

Spirit

SHARING FIRST NATIONS
HEALTH AND WELLNESS



THE MEN'S ISSUE

The Moosehide Campaign / Wunuxtsin Warrior Spirit
Step Up Challenge / Winter Wellness

Name a Male Role Model in Your Life and Tell Us Why They are Your Health Hero?



Tsilhqot'in Cowboy Clarence Petal, from the Tl'etinqox Government (Anaham). Nominated by Daana Gilpin.

Clarence was born August 12, 1936 to parents Late Henry Petal, and Late Edith Petal. His siblings are Brother Tony Petal, Sister Emma Mack (Petal), and brother Late Dave Petal.

He is a fluent speaker in the Tsilhqot'in Language. He has knowledge of our Tsilhqot'in traditional rituals, plants, hunting and fishing areas. He is also a carpenter, farrier, and mechanic. Clarence is alcohol and drug free, and quit smoking many years ago.

Clarence is 79 years old, and currently a full time working Tsilhqot'in cowboy. Clarence owns and operates his own ranch (Cow/Calf) on the Anaham Reserve. He is married to late Julianna Petal (Gilpin). Together they have built their homestead, and raised a family. He has a son Darell Petal, and helped raise Fred Gilpin, Donny Gilpin, Daana Gilpin and Danielle Gilpin. He is a loving grandfather to six grandchildren. Clarence is a

great Father, Grandfather, Uncle, Brother, cousin, friend and role model to many.

Not only has Clarence won many events in the competitive team roping & calf roping events through his lifetime, he has also received a BC Cowboy Hall of Fame Competitive & Working Cowboy Award through the City Of Williams Lake's Museum.



Matt Pasco, Nlaka'pamux Nation

Paul Dudgeon had a strong presence in my life as a student and later a professor at the University of Regina and First Nations University. He had a strong academic background and significant influence with government and industry. He felt strongly about health and the need for robust academic programs for Indigenous people. His influence on me was profound as he redirected me from law to an MBA. This opened up a world to many other strong strategic thinkers and problem solvers. My parents were also strong role models as mentors in rodeo and leadership and providing me with a grounded childhood.

Csetkwe (Megan Fortier) - Syilx/Secwepemc Nation has two Male Role Models in her life:

My uncle Bruce Manuel who is my godfather is my role model because he has always been there for me and has been a consistent man in my life. My uncle Bruce is strong in culture and is a survivor of hardships and came through with strong grounding in our culture and continued to inspire importance of education and culture. He is a reminder to me of who I am and reminds me of my value as a woman and encourages me with his strength, provides me with a feeling of safety and comfort in knowing he is there for me no matter what.

My Grandfather Tom Mollet is also a role model to me, I'm grateful for the teachings I received in witnessing the love he and my grandmother had in their life together. He supported my grandmother in all of her endeavors and values work ethic and shows unconditional love in all he does. ■





First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

SPIRIT MAGAZINE

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Please send story ideas, articles, and photographs to: Spiritmagazine@fnha.ca

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ON THE COVER: First Nations men gather on the steps of the BC Legislature to stand against violence towards women as part of the Moosehide Campaign. Read more on pg 30. Photo: Greg Forsberg

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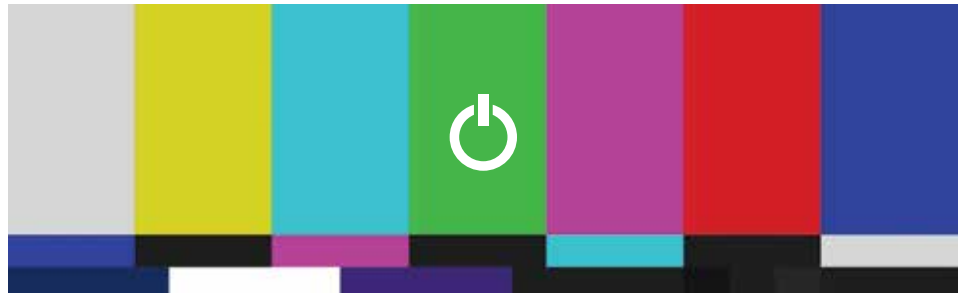
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TECH WELLNESS

Limit Your Screen Time!

JOHN PANTHERBONE



Try this. Sitting down, raise your arms in the air and stretch. Now place your hands and arms in your lap and clasp your hands. Pay attention to which thumb is on top. Now stretch again and put your hands and arms down again, only put your other thumb on top. Feels strange, doesn't it?

A simple exercise like this shows how quickly we become so accustomed to everyday habits that we don't even notice because they *feel comfortable*. Many would say we have become so accustomed to screens that we're almost fused to them in our everyday life and, yes, don't even notice it. For sure it's a double-edged sword - thanks to technology we have become incredibly connected and are able to work from almost anywhere. We're able to read news updates from across the world as soon as events happen - and that's sure faster than any moccasin telegram I've ever heard of. We sleep with our phones by our pillows or night stands, and for some, it's the first thing and last thing we check morning and night.

Computer screens, phones, digital music players, secondary screens for movies, television, and wireless waves - we are surrounded by technology. With all this connectedness, it's really important to take a step back and limit our screen time to have some downtime. Here are some tips for taking a break from the screen glow:

- **Set attainable goals for limiting time** - See if you can go a whole weekend with your phone off or in do not disturb mode. Notice how disconnected you really felt compared to how disconnected you thought you'd feel.

- **Pomodoro technique** - Work for 25 minutes, take a break for 5. This simple technique is very useful for increasing productivity.
- **Walks** - The headphone jack on my phone broke recently. Now, instead of listening to music or podcasts on my walks, I hear suburban nature sounds, and enjoy the brisk air and a real chance to connect with the outdoor environment. Take the stairs or walk instead!
- **Notepad** - A simple paper notepad for notes or ideas can be quicker and more personal than jotting down notes in a notepad app.
- **Use the blocking mode (aka do not disturb mode) in Android or iOS** - Useful feature for limiting the desire to constantly check that notification. You can still use the phone for normal functionality like receiving calls and texts. Or you can completely silence it. Schedule it to go on after work or for a certain time period. It's nice to disconnect for a bit (and reconnect to a bunch of notifications - it's like everyone missed you!)

The most important thing is just to take a step back and really *pay attention* to how much you're connecting to an electronic screen. Then pay attention to how good it feels to disconnect and how productive you can be away from a screen. The most memorable moments in your life are going to be the times you get outdoors, take off on a trip, connect (in real life) with friends and spend time with family - not the time you spent reading news feeds on your couch! ■

Welcome

to the **Men's** Issue of Spirit Magazine

In this issue of Spirit we celebrate men. From matriarchal to patriarchal societies the roles of men vary, but considering men as warriors and protectors for women and children in a traditional sense is as important today as it ever has been. Sisters, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and all women need men to stand up and act against violence and lead as healthy role models. In February thousands of men across the province stood together to address violence against First Nations and Aboriginal women and girls as part of the Moosehide Campaign on page 30.

Too often men are the last to ask for support when they need it. The expectation to be 'macho', to be a 'tough-guy', not show any emotion nor ask for help is not only a part of a collective history, but also a colonial legacy. Men need help and support. They have feelings and need to be given safe places and space to share their emotions with others. On page 10 and 33 we feature a number of resources with more available on our website at www.fnha.ca. Encourage the men in your life to seek support and share what's on their mind when they need to. Sometimes an open door, a friendly check-in, or a phone call is all that has to be done to provide a safe space to share how we feel. Other times, more support is needed. Help is available, so please reach out to your local health provider for yourself or your family members.

In this Men's issue of Spirit we explore the traditional and contemporary roles of men in First Nations communities and share a number of wellness tips, success stories, personal diaries, role models, and much more. Other features in this issue include the Interior Nations Traditional Foods Challenge, Nutrition and Men, and 7 Days at a Northern Warrior Camp. We also share the many healthy activities that took place in community during the FNHA Winter Wellness Challenge, and the FNHC's Beefy Chiefs 2.0 Step Up Challenge. Visit us online at www.fnha.ca to find out more information and join the online Step Up community. Especially those who are already a part of the challenge but haven't jumped online, the Step Up "First Nations Fit" forum is meeting place for First Nations across the province who are a part of Step Up and sharing their stories of staying motivated and active.

Sharing your stories is what this magazine is about. As you will read in the winter wellness article and often in Spirit, communities are leading the change towards health by self-determining their personal wellness at the centre of the circle. From the No Energy Drink and Pop Challenge, to Geocaching, traditional dancing, and bringing together Elders and Children for holiday feasts and tears of joy, this is health and wellness in action.

A number of special contributors shared their stories to make this issue a success including T'exelc author Willie Sellars on his book *Dipnetting with Dad*, First Nations Health Council representatives Wunuxtin Chief Wayne Christian from the Splatsin Nation and Vancouver Coastal's Ernest Armann with his personal Step Up diary, as well as other healthy stories from each region. We thank all contributors to each issue and are always on the hunt to share stories of First Nations wellness. Get in touch with our editorial team to share your images or words at spiritmagazine@fnha.ca.

We hope you enjoy the Men's issue of Spirit and stay tuned for the Women's issue coming out this fall!



Calling All Nurses!

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The First Nations Health Authority is hiring Remote Certified Nurses and Registered Nurses for Nursing Station and Health Centre positions in First Nations communities in BC.

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For more information on nursing job opportunities with the First Nations Health Authority in BC, please visit: www.fnha.ca/nursing.



www.fnha.ca/nursing

Scan here or visit the above link for FNHA Nursing videos to see what life is like working with First Nations communities in BC!



