations people. Education will be most effective when it involves tripartite partners, health associations, hospitals and health/medical centres. For more information on the Holistic Wellness Approach, please see Appendix C – the First Nations Perspective on Wellness.

Strategy 4: Help Fill the Knowledge Gap between Western and Traditional Practices

In order to build understanding, more effort needs to be placed on filling the knowledge gap between Western and Traditional practices. This can be done by supporting the education of Western medical practitioners and administrators with the fundamental goal of creating an understanding and acceptance of traditional wellness, and forming a collaborative approach to health care. Educational topics could focus on understanding traditional wellness practices, how traditional wellness practices can be built into existing health systems, potential benefits from traditional wellness practices, and how these practices can be accessed. Education directed toward the health care patients could focus on the value of combining both traditional and Western practices into the individual's health management.

Strategy 5: Model Traditional Wellness in the Workplace

Modelling traditional wellness in the workplace is a strategy that can help support building understanding of traditional wellness. The FNHA is exploring opportunities to build wellness into the workplace using the FNHA Wellness Approach. The FNHA has shared this approach with partners to encourage opportunities to incorporate traditional wellness into health planning and service delivery.

OBJECTIVE TWO – DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES

To incorporate traditional wellness in First Nation health, it is important to facilitate, encourage and support the development of resources. The following are suggested strategies to begin developing relevant resources needed in the area of traditional wellness.

Strategy 1: Develop a Resource List

Development of a resource list can help support efforts to increase access to information and research about traditional medicines and practices. Currently, the FNHA is working on further developing and refining a template that can be used for the creation of a traditional wellness resource list. A variety of resources have already been identified by the FNHA and will be examined to determine their relevance. The development of a database of available resources and healers will need to be guided by appropriate privacy and ethics.

Strategy 2: Support the Development of Tools and Resources

Communities have identified the need to support further development of tools/resources that can help build understanding of the various ways in which traditional medicines and practices can be delivered and by whom.

OBJECTIVE THREE – INCREASE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

To promote traditional wellness, the third objective is to increase knowledge transfer, which entails exploring ways to support healers in strengthening and sharing their gifts. Traditional healers will play a large role in transferring the knowledge they have regarding traditional wellness to youth, Elders and other stakeholders involved in the process. The following strategies have been identified as essential to increasing knowledge transfer.

Strategy 1: Encourage Engagement of Youth

First Nations community health centres are encouraged to develop programs and services to educate First Nation youth. It is the youth who will bring knowledge and practices to future generations. Examples of effective programs and services for community health centres and organizations to support include mentorship programs, the incorporation of traditional wellness in schools and the integration of traditional wellness education with existing youth programs, such as camps, canoe trips, language classes and outdoor programs.

“Youth lack an understanding or education of traditional medicines and healing practices. We need to start teaching our youth about the herbs in their areas, how to prepare them, and give them the ability to utilize these medicines so that they don’t have to wait for healers to access the medicines.” – **Community Health Director**

Strategy 2: Encourage Engagement of Elders

First Nations communities are encouraged to engage their Elders to promote knowledge sharing and education. This education can be delivered through in-school programs as well as community gatherings and workshops. Critical to this work is ensuring that Elders are engaged in a respectful and culturally-sensitive manner, and that information shared is protected and applied to its intended use.

Strategy 3: Support Development of Community Protocols

First Nations communities, in collaboration with their health centre staff and Chief and Council, are encouraged to develop protocols for dealing with external parties and when sharing information with their members. Such protocols are important for communities to have in place, and provide the structure for information sharing.

Strategy 4: Document Best Practices

It is important to collect and document best practices related to traditional wellness so that communities can work together in enhancing and building traditional medicines and practices. This may be done by reviewing and documenting best practices shared by communities in the “community initiatives” reports and also by conducting research and inviting communities to share best practices in traditional wellness. Building a resource list that includes these best practices will help ensure that communities across British Columbia have access to this information. Input from a wide range of communities will be critical to building a comprehensive anthology of best practices in traditional wellness.