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Nutrition and Men

GERRY KASTEN, FNHA HEALTHY LIVING TEAM

When I talk to men about food and healthy eating, one of two things usually happens: They tell me to talk to their wife, because she does the cooking, or they actually know quite a bit about how to choose healthy food.

Of course, knowing about something doesn't mean you're actually doing it. People know that they should eat more fruits and vegetables, and that too much junk food is bad for them. But actually doing it? Making healthy eating part of your life is a very different matter. So what can men do to choose healthier foods? What changes can they make to eat foods that will lower their risk for disease?

The first thing I'd suggest is to think about what "men's food" or "guy food" is and what it's not. It starts really young, when boys are told to "Eat your vegetables to grow up big and strong!" Then later on, boys get the message from other boys that they need to build big muscles to get girls. So they start to eat a lot of meat and avoid "rabbit food" in order to bulk up, and eat less healthy foods to be different from girls.

So the question becomes not how to help men eat better, but how to change the stories they're told that stop them from making healthy choices (or the stories they tell themselves). Here are a few ideas to start:

- Try eating all that "healthy food" that your wife/partner/parents talk about! Eating those foods doesn't make anyone less of a man. In fact, they make you more of a man – stronger, healthier and likely to live longer, to play with your grandkids and hunt with your sons and daughters.

Have you seen **Dr. Evan Adams**, FNHA Chief Medical Officer, on YouTube talking about bannock? **Search for: Dr. E Online Myth Busting Bannock!**



Video Still taken from Dr. Evan Adams 'Myth Busting Bannock!'

"The question becomes not how to help men eat better, but how to change the stories they're told that stop them from making healthy choices."

- Eat all kinds of traditional foods: berries, roots, fish and game animals - they're all great choices, and a variety of studies have shown that when First Nations people eat more traditional foods, they're healthier and less prone to conditions like diabetes (or better able to live with their diabetes). "Indian Tacos" with moose meat and tomato sauce (maybe even with some veggies in the sauce?) are a lean way to get more taste. When making your bannock, tried whole wheat or

gluten-free bannock over refined white wheat.

- Remember that eating vegetarian food doesn't mean being a "Bad Hunter" - there are lots of tasty vegetables that people gobble up at potlucks. Eating bean dishes a few times a month can really make a difference to your health. And local foods like a fistful of hazelnuts, or maybe hazelnut butter on whole grain toast, are great as a tasty snack.

And lastly, just a quick word about erectile dysfunction: Remember that your heart is not your only organ for which good blood flow is important! Healthy eating (again, foods like fish and nuts) reduces your risk for blockages, maximizes blood flow and can help you, as they say, last for a longer time in many ways! ■

If you're interested in reading more about nutrition for men, the Prostate Centre at the BC Cancer Agency has some great summary sheets. You can download them individually, or get them as a whole set. Visit: www.prostatecentre.com and search - Nutrition.

From Hunt to Harvest:

Safe Meat Handling Techniques

SUZANNE JOHNSON, FNHA HEALTHY LIVING TEAM

"My mom would be so mad at us if we brought home dirty meat!" These are some words I can recall from a traditional hunter talking about the importance of cleanliness while handling meat. He knew how critical it is to ensure that meat never touches the ground, as dirt will contaminate it. If this happens, you'll have to cut large chunks of meat away to avoid contamination - which is a waste of good food and also hard on knives.

It's worth the time and effort to handle meat safely. Hunting is a central part of our traditions and culture and it brings us the gift of delicious and nutritious food for our families and communities.

There are three key words to remember in safe meat handling: clean, cool and dry.

Before the Hunt

Be prepared by having all of the necessary equipment ready and cleaned.

During the Hunt

Aside from being able to make a clean shot, be sure that you know how to properly skin and clean or field dress the carcass before attempting any shot.

Field Dressing

Get to the animal as quickly as possible to begin the gutting, skinning and field dressing. Make sure that you have been shown how to do this several times before attempting it yourself. Ensure that equipment is clean and you have tarps to keep the meat off the ground.

Cooling

Cooling wild game as quickly as possible will slow the growth of bacteria and keep meat from spoiling. Ideally, this happens by taking the carcass to a cooler on the day of the kill. Skinning the animal as soon as possible helps with cooling, as does providing air circulation and keeping the meat out of direct sun light. Air circulation can be facilitated by hanging the meat or placing it on logs and propping the carcass open.

Transport

Make sure the carcass is clean and dry before transport. Keep it cool, out of direct sunlight and allow for good air circulation. Keep the meat clean during transport but avoid plastic bags and tarps if the meat is not completely chilled.

Aging

Aged meat is often more tender and flavourful. But if it's not done correctly, aging will result in spoiled meat that could sicken your family. There are several steps involved in doing this correctly so do your research. Some of the links below may be helpful.

Care in the Kitchen

Game meat (large animals) will keep safely in the fridge for five days and for up to 12 months in the freezer. Thawing frozen meat is best done in the fridge. See HealthLink BC File #59 Food Safety: Easy Steps to Make Food Safe for more details on this. Game meat should be well cooked as freezing or microwaving will not destroy all of the bacteria that might be present and can cause a food illness. Ideally, cook meat until the juices run clear and a minimum internal temperature of 165 F is reached.

Enjoy your meat and give thanks – and remember that part of our tradition of taking the gift of an animal is respecting it after it's killed to provide us with some of the best nourishment possible.

Links for further information on safe meat handling:

- http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/meat_safety/
- www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/diseases/safefieldddressing.htm
- www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.meatcare
- www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile59a.stm ■

7 Days at **Warrior Camp**

SEAN TAYLOR, FNHA eHEALTH TEAM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN TAYLOR AND PRESTON GUNO



It's the crack of dawn at the north end of Takla Lake. We crawl from our tents to see fog burning off the lake, revealing trees on the shoreline that are just beginning to show their fall colours. We're far away from the city and there are no cell phones in sight – we will be living without them for the next seven days. Before we have time to even start thinking about eating breakfast, we're running down a logging road in our hiking boots for our daily 7km run. When we return to camp, we stand in a line and, one by one, all eleven of us take a spirit bath in the lake with guidance from one of Takla's Hereditary Chiefs. By now we're all ravenously hungry so I start to boil some water to make oatmeal for everyone. Just as the water comes to a boil, I'm told that there will be no breakfast this morning. In preparation for our first sweat lodge ceremony, we will all be fasting until it starts. Warrior Camp has officially begun.

Warrior Camp is the initiative of a number of dedicated volunteers with help from the Northern First Nations Child and Family Services Council and now FNHA Northern Regional Office, directed at youth in need of support.

The camps were originally conceived to provide young men with an opportunity to experience a cultural Rite of Passage, and also to empower them to understand and take action to end violence against women and children. They provide direct access to the culture, teachings and ceremonies of the Nation's whose territory the camp is hosted on, and also provide the youth with some of the skills necessary to spend time out on the land safely. Throughout

their time at camp, youth are continuously encouraged to push themselves beyond their limits, which becomes a metaphor for persevering through the challenges they face in life.

Preston Guno, a member of Nisga'a Nation and Executive Coordinator of the Northern First Nations Child and Family Services Council, has been organizing these Warrior Camps for a number of years.

"The Warrior Camp concept was developed to provide youth with the opportunity to relearn important teachings of being a Warrior, and to unlearn the negative stereotypes that society continually promotes through media," Preston explained.

"The Warrior Camps have made a significant difference in the lives of many youth over the years as it gives them an important foundation of self-confidence, inner strength and focus, all of which are required to succeed in life."

When it comes to the structure of the camps, each day's activities were highly dependent on variables such as the weather, the mood and energy level of the Young Warriors, as well as events that no one could plan for – such as a successful hunt or two. Basic activities for each day consisted of an early morning run, daily affirmations led by a youth mentor, a spirit bath in the body of water we were closest to, and sharing of cultural teachings.

On our first full day in camp, the Hereditary Chief arranged to lead a sweat lodge ceremony for all staff and Young Warriors to officially start the camp in a good way, and also to prepare for our first hunting trip the following day. Part of the preparation for our first sweat included fasting for the whole day, despite the fact that we had gone for a 7km run in the morning and also needed to pack wood to the lodge in order to make the fire to heat the rocks for the sweat. The purpose of the sweat was purification, and consisted of four rounds of prayers: Negativity, Women and Healing, New Beginnings, and, Men and Strength. By all accounts it was a challenge on many levels to endure the full length of the ceremony, but once it was completed and we had gone for a swim in the lake to cool off, everyone felt a sense of renewal.

The day after our first sweat, we drove about an hour away from our base camp into the mountains to hunt goat – a notoriously difficult animal to track. After hiking for only about half an hour, the Chief spotted one on a rocky hill in front of us. Within minutes, the goat had been shot. As we started to walk towards it as a group, the Chief was marveling at our luck and turned to us and said, “that’s why I pray in the sweat lodge before I hunt!” He then taught us the process of ceremoniously and respectfully showing our thanks to the animal and the Creator for the gift, as well as preparing the meat and hide from the goat to be packed back down the mountain by the Young Warriors.

Through the rest of the camp we shared many other challenging and rewarding experiences as a group. We walked for hours along the marshy trap line that the Chief’s family had walked each day when he was growing up. We had open and deep discussions during a Talking Circle, we helped the Chief’s brother bring a moose he had hunted back to camp, and we shared many meals together.

On the last night, we had a closing sweat to mark the end of camp and to send us back to our homes and families in a good way. Before the final sweat, the Young Warriors set intentions for what they wanted to change in their lives when they left camp, and also received guidance from the Chief



“The Warrior Camp concept was developed to provide youth with the opportunity to re-learn important teachings of being a Warrior, and to unlearn the negative stereotypes that society continually promotes through media.”



about how to achieve their goals. At that final sweat, the sense of the changes that had taken place in each Young Warrior in the past seven days were visible. Where the Warriors had struggled in the first sweat to describe the grief they felt from a parent who had passed on, they now spoke with strength; where the Warriors had struggled to describe the path they’d take in life, they now spoke with confidence and a new perspective.

As we drove back to the city from the camp, it was the last day of fall. While we were away the leaves on the trees had been transformed, and so had we. ■

Health and Wellness Resources for Men

How can we better support men and boys?

FNHA HEALTHY LIVING TEAM



Men can sometimes be the last to ask for help when they need it. Below are some tips to encourage community support for men.

AS FRIENDS AND FAMILY

- Reinforce how seeking care for mental health challenges is a sign of strength
- Emphasize that there is no wellness without mental wellness
- Model positive behaviors, such as self-care (e.g. taking care of ourselves during times of stress through calming techniques, such as deep breathing, exercise, healthy eating, and talking about our problems with others)
- Frame the conversation around our mental health as “taking care of ourselves”
- Support positive mental health behaviors, such as someone making time to see an Elder or counsellor, just as much as you would support a positive physical health change, such as exercise
- Validate people when they express their emotions. Instead of saying “You’ll feel better tomorrow”, try “That sounds really tough. I’m here for you”
- Recognize friends, family, and community members who are on their journey towards mental wellness by saying something like “George really cares about his mental

health – that takes a lot of courage and strength. I’m so happy for him”

- Avoid using stigmatizing language, such as “crazy”, and use person-centered language instead, such as “people living with mental health challenges”

AS A COMMUNITY

- Continue to celebrate cultural events, connect Elders with youth, and pass on traditional skills and language to younger generations
- Reinforce mental wellness through traditional teachings
- Meet as a community to feast and celebrate mental wellness champions in your community
- Hold a regular drop-in talking circle or information session on mental wellness
- Meet with groups of men and boys to identify what keeps them well, what could be done to support their mental wellness, and what could improve access to services
- Develop programming tailored to the needs of men and boys in your community

AS HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

- Make every encounter with a patient an opportunity to talk about mental wellness
- Ask, “How are you dealing with your stress?”
- Ask, “Who are the supportive people in your life who you turn to when you are stressed?”
- Ask, “Would you like to talk to an Elder or traditional healer?”
- Ensure a mental health assessment is part of your patient intake process or regular check-up
- Become familiar with the available mental health and substance use supports in your community and surrounding area for referral purposes
- Place mental health pamphlets and other educational materials around the clinic, office, or waiting room
- Take additional training in mental health and substance use issues, such as Health Compass, trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and the Indigenous Cultural Competency Training in Mental Health

“Fatherhood is Forever”

“Fatherhood is Forever” discusses why fathers are important, learning how to be a father, and some of the different approaches that can work in different situations. The booklet recognizes that many men grew up without an involved father and encourages: “The best thing about life is that it takes place in the moment. Every moment, you can choose a path of healing. Every step that you take in your own healing is a step towards becoming a better father.” Many ways are discussed that men can be confident and effective fathers, including providing a safe place for their children to grow, showing affection, honouring the children’s mother, and being a role model to build trust and respect. Many ideas are presented of how fathers can be involved at different stages of their child’s life, including caring for children, teaching, playing, and sharing family traditions.

Skak Ha Dees T’aih (Children are Precious)

Based out of Carrier Sekani Family Services, this project worked with Elders and young fathers to determine the role of men in child rearing. The project discussed challenges and obstacles that new fathers face, which can result in anxiety or violence. The research resulted in a guide that can be used to prepare young fathers for their role as parents.

Nak’azdli Young Warriors Program

The *Young Warriors Program* is a culture and leadership training program for youth starting in the program between the ages of 10 to 12 years of age at the start. Participants have the opportunity to experience a host of cultural activities throughout the program, including hunting, preparing traditional foods, making drums, and learning the cultural roles of men and boys.

Northern Health - Men’s Health

The *Men’s Health program* was created by Northern Health in response to the Chief Medical Health Officer’s November 2010 report “Where are the Men?”

Northern Health has a number of great resources for men including the MANuel available at: men.northernhealth.ca. The FNHA and Northern Health are collaborating on an updated MANual specifically for First Nations and Aboriginal men, keep an eye out for the launch! ■

Step Up Diary Ernest Armann

Vancouver Coastal First Nations Health Council Representative

The Beefy Chiefs Step Up Challenge has taught me a few key lessons since I joined this past July. I had to address mobility challenges that hindered my ability to keep active over the past few years. It was nothing too serious, but enough pain and suffering to allow me to embrace a sedentary way of life. Apparently I am a workaholic and have focused myself on work that involves a lot of sitting and traveling.

The Step Up Challenge has helped me with the motivation I needed. I figured I was beefy enough to qualify for the challenge and set out on the fit bit path. It took a good seven days to break through the pain of walking every day. The targets pre-set in the fit bit helped me focus on meeting the goals of ten thousand steps. I had to get help from my doctor, naturopath and massage therapists to help address the pain, flexibility and mental challenges I was facing as I continued down the path.

Once I started to consistently hit and exceed the daily step counts I challenged myself to do better and keep up with the cool kids in the Beefy Chiefs Step Up group. I soon found that I could not physically keep this up as I started to have injuries that took longer to heal up and started to become a little miserable. I was motivated to keep up the pace and soon bought new foot wear and started to take medications for swelling that did not really help.

After several visits to my massage therapist/naturopath, he helped me understand the importance of diet as a lot of foods were contributing to inflammation in my body and I had to make adjustments. As I started to feel better and my strength improved I was able to increase my time spent on walking. I soon had to deal with the amount of time needed to be able to do the walking, and keep up with work and life in general.



I realized that my leisure time was eroding away, my “negative time” of doing nothing productive was affected. I adjusted my routine to allow for walking more often during the day and that helped me perform better at work. I am able to deal with and think things through on a walk, where before I would carry that crap home and try to lose it with my negative time.

After all this, I have learned more about myself and how to create balance in my life by making changes for physical, mind, body and spirit. I now have very little negative time of doing nothing and have a reasonable amount of time for walking which helps me do more work and still have time for family.

Join the ‘First Nations Fit’ online Step Up community in Activity Groups on fitbit.com and read more diaries on the First Nations Health Council website: www.fnhc.ca

Finding Our **Warrior Spirit**

An interview with Wunuxtsin

MARY McCULLOUGH, FNHA INTERIOR TEAM

Since being elected over forty years ago as student council president at Armstrong Junior and Senior Secondary, Kukpi7 (Chief) Wayne Christian (Wunuxtsin) has never stopped advocating for his community. After high school, he moved on to a position with the Native Student Union at the University of Victoria in 1973. Kukpi7 Christian began what has been a longstanding political career in 1977 when he was elected to council of his Nation at the age of 23 and two years later elected as Chief, serving for eight years. After working as Executive Director of the Round Lake Treatment Center and then with Community Health Associates, Kukpi7 Christian returned to politics when he was again elected as Chief of the Splitsin Nation.

Today, Wunuxtsin, meaning “big voice that speaks the truth”, is serving his fifth consecutive two-year term and has been a leader for his people for over thirty years. In his role as the chair of the Secwepemc Health Caucus and one of three Interior representatives on the First Nations Health Council, Kukpi7 Christian is a leader and role model who has had an impact not only within his community and his Nation, but across the country.

Kukpi7 Christian's busy lifestyle requires a great deal of mental focus which leaves little time for the balance provided by physical activity. “If you have to talk as a leader, provide direction, impress upon or inspire people, it takes a lot of effort, it takes a lot out of me,” says Kukpi7 Christian. He strives to keep his life in balance through spiritual practices, physical activity such as hunting, walking, fasts and ceremonies, and making healthy food choices. He also pays close attention when he's on the road, which is often. “The biggest struggle I have is keeping continuity. It's about creating an ebb and flow schedule: don't go overboard, but just keep moving.”



Kukpi7 (Chief) Wayne Christian (Wunuxtsin) speaking at Gathering Wisom VI.

“We owe it to our grandsons, our great grandsons and those not yet born, to carve out a new destiny as men in this world. We have to take our rightful place as providers, protectors, and nurturers of our communities again.”

Kukpi7 Christian credits his personal wellness in large part to his seven children and nineteen grandchildren. “Wellness is about our kwsélkten (relations),” he says. “My wellness is important for my children and grandchildren. We are here for a greater purpose in life, it isn't just about us, but about those around us and those yet to come.”

Deeply rooted in his culture and its teachings, Kukpi7 Christian advocates for men's wellness, advising men to “step up and take their rightful place.”

“Men do not play the same prominent role that they used to in our society. Traditionally, men were protectors and providers,” he says, noting a change in societal roles means men's self-esteem needs support from a young age. “A lot of pain that they (men) carry is physical pain, but it starts with emotional pain. They bury that pain and so it gets carried in their muscles, body memory, emotions and spirit.”

Kukpi7 Christian believes there is a strong connection between mind, body and spirit, and that health lies in being aware of that connection. “Wellness is about knowing yourself well enough to understand what is going on for you, where it is coming from and what to do about it.”