Strategy 5: Encourage Utilization of Communication Media including Technology

All partners are encouraged to utilize appropriate communication media and technology to promote the use of traditional medicines and practices in a respectful and focused way. The key to this strategy is that those who share knowledge are protected, do not feel exploited and are aware of how information will be used. Examples of ways in which technology can be utilized include the use of videoconferences and e-health. The development of protocols to help facilitate proper use of communication media is needed and will support efforts in this area.

Strategy 6: Help Improve Access

Improving access includes ensuring that First Nations people have access to traditional practitioners. It is critical that the partners work together to support the development and implementation of strategies to increase access to traditional practitioners in various health/medical centres across BC. It is acknowledged that each and every one of us has a role to play in improved access to traditional healing and practices such as developing dedicated spaces where knowledge can be shared. This must be balanced with effective strategies for the protection of traditional medicines and practices. Further work in this area will help in creating the space to be able to facilitate better access.

OBJECTIVE FOUR – PROMOTE PARTNERSHIP

The fourth objective on traditional wellness is to promote partnership. Partnerships are important in supporting Western and Traditional systems of health care to work together.

Strategy 1: Start with Communities

Engagement with First Nations communities is an important first step toward promoting partnerships. Through the Traditional Healers Gathering, Gathering Wisdom, Community Engagement Hubs, Regional Caucuses and the Health Directors Forums, the FNHA continues to put much emphasis on First Nations community engagement. Gatherings provide a way to learn from communities what their priorities are and how they want to be further engaged in the area of traditional wellness.



Strategy 2: Support Development of Intellectual Property Rights

In order to promote the protection of traditional knowledge, traditional practitioners and traditional medicines, there is a need to advocate for the development of intellectual property rights aimed at protecting medicines, traditional foods, and sacred areas. Communities know best what will work for them, but have asked for technical support in developing protocols and means for protecting intellectual property rights of traditional practitioners. This is an area that needs to be further explored in detail, as there are many complexities around the protection of traditional wellness.

Strategy 3: Support Policy Development

Technical support for the development of traditional wellness policies in British Columbia and Canada are also needed. Steps to consider in further supporting policy development in this area include:

- Determining what types of policies need to be implemented
- Determining at what level these policies need to be implemented (health authority, provincial and/or federal level)
- Setting milestones for the implementation of these policies
- Identifying the stakeholders that should be involved in the implementation of these policies
- Describing an engagement process for implementing policies to support traditional wellness

Strategy 4: Serve as a Liaison

Communities have identified the need for a Liaison function to bring information together, coordinate information between partners, communities and stakeholders, and facilitate sharing of information where it is most needed and in a manner that is respectful. The FNHA has established a Traditional Healers Advisory Committee, which will support this need for communication and information sharing between communities. Building a bridge between healers and traditional practitioners and mainstream health providers such as in hospitals and health/medical centres will also be an important goal, as it will assist health providers in accessing traditional healers, and building new or partnering with existing traditional wellness centres.

“Each community is unique and should have input on how traditional wellness programming is incorporated into their communities. Communities should also be consulted as to how their traditional wellness practices are used internally and externally.”

- Community Health Director





Strategy 5: Support the Development of Protocols

First Nations communities are interested in developing protocols to guide the promotion and protection of their own traditional wellness activities. Support can be provided in this area by highlighting best practices, developing templates and guidelines as well as developing policies that communities can use to carry out this important work. For example, protocols established by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, help to inform the development of protocols for initiatives such as dedicated sacred space in hospitals, tobacco use and smudging practices.

OBJECTIVE FIVE – ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT TRADITIONAL HEALERS AND COMMUNITIES

The fifth objective is to advocate for traditional healers and communities. The FNHA and its partners and collaborators recognize the need to advocate in the key areas related to traditional wellness, from facilitating the accreditation of traditional healers to funding. The following strategies encompass areas in which advocacy for both traditional healers and First Nation communities is needed.