Despite growing up without a father or grandfather, Kukpi7 Christian was able to learn about fatherhood by taking on the responsibility himself. “I didn't have a father, but that didn't stop me from becoming a father. I didn't have a grandfather but that didn't stop me from becoming a grandfather and learning our language, our traditions, our songs and our teachings.”

Traditionally, Kukpi7 Christian notes, young men were taught what they needed to know through discipline and nurturing. "If we want to teach our young men to be providers, we first have to provide that foundational work." We also need to teach our young people that it is okay to show affection, he says. "My own grandsons run up to me and wrap their arms around me and tell me that they love me - this is wellness for me."

The traditional role of our men was as a warrior, Kukpi7 Christian says, protecting our Elders, children and families. "We need to re-instill our warrior spirit by standing up and fighting in such a way that we provide and protect families and nurture our communities back to the way that they were before contact."

Kukpi7 Christian's advice for First Nations men is to live, love and laugh. "Men have to learn how to live their lives, not for others, but for themselves, and live it so that they truly know who they are." He also advises men to learn how to love themselves and laugh, "Laughter is important, it is healing."

As for moving forward supporting men in their journey to wellness, Kukpi7 Christian advises that we challenge our men to step up to be providers and to be in the roles that we were once in, "no excuses." Additionally, he recommends that every community or Nation develop a healing strategy that is comprised of both traditional and modern wellness practices and supported with investment. He advises advocating for men's healing and to start transforming our services from a sickness system to a wellness system that supports men's health. "We owe it to our grandsons, our great grandsons and those not yet born, to carve out a new destiny as men in this world. We have to take our rightful place as providers, protectors, and nurturers of our communities again." ■

KDC Health Shares Holistic Wellness at Winter Challenge Event

On the traditional territories of the We Wai Kai Nation, Kwakiutl District Health Council held a Winter Wellness Challenge Event on December 9. The event had a number of activities that related to each of the First Nations Health Authority's Wellness Streams. These events ranged from cedar weaving to family fit classes, tobacco speakers and a healthy traditional-style meal. All of these classes were open to children, parents, families and Elders.

Organizers of the event knew that the timing would be difficult due to other community priorities like Christmas concerts, shopping, parties and other meetings. An enthusiastic effort was made to make sure that the event was attended well and in the end over 70 people attended. Those that did attend enjoyed the event immensely with many choosing to stay for the entire day.



We Wai Kai Nation members getting their winter wellness steps in!



An event such as the one held by KDC Health offer communities the chance to see and do things that they would not normally do. It benefits the individual as well as the community's wellness. ■

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Babine Lake Drummers and Dancers

Keeping Our Culture Alive

SUBMITTED BY THE BABINE LAKE DRUMMERS AND DANCERS

Babine Lake Drummers and Dancers have been performing for 2 years now the membership of this culturally enhanced group is 130 dancers and singers combined. We have been performing all across BC at events such as cultural gatherings and grand openings and events that are related to promote healthier active living and have also performed at events that are well known for cross-cultural performances.

The main objective of this group is to take pride in our culture and to share our skills and our goals with other communities and organizations while encouraging healthier active living for everyone. We take pride in our culture and exhibit it through song and dance. We practice every week and our Hereditary Chiefs provide the skills and knowledge through lessons and stories of our culture. Our Dancers are being enhanced with our tradition and our Elders are of sound mind knowing that our future will consist of leaders that know our culture and our tradition.

One of the group's biggest goals is to emphasize our language and the significance that this plays in keeping our culture alive. When we travel for performance we are representing our Nation and we do so with great pride. Our traditional system consists of 4 clans which include Caribou, Bear, Beaver and Frog there also are sub clans within these clans that we go into sharing in our presentations.

The songs that we sing and dance to have a story with them and this is history that is passed on since time immemorial. Our history is passed through oral teachings and our songs are one way that we use to remember these events. Our performances consist of our Clan entrance songs that are sung at potlatch ceremonies and we also have clan feather songs that are shared through the event. The group also shares on the significance of the dancing that is given through the songs.

Our goal is to share a positive entertaining experience through our tradition while pro-



moting healthier active living and creating new relationships with other cultures and organizations in the process.

Our performance has been proven to not only entertain the crowds of many different sizes but it has also shown that there is great interest in the ability of our Hereditary Chiefs and our leaders to be represented with such talent and diversity. We have been enjoying this venture of sharing our culture with others for many diverse purposes and we are looking forward to keeping this initiative alive.

The ages of the participants can range at times from a 1 year old all the way to 94 years of age. As a team the performance is spectacular and the response is always positive. Our group has been meeting every week to practice and we do this not only to strengthen our performance but we also want to ensure that our bond as a family and group remains. There are many struggles in our community and when we

see that our members are struggling we always utilize our group to rely on each other for support and encouragement.

We as a group put an emphasis on not only a healthy active lifestyle but we also stress that education is key. We are always encouraging our group to participate in developments in and around our community to ensure that we are moving forward with every opportunity to be a part of the growth and change towards our futures.

Culture is key in ways of living for our people and being inclusive of the emphasis to promote a culturally based approach has been proven a great key to establish healthy interaction between our members and other communities and services and programs. We look forward to sharing our next performances in outlying communities. As it is the intentions that our future is secure with a great sense of pride and confidence to develop into a strong healthier community. ■

Interior Nations Get Back to the Land with Traditional Foods Challenge

RYAN DAY & RAMONA (MARY) LOUIS

Inspired by the success of the Beefy Chiefs Challenge and the Winter Challenge of the previous year, the Secwepemc Health Caucus designed the Get Back to the Land Challenge for all Interior Nations in late 2014. The Challenge is a recognition of the foundational importance of our connection to the land for the health and healing of our peoples and territories and was set up to encourage communities to get together to harvest and preserve their traditional foods.

At the Spring 2014 Interior Nations' Caucus session all Seven Nations of the Ktunaxa, Syilx, Secwépemc, Nlaka'pamux, St'át'imc, Dākelh Dené, and Tsilhqot'in unanimously endorsed participation, as all representatives are united in their belief in the importance of our peoples' relationship to the land for our health. It was decided that points would be awarded based on: the number of participants, with a minimum of two generations; the number of foods or medicines harvested and preserved; and reporting in the ancestral language.

Communities harvested and preserved moose, deer, salmon, Indian Tea, Indian Celery, Indian Potatoes, huckleberries, soapberries, bitterroot and various other roots, rabbit, trout, spruce tips, sage along with many other foods and medicines. Contribu-

tions came in from groups as small as father and son fishing trout in the Tsilhqot'in to community events like the Bonaparte Indian Band fish camp. Entries were sent in as video, photos, powerpoint presentations and even a community scrapbook.

“When you're sitting next to your grandma picking berries, it doesn't seem like work.”

There were three groups which stood out from the rest: Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) of the Syilx Nation, Canim Lake Band and Little Fawn Nursery (Tk'emlups te Secwepemc). OKIB earned the most points and was awarded a \$10,000 food security grant to continue doing great work building the health of their people and lands. Honourable mentions went to Canim Lake Band, who made an excellent scrap book of their activities, and to Little Fawn Nursery for teaching their young ones the old ways.

“The commitment of our community to reconnect with past practices is amazing. I'm so very proud of everyone who participated and the Council and I congratulate all participants,” said OKIB Chief Byron Louis, who also thanked the OKIB Health and Social Development Department for coordinating the Band's participation.

Throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2014 OKIB members came together to pick, can and dry berries, can salmon and deer meat, and harvest tea, bitter root and

Indian rhubarb. Community members of all ages shared stories and laughter as knowledge was passed between generations. Approximately 83 people participated in the events throughout the season.

“There were grandmas and grandpas, moms and dads, youth and children. When you're sitting next to your grandma picking berries, it doesn't seem like work,” said Ramona (Mary) Louis.

Louis, assisted by summer student Danielle Saddleman, served as OKIB's coordinator for the traditional foods gathering and preserving project, which applied nicely to the Get Back to the Land Challenge. The project gave Louis a strong sense of pride in working with the community. “It was fantastic!” she said. “Working together helps build the sense of community for us.”

Louis notes that gathering traditional foods gave participants a holistic approach to wellbeing – strengthening and healing them mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

While gathering traditional foods doesn't seem like work for some, Louis considers it very important work that must continue each year. “Today we are dependent on grocery stores, restaurants and fast food,” she said. “Because of that we're not as healthy as we were long ago when we



Traditional foods were on the menu during the very successful Interior Nations 'Get Back to the Land Challenge' last year.

Benefits of Gathering Traditional Foods

With Ramona (Mary) Louis

Mentally: "You are reviving traditions, being proud of your traditions and culture and the teachings of gathering and preserving techniques. One Elder said to me, 'It is so good to be able to pass down the teachings to the younger generations!'"

Emotionally: "You are connected to your family, friends, Elders, youth, children and community. We use food to gather our people together. Feasts, celebrations and ceremonies, when we are out on the land we are all equal and we share what we gather."

Physically: "You're getting exercise by hiking up the mountains and picking berries, hunting, fishing, digging roots, and eating the nutritious healthy foods. It feels so good when we are up the mountain, to breathe the fresh air. It's so peaceful and quiet."

Spiritually: "You respect, pray and give thanks to the land, plants, and animals for providing you with this food. You learn from your Elders the stories and songs and teachings of how the plants and animals have given up their lives for us so we can continue to exist on the land. It is sometimes overwhelming when I pray and give thanks to the foods, knowing how powerful a prayer can be."

gathered and preserved our own food. We can reclaim our roles and responsibility to provide for ourselves, families and community, knowing we have an abundance of healthy traditional foods to gather and preserve and that we will never go hungry."