Strategy 1: Support Recognition for Traditional Healers

Communities have asked for recognition for traditional healers. Their important work needs to be acknowledged and recognized, and there needs to be dedicated resources to build this recognition. Policies that support traditional healers are being explored as a means to ensure that traditional healers are not only acknowledged for their important work but that they are compensated, where appropriate. This may be similar to what exists for mainstream physicians but with a focus on non-traditional compensation such as gifts, honorariums, payment for travel and other methods of having their living needs met.

Support in building accreditation for traditional healers has been recognized as a priority for some time. Efforts need to be focused on supporting communities to identify and utilize their healers. The ultimate goal is to identify means to protect the safety of communities by making certain that healers are acknowledged and accepted as healers by the community.

“It needs to be recognized that traditional healers work on top of healing as they don’t get paid or compensated right now for things like transportation. We need to start recognizing that what they do is a job.” - Community Health Director

Strategy 2: Develop and Support Healers Advisory Committee

The FNHA has developed a Traditional Healers Advisory Committee, which is made up of traditional healers, Elders, health care professionals and program leads in Traditional Wellness. It is hoped that further efforts in all of the strategies identified in this framework can be advanced in a good, and meaningful way, and that the Advisory Committee can support these efforts where needed.

Strategy 3: Advocate for Funding

Support for communities in advocating for funding to support traditional wellness initiatives is needed. Funding is needed for space, travel and other costs associated with developing and delivering traditional wellness programs and for adequately compensating practitioners. One of the ways in which this can be done is through increasing the recognition and “standing” of traditional medicines and practices within the mainstream health care system. It is expected that this will positively impact on efforts to secure funding for First Nations efforts and initiatives in traditional wellness.

Strategy 4: Support the Establishment of Healers Networks

There is a need to facilitate networking opportunities for healers through community gatherings, conferences and online forums. This can help in information sharing on best practices, and will be explored further as a strategy to support traditional wellness.

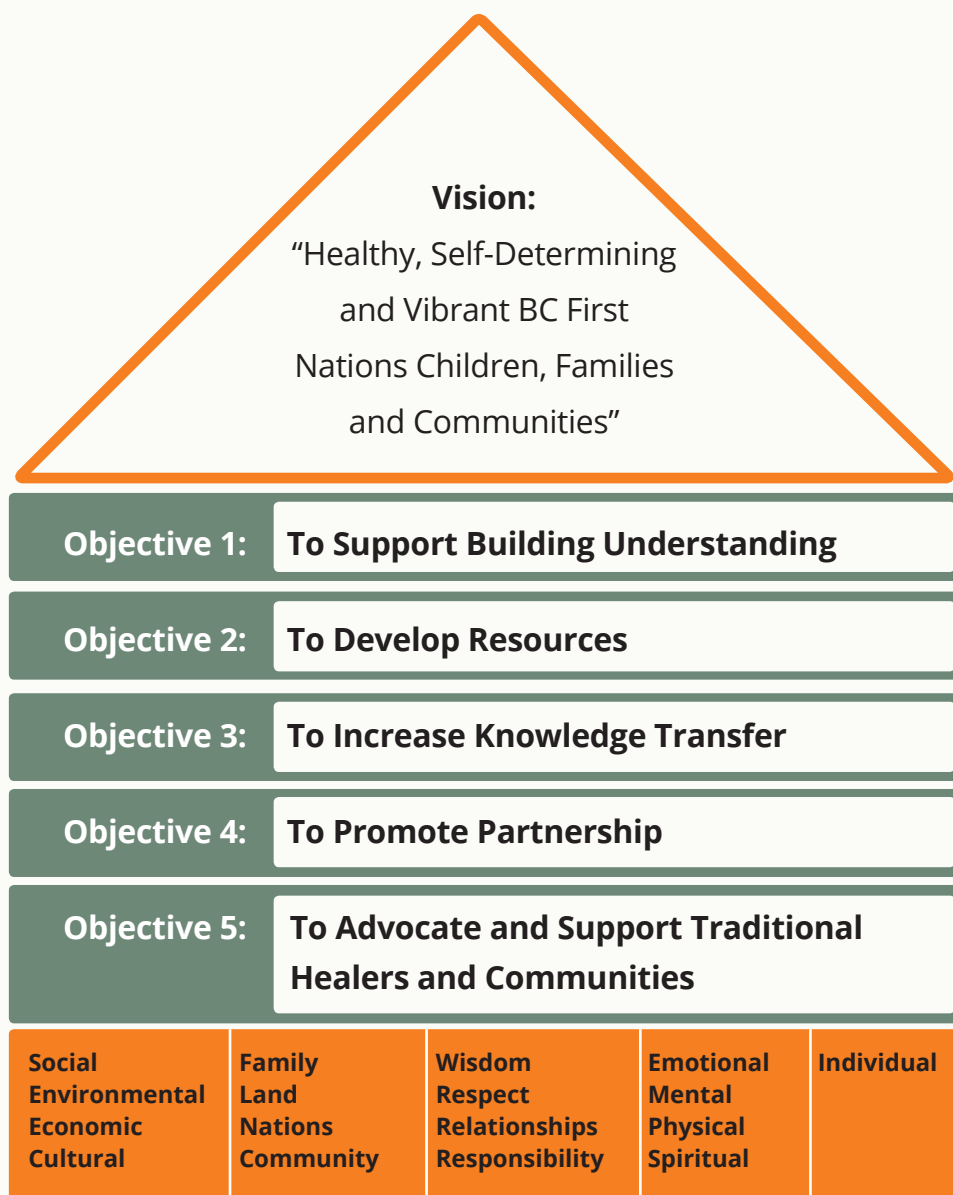
Strategy 5: Advocate for the Protection of Plants and Medicines

First Nations have expressed the need for advocacy for increased access and protection of plants and medicines. Further work in this area entails providing policy support and advocacy to support the on going efforts of communities in protecting the use of traditional plants and medicines. Documenting of best practices, including practices that First Nations have used to protect their traditional medicines and plants, would be an invaluable resource for both communities and decision makers and should be included in efforts to protect traditional plants and medicines.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE ON WELLNESS

To articulate a visual depiction and description of the FNHA's overall vision and purpose, the First Nations Perspective on Wellness was developed. The model is intended to be used as a tool for both internal and external stakeholders in order to create shared understanding of the holistic vision of wellness shared by BC First Nations.

The purpose of the diagram below is to illustrate how the FNHA's traditional wellness vision and objectives in this Strategic Framework are based on and supported by the First Nations Perspective on Wellness that guides all of the health authority's work. At the foundation of the "house" are the key components of the Perspective on Wellness. These are an integral part of supporting the rest of the house because they are the basis for implementing the suggested traditional wellness objectives and vision. Please reference Appendix C to see a diagram and description of the full First Nations Perspective on Wellness.





8

Next Steps

NEXT STEPS INCLUDE

1. Development of a toolkit for this Strategic Framework, which highlights best practices and examples to support the outlined objectives;

- Aid in implementation of this framework and putting Objectives into action. Includes development of a toolkit with examples of established traditional wellness strategies.

2. Prioritizing objectives and strategies for traditional wellness;

3. Ongoing support for the Traditional Healers Advisory Committee;

- Purpose of traditional healer's advisory committee: serves as a forum or meeting place for First Nations healers and practitioners to come together and share ideas and best practices, and to support the development, accessibility and protection of traditional medicines and practices in BC First Nations communities, facilitated by the FNHA.