The OKIB would like to thank the First Nations Health Authority for sponsoring the Get Back to the Land Challenge. Organizers and the OKIB would like to send out a big congratulations to all the communities who sent in photos and videos of their activities. The smiles on all the faces say it all – our health is there on the land and we need only to get out on it. ■

Tea Time Local Natural Teas

MICHAEL BELL, FNHA COMMUNICATIONS

It was my grandmother who first introduced me to tea drinking at the tender age of 8. We would sit in her diningroom on a sunny afternoon with the sunshine coming through the windows as we would sit, talk and sip our tea. At that time, I was adding both sugar and milk to my tea, but now as an adult - I drink my Earl Grey tea black. I have tried various types of commercial teas over the years, but was fascinated when I learned about local First Nations who have been enjoying natural teas for generations - here are a few examples:

Labrador tea is an evergreen shrub with twigs that have dense, rusty brown hairs which give off a spicy odor. The flowers are white short umbrella clusters at the end of the branches.

Labrador tea can be picked during the Spring, Summer or Fall and dried out in brown paper bags. The tea is made by placing a handful of dry or fresh leaves in about 1L of water and boiling the leaves to taste. For some this means about 20 minutes for others, a few days. Labrador tea can also be used whenever you feel symptoms of a cold or sore throat.

Common Mint is aromatic with a typical "mint" smell, growing from creeping rootstocks. The stems are squarish and the leaves are pointed, smooth or hairy, and have toothed margins. The flowers are small and pale purple, sometimes white.

For tea, the common mint can be used either fresh or dried. Brewing fresh leaves requires steeping of several leaves in a cup of boiled water.

Dried tea can be made the same way but may be preferred if it is boiled for a few minutes. This tea can be brewed in stronger doses as a medicine for colds, coughs, and influenza.

Wild Roses are shrubs with thorny stems and compound leaves. The flowers are pale to bright pink with yellow centres, and the fruit (hips) are bright red-orange. This fruit is high in vitamin C. and found in long grasses and open woods.

The rosehips can be picked in early fall but many suggest waiting until after the first frost as this helps to soften the flesh and increase sweetness. They can be harvested in the winter when food sources are scarce.

To make tea, the rosehips must be boiled for about 20 minutes by placing a handful of fresh or dried rosehips in about 1L of water. ■

Labrador Tea

Ledum groenlandicum



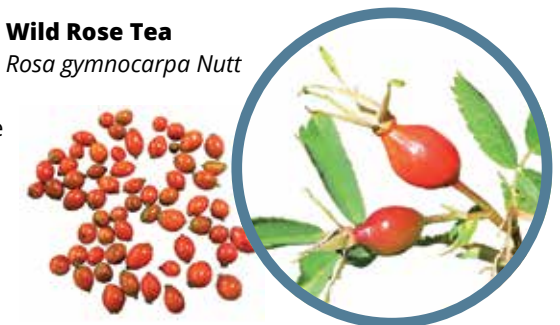
Common Mint Tea

Mentha arvensis L.



Wild Rose Tea

Rosa gymnocarpa Nutt



Diary of an Olympian

Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity

GREG EDGELOW, FNHA STAFF

As a First Nation Olympic athlete, I left no stones unturned in my quest for success. I had to train when my body was fatigued, unhealed and broken. That's part of training for the Olympics. I'd like to share with you some ideas that kept me motivated and focused during my competitive years as a national team athlete, but also now as I get older and am busy with work. I'm keenly aware that many of you have families, volunteer responsibilities and other obligations that make it challenging to live a balanced life.

What value do you put on your holistic health? It might help to think of our physical activity potential like a perishable item in the grocery store with an expiry date. We can never get that day back that we didn't use our bodies, when we were sedentary – when it's gone, it's gone. But if we invest now in our physical well-being, we'll feel the benefits for the rest of our life. Let's be honest, for many of us the road to glory is paved with good intentions. We think about committing to more physical activity but following through with plans can be as tough to do as first steps.

As much as possible get out into nature – its majesty is a big motivator. Walking or jogging the trails helps keep your thoughts focused on the process at hand, such as your footing, grade, elevation and obstacles, as well as on sights, sounds, smells - so we think less about giving up or cutting the activity short.

When climbing trails that gain elevation, we can fatigue much more quickly. When this happens, your mind is telling you to stop. Try to push past this and keep your feet going if you can – within your safe limit - even if you are barely moving, stay mindful of what your body and mind are telling you and don't push yourself too far or fast. Remember – it's not a competition. Even a little bit of physical activity works for wellness.

If you have a dog, I highly recommend incorporating your pet into your regular activity regime. It's enjoyable and beneficial for you and your dog. And when you're doing something for someone else, like your dog, it can boost your motivation. Off-leash dog parks are excellent because dogs can exper-



Hiking on the Whyte Lake Trail

ience unconstrained freedom and fun. When you're in a park or on a trail with a dog, enjoying the animal's energy and enthusiasm, you're gaining multi-faceted benefits to your own well-being – body, mind and spirit.

During your activity, take photos of your dog and you as motivators for yourself and as a conversation point with family, colleagues and Facebook friends. This may also be a catalyst to inviting others to participate with you.

Walking, hiking or running longer distances, especially up mountain trails, can often seem overwhelming. When I'm running down a city block or hiking a winding trail, I find that focusing on an upcoming landmark is a way to achieve micro-goals within your larger goals. It's easier to focus on a landmark 250 meters ahead of you than 5 km away. Every time you reach that micro-goal, it acts as a motivator to achieve the next micro-goal until you have completed your desired distance.

Finally, another motivator that can help you increase your performance is to be aware of who is either in front of you or behind you, to catch them or not get passed.

Catching up is much easier than staying in front, but both help you take your focus away from the thinking about the overall distance. Catching up to someone is a big confidence booster, while challenging yourself not to get passed creates mental toughness and a better awareness of what your body is capable of.

For me, sport, recreation and physical activity is an investment, not an expense. It's a bona fide investment in our current health and wellness, but also an important investment in our future well-

being. We often deny ourselves some form of physical activity that will benefit us - physically, mentally and spiritually - by deciding the cost is too high, even if it's affordable. It's a common way to procrastinate, avoid and defer.

Think about how much time and money we spend on socializing, shopping and on other activities that have minimal benefits for our health. Retail therapy is an oxymoron. In actual fact, this activity usually puts tremendous stress on our bank accounts, which in turn can negatively affect us psychologically and physiologically.

How often did you contemplate partaking in some form of physical activity but procrastinate and then justify it with "you didn't have enough time"? How many times did you feel bad about eating an extra-large portion of food or something unhealthy and told yourself that you were going to work it off but didn't? When was the last time you got out on the road or trail, or went to the gym to work out, and had a goal in mind but lost interest part way and told yourself you did enough?

The key to success is to keep planning, follow through and don't stop. If you at least plan to do something physical, you tremendously increase your chance of completing your goal.

Believe me, you're not alone. Everyone experiences a lack of motivation, regardless of how far up they are on the exercise evolutionary ladder. The key to success is to keep planning, follow through and don't stop. If you at least plan to do something physical, you tremendously increase your chance of completing your goal.

While my preference is to mostly work out alone, there are significant benefits in working out with others. Your partner will help keep you accountable and may even inspire you to push yourself harder. Many of us hate to be outdone or be left behind. These are motivators to push harder and complete the task.

The bottom line is that there are many strategies for staying active to achieve our personal health and wellness goals. Doing it on your own can be more challenging than partnering with a spouse, friend or colleague, or your pet. Remember that approaching each activity in bite-size pieces can make the journey more palatable and achievable. Regardless of the type of activity you engage in, you are making a fantastic investment in your overall health and wellness. You are worth it - so make it count to get the best return on your investment! ■