4. The need for partners to identify their roles and responsibilities in supporting the objectives and strategies outlined in this document to plan and implement.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX B KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Traditional Wellness Strategic Framework Questionnaire

The First Nation Health Authority has engaged MNPLLP (MNP) to support planning research and strategy development in the area of Traditional Wellness. As part of this project, we are conducting interviews with key stakeholders, such as yourself. The questionnaire below should take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The main purpose of the questionnaire is to determine how the First Nations Health Authority can best support First Nations communities in utilizing their traditional medicines and practices.

Your participation is completely voluntary and the information you provide is for the purpose of this project only.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name:

Title/Role:

Organization:

Region:

Date:

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

1. Please describe your organization (*e.g. service offerings, objectives, mandate etc.*).

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities at this organization.

CLOSED ENDED QUESTIONS (*Skip if interview is with First Nations Health Council Members*)

3. Do you agree with the term 'Traditional Wellness'?

Yes No

Please explain:

4. Do you see Traditional Wellness being woven into the FNHA health actions strategy areas?

Yes No

5. What are your priorities regarding Traditional Wellness? Please rate each of the following areas from 1 = *not at all important* to 5 = *very important*.

a. Adequate protection for people in the community to carry out their traditional wellness practices: _____

b. The ability to access traditional medicines and practices: _____

c. Finding ways to pass on traditional knowledge to the youth: _____

d. Learning about how other Nations and communities carry out traditional medicines and practices: _____

e. Other, please explain: _____

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

6. How are BC First Nation communities benefiting from Traditional Wellness today and how would you like them to benefit in the future?

7. How do you see Traditional Wellness incorporated into health programming? How is your community/organization incorporating traditional healing? What traditional healing programs do you offer?

8. What support and resources do communities need to further improve health and healing through Traditional Wellness?

9. How could awareness and acknowledgement of traditional healing practices be increased?

A traditional healers advisory committee (Knowledge Keepers Circle) is being established with membership from Elders, traditional healers, healers' helpers and health care professionals.

10. How do you see a traditional healing advisory committee helping BC First Nation communities?

11. What membership criteria should be used to choose advisory committee members? How should this process be established (i.e. what steps should be taken for the call out of membership)?

12. What should the roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee be?

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Do you have any final comments or recommendations?

14. Do you have any suggestions regarding other stakeholders who we could speak to about Traditional Wellness?
(If yes, please provide their contact information)

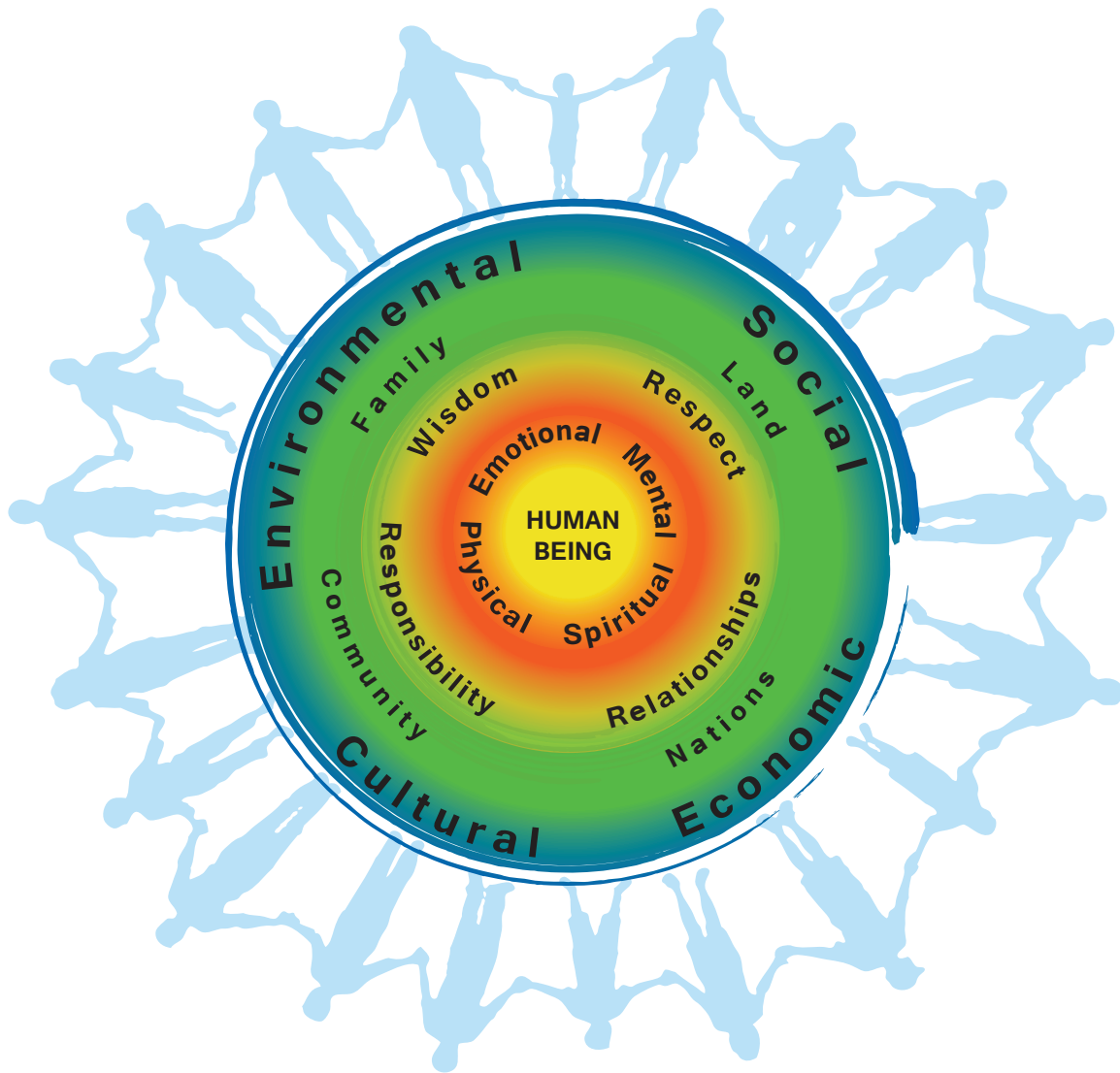
15. Are you aware of any relevant research or policy information that we should review for this project?
(If yes, please specify)

16. Lastly, if we have any further questions, may we contact you?

Yes No

(If yes) Please provide us with your contact information.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION



APPENDIX C FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE ON WELLNESS

Main purpose of the model

The First Nations Perspective on Wellness is intended to be used as a tool for both internal and external stakeholders in order to create a shared understanding of the holistic vision of wellness shared by BC First Nations. It can be the basis for planning work and/or used to create shared understanding. As well it can be used as a stand-alone visual, or used by individuals and/or communities to develop their own holistic model of wellness. This is a living document and will be modified with further community engagement.

Symbolism Meaning

This model has been derived from a holistic perspective and the medicine wheel. The basis of this model is to achieve health and wellness by taking a look at and nurturing the internal and external factors that affect wellbeing. Many of these concepts are based on traditional knowledge.

Although the model appears in layers, it is important to acknowledge that all the words in each circle are interconnected with each other, and with the components of other circles. In addition, all the circles themselves are connected and responsible for each other. Ultimately, all of these factors are important and need balance to achieve wellness.

Centre Circle (Core of wellness)

The Centre Circle represents the human being taking responsibility for their own health and wellness with a strong sense of self-identity and self esteem. Everything originates at the centre, and it is with one's self, that the journey of wellness begins. The broader context that an individual lives in (e.g. one's community and larger society) also effects decisions, actions, and choices.