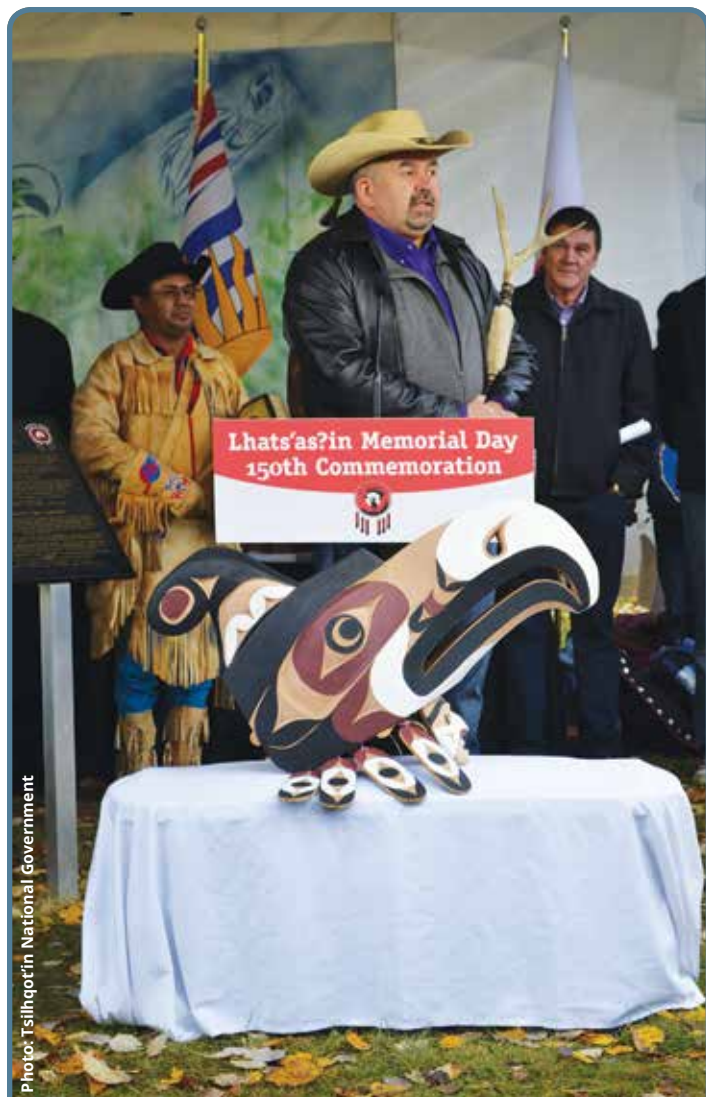


Photo: Tsilhqot'in National Government

Tsilhqot'in Nation leaders, other Interior Nation representatives, and community members gathered in what is now known as Quesnel on October 26, 2014 for the 150th Lhats'as?in Memorial Day Commemoration to honour the five Tsilhqot'in Chiefs who were hanged by the BC government 150 years ago to the day as part of the Tsilhqot'in War. For a comprehensive history on the events read Tom Swanky's book: *The Tsilhqot'in and other First Nations Resistance*.

No Tolerance Community River Spirit Walk

SUBMITTED BY GINA PETERS



Participants in the 15th Annual No Tolerance Community River Spirit Walk on the Skwah Nation territory in the Fraser-Salish.

Pouring rain and cold temperatures could not discourage participants in the 15th Annual *No Tolerance, Community River Spirit Walk*, held on November 27, 2014. The Williams family, along with the Skwah Nation Pre-School, led the protest against drug dealers and crime in their small community.

This year, protesters walked in sadness, honouring the late Dean Williams Sr., who felt passionately about the safety of children and the future of the Skwah grounds he was proud to call home. Dean had a profound effect on his community, looking out for and inspiring the children and youth whom he knew were its future. He truly “walked the walk”, turning away from unhealthy habits, serving as a strong leader and inspiring the young to learn about their culture.

“My husband always had an open door policy. He loved our family and especially the children - he fought so hard for them and their safety. Dean stopped smoking when Andrea was born. It was an agreement we had and a promise he kept, to stop drinking and smoking. He did it, he was true to his word. He knew that to have kids he would have to do it straight,” said Tzanaulliye (Lena

“Our society is tied in with who we are, we are proud to be People of the River. We come from a long line of canoe pullers and we will continue walking and canoeing to honour my Uncle Dean’s legacy. We took his paddle with us on our last walk, because it represented our Uncle Dean. He was with us.”

Williams) his wife. “I think this is when he started to lobby for our children, he began to spend more time at the pre-school, offering to drum and sing at events. He was there every day, and eventually he started to invite children to canoe with the Spirit River Canoe Club. Children always came first with him. His service work on Council was enhanced by all of the countless volunteer hours spent with our children and those in the Chilliwack School District. The work he did, the work he started, will carry on, because I think he is stronger now in spirit than he was as a physical being.”

As the protesters drummed, sang and walked through the Skwah, stops were made in front of the homes of known drug dealers and criminals who have been actively selling drugs and disturbing the peace of

the Skwah Nation. The peaceful demonstration was meant to shame and discourage criminals from conducting business on Skwah traditional territory. In the past, the small community has experienced multiple incidents of gun violence, theft and domestic violence, which have all been attributed to the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

“Through my darkest times, Dean never gave up on me. He was always there and often came to look in on me. He encouraged me to be a warrior, to stand and protect with him, to help me stand proud. Every time we had an event, he was the first to get ready. With canoeing, our walks and work with the school district, he never gave up,” said Semethetel (Russ Williams Jr.). *“Our society is tied in with who we are, we are proud to be People of the River. We come from a long*

line of canoe pullers and we will continue walking and canoeing to honour my Uncle Dean's legacy. We took his paddle with us on our last walk, because it represented our Uncle Dean. He was with us."

The No Tolerance, Community River Spirit Walk Society lobbies year-round to eradicate crime in their community by posting home-made signs, reminding everyone that this should be a safe place to play, just as it once was when the 15 Williams children were raised here.

"After he was gone, I realized Dean was my Superman. He always fought for what he believed was right. Dean led by example, for 30-plus years he let go of the bottle. He was always active, always on the water. Canoe season runs from spring to summer, but for him it was year-round. He was the leader of our family. If we needed any information, he was the man we asked for help, for guidance and historical information," said Wichem (Ron Williams Jr.). "If we fell off our Red Road, he was the one who would pick us up. He would let us know he cared and let us walk proud. We have huge shoes to fill after losing him. He was the leader of our family. My uncle stood for what he believed in and would not back down when it came to his family. He was the caretaker of our family - the foundation, you could say. He was also security for the village, he would stand up to anybody if they were not welcomed. If I had to describe Dean Williams Sr. in one word, it would be Superman."

Though it was an emotional day, the Williams family walked proudly with Dean Sr. in spirit while holding his canoe paddle and onto the memory of his strength and courage. Dean is fondly remembered as being a very generous, caring and loving man. When speaking with the Williams family, it's easy to understand how their husband, father, brother and uncle became not only a role model for their own lives but for the community as a whole.

"Dean possessed a courage that other people didn't have. Dean knew how to be serious and to mix a sense of humour with



these tough topics as well. I will never forget all of the little things - the time, and the knowledge that we shared. I know he is a role model, but for me he was my uncle," said Qohtyetel (John Williams). "We did service work together but he also helped me to stay on the Red Road. I will continue to do our work, this is what helps me. This is how I will stay on the Red Road. My uncle believed in our children. If you look at the path outside the pre-school you will see how worn it is, and notice that this was his direct route to the children he loved and protected for most of his life." ■

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First Nations youth are often faced with a colonial version of 'Canadian' history in the classroom that is disrespectful. This is also a challenge for educating the general population on the cause and effect of colonization. Above: Yunesit'in (Stoney) Nation.

Education and First Nations Youth:

Opposing the Colonial Narrative and Closing the Gap

PHIL HOGAN

It is a serious issue facing First Nations today - the educational outcomes for First Nations students are persistently and significantly poorer than those of non-Aboriginal students in Canada. While overall First Nations students struggle more than non-Aboriginal students, First Nation boys are faring worse than girls. For the sake of the young people who are our future, we need to ask some tough questions and come up with solutions. Education is a social determinant of health and directly connected to success later in life. This is not to

say only western education is important, traditional forms of education are equally if not more important for youth.

The importance of getting an education is indisputable. A high school diploma, at minimum, is often essential for landing a secure and decent job. As well, education level is linked directly to health. The World Health Organization lists education as a social determinant of health, saying "low education levels are linked with poor health, more stress and lower self-confidence."

It's no exaggeration to say that a lack of education sets up individuals for, potentially,

a very negative domino effect in their lives - poor education can lead to less income, unemployment, and housing insecurity.

As for the growing gap in educational achievement between boys and girls, this trend is certainly not limited to First Nations. As academics and educators have noted, girls have been surging ahead of boys in the developed world for some time, and the exact reasons for this aren't fully understood. In the past, women's education and the professions that were open to them were significantly restricted. But during the 20th century, many of the barriers and

prejudices that restricted women were challenged, opening up new opportunities.

At the same time, First Nations people – of both genders – are dealing with the highly destructive and deeply damaging Indian Residential Schools legacy. In this environment – where First Nations students endured severe abuse and discrimination – it’s no wonder the historic and cumulative effects of this system are still affecting our students to this day.

For the sake of our students, there’s clearly an urgent need to work together to give them a better chance at educational success. But constructive discussion and dialogue hasn’t been easy. The recent debate about First Nations education has intersected with a number of political

The strength of First Nations, despite many decades of adversity, is an inspiring story of survival and success.

debates waged in public, disputes over the basic facts, and ongoing legal action. Disagreements and disputes between First Nations and government are eroding an already problematic relationship.

Tyrone McNeil, President of the First Nations Education Steering Committee, says “the current state of First Nations education shows improvement in the statistics.” In the work his organization is doing to improve educational outcomes, he describes a good relationship with the BC Ministry of Education, the BC Teachers Federation, Trustees and parents groups.

But these positive relationships aren’t necessarily leading to the changes needed in the classroom, where our children are. Mr. McNeil describes a series of disconnects in the educational system – notably in the curriculum and in how some teachers view Aboriginal students with lowered expectations.

It’s no surprise that racism and learning don’t go well together. According to an EKOS survey from 2006, 42% of off-reserve Aboriginal people reported being exposed to racism or discrimination over the last two years. The survey also showed that 28%

of Aboriginal people reported experiencing racism at school.

When it comes to on-reserve education, funding is a big factor. First Nation schools began as part of the process of replacing the Indian Residential School system. Today there are 520 First Nation-run schools in Canada and 130 in BC. Though disputed by government, there is an emerging consensus that funding and services fall below those received by provincial schools. The lack of services and parity in educational quality is another related issue. Run-down schools in need of repair and a gap in services leave many students without the benefits of non-Aboriginal schools.

Curriculum is another, related problem. For years students have been taught one version of Canada’s founding – one that was firmly built upon the European colonizer’s view of history that assumed the racial superiority of white people. Though moderated somewhat in recent decades, the underlying cultural assumptions remain a powerful force in Canadian society, and therefore in school curriculum.