Second Circle (Aspects of Wellness)

This circle illustrates the Mental, Emotional, Spiritual and Physical dimensions that are necessary for a healthy, well, and balanced life. It is critically important that there is balance between these dimensions of wellness and that they are all nurtured in tandem to create a holistic level of wellbeing, one in which all four areas are strong and healthy. Examples of wellbeing:

When looking at mental wellbeing, consider looking at career satisfaction and stress management. When looking at emotional wellbeing, it is important to nurture relationships and identify support networks. When looking at spiritual wellbeing, it is important to nurture the spirit, whether it is through culture, language, ceremonies, religion or the creative arts, such as writing, drumming, dancing or drawing. When looking at physical wellbeing, consider nutrition, physical activity, and weight management.

Third Circle (Values of Wellness)

The third circle represents the overarching values that support and uphold wellness: Respect, Wisdom, Responsibility, and Relationships. These four values need to be acknowledged when honouring yourself and others.

- **Respect:** Respect is honouring where you come from, your culture, your traditions, and yourself. It is intergenerational, and is passed on through ones community and family. It is the driving force of the community because it impacts all of our life experiences, including our relationships, our health, and our work. It is defined as consideration for and appreciation for others, but there is recognition that respect is so much more in First Nations communities – it entails a much higher standard of care, consideration, appreciation and honour and is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our people. There is an intuitive aspect to respect, because it involves knowing how to be with oneself and with others.
- **Wisdom:** Wisdom includes knowledge of language, traditions, teachings, culture, and medicine. Like respect, wisdom is passed on by our ancestors from generation to generation. It is sacred in nature and includes honouring your spirit and sharing your knowledge with others.
- **Responsibility:** Every person has responsibility to self, families, communities, and the land. Responsibility extends not just to those that we come into contact with or relate to – but also to the roles we play within our families, our work, and our experiences in the world. There is also a mutual accountability and reciprocity aspect to responsibility. Responsibility intersects with so many areas of our lives, and involves maintaining a healthy and balanced life and leadership through modelling healthy behaviour and wellness.
- **Relationships:** Relationships are what sustain us. Relationships and responsibility go hand in hand. Like responsibility, relationships involve mutual accountability and reciprocity. Relationships are about togetherness, team-building, partnerships, capacity building, nurturing, sharing, strength, and love. It is recognized that Relationships need to be maintained strongly within oneself as well as with those around you.

Fourth Circle (Relationships for Wellness)

The fourth circle depicts the people that surround us and the places where we come from: Nations, Family, Community, and Land. You, the individual, need to build healthy relationships and responsibilities within these areas, which will provide the foundation for health and wellness.

- **Land:** The land is what sustains us physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We use the land for hunting, fishing, and gathering. The land is about where you come from, including your territory and is the basis of our identity. It is more than just the earth. It includes all living and non-living things such as: water, the air, fire, food, medicines, animals, all plants and trees, the mountains, and our ancestors. We have a responsibility to care for the land and to share that knowledge with our people. Land and health are closely intertwined because land is the ultimate nurturer of people. It provides physical sustenance but also provides emotional and spiritual sustenance because it inspires you and provides beauty; it nurtures your soul.
- **Community:** Community represents the people where we live, where we come from, and where we work. There are many different ways to view community: community of place, community of knowledge, interest, experience, and values. It is important to recognize that these all have a role in our health.
- **Family:** Our family is our support base, and is where we come from and includes our languages and culture. There are many different kinds of families that surround us, including our immediate and extended families, our ancestors, those who we care for and who care for us, our support system, or traditional systems in addition to or instead of simply blood lines. It is important to recognize the diversity that exists across British Columbia, that there are different family systems that exist, e.g. matrilineal.
- **Nations:** This Nation includes the broader community outside the immediate and extended family, and community. In essence, Nation is an inclusive term representing the various Nations that comprise one's world.

Fifth Circle (Determinants of Wellness)

The fifth circle depicts the Social, Cultural, Economic and Environmental determinants of our health and well-being. These determinants affect our health and wellbeing and it is our responsibility as an individual and as a collective to ensure these determinants are available and protected.

- **Social:** Social determinants, such as security, housing, food, prevention, promotion, education, health awareness, outreach supports, are all critical aspects of our health and well-being.
- **Environmental:** The environment, including the land, air, water, food, housing, and other resources, need to be taken care of and considered in order to sustain healthy children, families and communities. Safety and emergency preparedness are critical components.
- **Cultural:** Culture means language, spirituality, ceremonies, traditional foods and medicines, teachings, and a sense of belonging.
- **Economic:** Economic means resources, which we have a responsibility to manage, share, and sustain for future generations. There is a need to create balance in how we use our resources and good leadership to help us create this balance. Economic can include our employment and our workplace health.

Outer Circle

The people in the outer circle represent the vision of strong children, families, Elders, and people in communities. The people are holding hands to demonstrate togetherness, respect and relationships, which in the words of a respected BC Elder can be stated as “one heart, one mind.” Children are included in the drawing because they are the heart of our communities and they connect us to who we are and to our health.

Colours

The colours of the sunset were chosen specifically to reflect the whole spectrum of sunlight, as well as to depict the sun’s rotation around the earth, which governs the cycles of life in BC First Nations communities.

Background

This First Nations Perspective on Wellness was developed as a DRAFT concept by the FNHA Traditional Wellness Working Group and FNHA staff and advisors which included: Dr Georgia Kyba (Naturopathic Physician Advisory); Susan Timmerman (HR); Haike Muller (Health Actions); Trish Osterberg (FNHC Secretariat); Allison Twiss (Health Actions); Anita Finney (Corporate Services); Jean Allbeury (Health Actions); Karlene Harvey (Communications).

The model was presented at Gathering Wisdom V in which participants were encouraged to provide feedback. This feedback was incorporated into the final model and description in collaboration with the following FNHA staff and advisors: Dr Georgia Kyba (Traditional Wellness Advisor); Dr Sarah Williams (Senior Advisor); Lloy Wylie (Senior Advisor); Haike Muller (Health Actions); and Davis McKenzie (Communications).

Development of this vision began at the July 2011 staff retreat when the Traditional Wellness Working Group presented a conceptual model of wellness for the organization. Since the very beginning, the FNHA has recognized the need to create a visual depiction of wellness along with a description of how this model aligns with the overall vision of the FNHA, which is: Healthy, Self-Determining and Vibrant BC First Nations Children, Families and Communities. There is a need to solidify a common understanding of wellness, as this will more clearly define how the FNHA will carry out this vision for internal and external stakeholders.

At the July 2011 staff retreat, FNHA staff had an opportunity to consider what wellness means to them. A draft conceptual visual was presented with the understanding that the visual was intended to serve as a template for discussion, not as a final product or depiction, and that it is meant to be a living document that may evolve over time as the organization transitions and incorporates more fully the perspectives of communities.

In November, 2011, a call was put out to staff asking if they would like to be involved in development of the vision of wellness. In December, 2011, staff met to begin initial discussions on the vision. These discussions were in essence a brainstorming session that focused on the main aspects of wellness and the values representing wellness. The result of this discussion was a circle with several layers, which included an inner circle depicting the main aspects of wellness – emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical. A second meeting was held in February 2012 to finalize the visual representation and to describe the values and their relevance to the overall vision. The model was presented at Gathering Wisdom V for community feedback. Community feedback was incorporated June 2012 and the final visual representation and description was completed in September 2012.

The end result is the visual model and description, which can serve as a starting point for discussion with and potential use by the FNHA staff and First Nations communities on what they conceptualize as a vision of wellness for the FNHA.



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Traditional Wellness Strategic Framework

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