Slowly, First Nations are making an appearance in classroom curriculum but things are still far from inclusive. For students who are familiar with the history of First Nations, out-of-date curriculum that reflects the old racialized history of Empire, and that ignores the true history of their people, school must be a difficult experience. How can First Nations students possibly be engaged at school when they are taught a history that is biased, and denies or negates the reality of their experience and that of their communities and Nations?

I am a single father to a son that has some rather strong opinions about the curriculum he has been taught at school. The disconnect between the history of Canada that First Nations are familiar with, and what is taught in school, is a problem for some students.

“You can put a jacket on a goat, but it’s still a goat,” my son said about the school curriculum that he finds is so different from the history of BC that he has been taught by family and cultural knowledge.

I took the time to review the curriculum he had – and while it was better than what I was taught in the 1970s, it still is far from a full and true picture of our shared history.

My son informed me that his friends feel similarly. Let’s face it, a curriculum that rings false is going to affect student engagement, especially when the history is about the ancestors and relatives of the student.

So is the picture totally dark and hopeless? Though the statistics may seem grim, and the educational attainment of First Nations relative to others is poor, the good news is that overall many First Nations people are making it through the system

Though the statistics may seem grim, and the educational attainment of First Nations relative to others is poor, the good news is that overall many First Nations people are making it through the system and achieving higher levels of education.

and achieving higher levels of education. So, in a seeming paradox, First Nations have poor educational outcomes yet we’re seeing historic numbers of First Nations achieving higher levels of education.

The strength of First Nations, despite many decades of adversity, is an inspiring story of survival and success. Even so, there remain substantial problems that we must address. To bring First Nations education to parity, racism must be addressed and reduced in schools, funding for schools on-reserve must be increased to match other schools in BC, and the curriculum must be revised to reflect the historical reality.

“Too many people are satisfied with 1 or 2 per cent improvement,” says Tyrone McNeil of the FNEC. “In actuality we need to see improvement in the range of 30-40 per cent. The system seems satisfied with incremental change and we’re not.”

Let’s remember that we have a young population that is increasingly well-educated, and with their help we can work for an education system that supports more and more successful, high-achieving First Nations students. ■

Dipnetting with Dad

Author Willie Sellars Reflects on the Role of Men, Culture and Staying Active

BRENNA LATIMER

FNHA had the honour of interviewing Willie Sellars, author of the vibrant children’s book *Dipnetting with Dad*, and member of the Williams Lake Indian Band (T’exelc). The beautifully illustrated book tells the story of a young man learning the traditional practice of dipnetting with his father and grandfather. The story shares lessons about respect, bravery, prayer and learning one’s culture. Sellars is a young First Nations leader and a role model—he is a father, in his second term as Councillor for T’exelc, attending post-secondary, on a book tour and staying active through sports and culture.

In our interview, we asked Sellars about how *Dipnetting with Dad* reflects the role of men in passing on traditional and ceremonial practices. He shared about how learning from his grandfather and his father contributed to his sense of identity, and that he now passes that knowledge on to his son and daughter. He told us how he nurtures his spirit, stays active and concluded with some words of encouragement for other young First Nations leaders.

BL: Compared to when you were growing up, how have the roles of women and men changed when it comes to dip-net fishing?

WS: Over the years and over the generations the woman’s role down at the river has changed significantly ... from (women) being predominantly the ones staying at home and preparing the fish. Now you see women right down at the river catching fish. When I grew up I learned from my dad. He learned from his grandfather. It was the man’s role to go down to the river, and now the way that I’m teaching, I’m not only teaching my son but I’m teaching my daughter the same thing.

BL: Tell me about the role of men passing down not only the practices but also the ceremonies and the teachings of respect.

WS: I always learned to respect the river and to respect the fish. What better way to do that than having that traditional sweat before the start of the season, making sure we pray for a safe journey for the fish and pray for a safe fishing experience for ourselves. Not only that ... but also pray for the water and even the sun for that matter. We make sure that we feel blessed and cleansed before we head down (to the river).

BL: How has that sense of identity that was instilled in you through these teachings contributed to being the leader and role model that you are today?

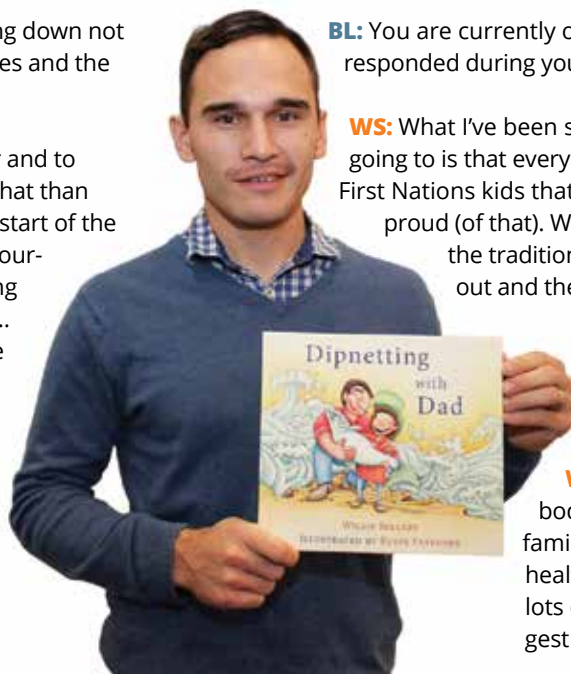
WS: When you learn how to do those things yourself ... (it instills) that sense of pride of being First Nations. Growing up I sang a lot of songs in the sweat. I was taught how to properly run the sweat. Then as I grew older I started hearing those songs more and more. Not only could I sing them, but I felt comfortable singing them. I felt proud that I knew those songs and proud that I could follow along without missing a beat. I could bang the drum and when I teach that to the younger generation ... I don’t feel uneasy about it at all. I feel comfortable and I feel that being a role model is neat. I feel myself being a role model just like my uncle was a role model for me when he was teaching us those awesome [prayers].

BL: You are currently on a book tour, how have children responded during your school visits?

WS: What I’ve been seeing at the schools that we’ve been going to is that everyone wants to bang the drum ... and the First Nations kids that have tried dipnetting before ... they’re proud (of that). When we show the video and talk about the traditional Sweat Lodge ... they pop their chests out and they’re happy.

BL: You are a leader in your community and you practice your culture. How do you nurture your spirit?

WS: I live a healthy life. I don’t abuse my body. I stay physically active. I have a good family at home, a healthy family atmosphere, lots of hugs and lots of kisses, lots of singing. One of the biggest pieces that keeps it all together is



T’exelc author Willie Sellars shows off his book ‘Dipnetting with Dad’ illustrated by Kevin Easthope.

that prayer piece. Making sure that (the kids) are getting brought up the right way, learning the right way to do things, learning how to practice their culture and traditions ... by handling that deer after we shot it, getting ready to harvest it, helping clean a salmon or helping bang the drums. There are all sorts of different ways. By nurturing (my family) it also helps me nurture my spirit.

It doesn't matter if you're from a small town or a big city - anything that you set your mind to you'll be able to achieve with hard work and determination.

BL: The process of writing your book must have been an intense experience. How did you take care of yourself during that time?

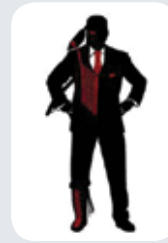
WS: I had a good support group. Kev (illustrator Kevin Easthope) was there every step of the way ... showing me the ropes and showing me the artistic side and why we should make a change. Also, we had great feedback from Elders, community members, Chiefs from other communities, teachers and counsellors and my family at home.

BL: What would you say to young First Nations men about their journeys?

WS: It doesn't matter if you're from a small town or a big city - anything that you set your mind to you'll be able to achieve with hard work and determination. A lot of people think that just because they're not from a big city that they can't accomplish something. And coming from a small community, a small reserve of only 200 on reserve band members, we're now touring all over British Columbia showing people our book and sharing our stories.

BL: I really, truly admire what you've done with this book. Thank you so much for talking with me. ■

Men of the North Health Fair



Organizers Alexander Erickson and Jolene Prince at the Men of the North health fair on Nakazdli Nation territory.

First Nations men from around the North gathered on Nakazdli Nation territory for the Men of the North health fair in November. The project was an incredible journey of discovering how important Men's Health and Wellness is. The Forum gathered Men from all over the region in one location to present and provide an awareness to the issues that Men face in today's society. All four aspects to the Medicine Wheel were addressed in this amazing Forum. Intellectual, Emotional, Physical and Spiritual.

There were four main facilitators, Gerry Oleman, Don Burnstick, Curtis Ahenekeew and Mike James. Each Facilitator presented workshops on their views on what it takes to "Reawaken the Inner Warrior". The Facilitators added their personal interpretation of what a "Warrior" looked like. Each Facilitator had the opportunity to share their story of inspiration, towards their own health and wellness. The Facilitators brought together their knowledge to bring a distinct First Nations identity back to the Men within the Forum.

The Planning was done by:

- Alexander Erickson, Men of the North Forum Coordinator
- Jolene Prince, M.C.H. Coordinator
- Men of the North Group



Step Up Challenge

CATHERINE ATYEO AND TREVOR KEHOE



There's a new device catching on in First Nations communities around BC. No, it's not the latest cell phone, tablet or laptop. It's the Fitbit – an activity tracker that clips on to your clothes or wear on your wrist depending on the model. As the main tool in the latest First Nations Health Council Beefy Chiefs 2.0 Step Up Challenge, this small device is measuring mighty positive steps in the health of First Nations people in BC.

The Step Up Challenge, launched in June of 2014, invites all First Nations to compete alongside their leadership for most steps, distance and active minutes – all calculated by the Fitbit. Both Beefy Chiefs 2.0 and its predecessor the Beefy Chiefs and Champions Health Leadership Challenge of 2013-2014 led the way to encouraging everyone in communities to step, walk, run and move their way to better health.

As of April 2015 over 4,200 participants have registered for Step Up. This includes 53 Band Chiefs, 148 Band Councillors, 761 Community Health Workers and 3,155 First Nations community members. Participants are finding that with the Fitbit tracking their progress, they're extra motivated to reach the suggested target of 10,000 steps per day.

From July 2014 to April 2015, participants have walked a total of 1,128,561,981

steps, 3,340,035 active minutes, and 680,528 kilometres traveled – collectively walking almost 17 times around the circumference of the earth!

Initially William Sandy was highly skeptical about the idea of tracking his activity with an electronic device. "I thought it would only discourage me from making healthier choices for my body, mind and spirit," William recalled. "But it has done the complete opposite! I began this journey in November of 2014 and since then I've walked over 800 kilometres and have lost 30 pounds."

Julie Robertson has also found that tracking her progress has just inspired her to go further and further. "When I started this year, walking one kilometre was a challenge," she said. "Now every day I'm averaging four to five kilometres. One of my 10,000 step days is an eight to nine kilometre walking day. It's fantastic to see the steady progress."

"Just wearing the Fitbit has motivated me to be even more active," said Tracey Simon. "Now I have some very tangible goals to strive for each day – 10,000 steps and 10 stairs. I have plenty of stairs in my home so I make sure I climb those stairs every day to reach my target goal."



Lower Similkameen Band's Carole Basil with a grab bag prize for her community.

From July 2014 to April 2015, participants walked a total of 1,128,561,981 steps, 3,340,035 active minutes, and 680,528 kilometres traveled – collectively walking almost 17 times around the circumference of the earth!

It doesn't take long for participants to get attached to their Fitbit. While the Fitbit is an indispensable tool for a participant's journey to better health, many participants soon realize there are other factors in sustaining their motivation – one being a variety of activity.

Lynette Lucas wanted to change things up from just walking and running, and also wanted activities she could do inside if the weather was particularly cold. "I started using my Bosu, spin bike and hula hoop. I also run up and down stairs and do some basic boot camp exercises. And when I'm taking a web conference I don't sit – I'm on a treadmill."

Whether it's getting on a treadmill, doing a Zumba class or working out to a DVD, participants are finding the ways that work for them to reach that magic number of steps. "I discovered dancing is a great way for steps to add up quickly," said Sharon Duffy. "We all like to dance in our house so sometimes we just put on some good dancing music and dance away in the



Mamalilikala's John Powell was a November winner with 1,188,631 steps.

living room. My granddaughters love it!"

Another factor in keeping many participants motivated has been getting active with friends, family members or co-workers. Jennifer Narcisse admits she had never been a fan of walking in the cold of winter – but walking with her fellow Fitbit-ing co-workers is actually fun. "I am thankful for this group. Not only are we getting healthier but the laughs are an added bonus."

Others have recruited their spouse to hit their steps target. "I'm forcing my hubby to walk with me at night to make up any steps to hit my goal," said Brena Robinson. "One night we had to walk 6,360 steps. We're enjoying the walks as mini date nights!"

While there are monthly and quarterly prizes as well as Grand Prizes to be awarded

at the Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey VII May 2015, participants are keenly aware that the real reward is better health – and that has the power to enrich and transform lives.

"It doesn't matter if you get more active just a little, or moderately or at a higher level, there are always going to be benefits," said Sharon Duffy. "The benefits are personal, which is vitally important, but those benefits affect our families, friends, co-workers and communities. The ripples continue – it's awesome."

Participants will be recognized at Gathering Wisdom VII but the stepping will continue into 2015 with a continuation of Beefy Chiefs 2.0 Step Up – stay tuned for the official announcement and congratulations to all Step'ers out there! ■

Where's
the Beef?

Send us your Step Up photos
and inspire others to take part
in their active wellness.
Email them to: active@fnha.ca



Winter Wellness Challenge

CATHERINE ATYEO



Left: Salmonberry Trading Co. participants show great enthusiasm capturing their physical activity for the Winter Wellness Challenge. Right: Participants at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Annual Christmas Party enjoy traditional dance with their clans.

A dance challenge, celebrating Elders, 'geocaching', saying no to pop and energy drinks, and an evening of self-caring for women – just a few of the ways participants rose to meet the FNHA's 2014 Winter Wellness Challenge. From the numerous photos, conversations, and kind words, it's clear that the Winter Wellness Challenge not only inspired an impressive range of health and wellness initiatives – it also led to community-building and loads of fun in the process.

The FNHA Winter Wellness Challenge was designed to encourage the development of innovative, culturally grounded health promotion events and campaigns. The FNHA funded 104 events across the province at a total of \$194,000. With an additional contribution of \$208,000 from host Nations and other partners, the total investment in the Challenge was more than \$400,000.

The Challenge, which took place between November 21 and December 21 of 2014, supported communities with events based around the four FNHA wellness streams:

"I'm more active and accountable for what goes in my mouth."



ALW Publishing & Port Alberni Friendship Centre encourage participants to stay moving through the Be Healthy Club on Facebook.

being active, healthy eating, nurturing spirit and respecting tobacco.

The Port Alberni Friendship Center challenged participants with a 21 Day No Energy Drinks or Pop Challenge. Individuals and families took up the challenge to say goodbye to high-sugar beverages. Most participants said they had more energy, their mood was more positive and they were sleeping better because of a reduced sugar intake. Eighty per cent of participants are so impressed with the changes in how they feel they've decided to continue staying away from sugary drinks.

The Centre also created a 21 Day Walk Challenge to go along with the first challenge to give up sugary drinks. Participants in both Challenges say they began to think about and change their habits.

When it's winter in Williams Lake, heading outside for a long walk isn't on the mind of many folks. But the Nenqayni Wellness Centre in Williams Lake changed that mindset by challenging participants to take up something called 'geocaching'. Geocaching is essentially a global treasure hunt using GPS technology and handheld

devices to seek out coordinates of unique locations, treasures, or just plain fun and humorous items. This event involved the Centre's staff and clients heading out with passport booklets to find 12 geocaches using a GPS unit. Most caches were near the Centre but some were up to 1.5 km away. Each cache contained a word or picture clue and participants had to sign a log book in each cache to prove that the cache had been found. Adults and children participated and went on the hunt in teams.

Dancing is central to the wellness of many First Nations peoples, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society used the occasion of their Annual Children's Christmas Party to challenge participants to join in traditional dancing. Participants were taught how to dance the traditional dances of the raven, eagle, killer whale and wolf clans. Cedar rose making was incorporated into the event to add another dimension of beauty and skill.

The dance challenge not only got participants up dancing – it allowed them to mingle and get to know other participants. As one of them said: "It's the best Friendship Centre event I've been to. The dancing was a lot of fun."

The Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC coordinated a highly success "Celebrating Our Elders" challenge in all 12 of its member sites around the province. Children and

"We learned that we need to get the children and Elders together for more activities like this. There was so much happiness and comfort amongst the group."

families who attended the event were asked to invite an Elder, grandma, grandpa, auntie or uncle to take part in a community feast or gathering. The purpose of the challenge was for each AHS program to increase Elder participation and knowledge of AHS programs. As an incentive, the AHS site with the most Elder participation at the community feast would receive additional funding for another gathering to nurture Elder involvement in early childhood programs.

The challenge reinforced the deep value of bringing young and old together. "We learned that we need to get the children and Elders together for more activities like this. There was so much happiness and comfort amongst the group," said one organizer.

One Elder brought tears to the eyes of many when he got up and gave thanks for

the feast, adding that some Elders are very lonely over the Christmas holidays and that it warmed his heart to be invited to be with other Elders in the community and children.

Elder wellness was also the focus of a challenge organized by the Prince George Dakelh Elders Society. In addition to a weekly walking program, participants also attended a healthy eating program. The program gave them information on how to be smarter shoppers and avoid being distracted by gimmicks, as well as how to save money by shopping together and sharing larger quantities of a food.

One participant noted that it's possible to incorporate Indigenous foods into many recipes to make them healthier and more cost effective. "Many Elders and parents have access to moose, caribou and elk meat which can add variety to recipes, give a different taste and make them more nutritious."

The enthusiasm of participants and their positive comments about the Winter Wellness Challenges make it clear that the journey towards better health – in body, mind and spirit - is more rewarding and successful when it's made with the support of others. Stay tuned for more winter wellness activities next year and be sure to sign up for the FNHA eBlast on our website for all the latest announcements! ■



In December, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres in Victoria hosted personal health workshops including Tai-Chi.



Esteemed leader and Elder Wickannish Cliff Atleo Sr., Vancouver Island First Nations Health Council representative speaks on the steps of the BC Legislature building in Victoria on February 12.

The Moosehide Campaign

Pledge to End Domestic Violence

JORDIE JOHNSON

During a hunting trip along the Highway of Tears in northern BC, Paul Lacerte and his daughter had a conversation and an idea to start a 'call to action' to end domestic violence. It was the beginning of what is now known as "The Moosehide Campaign". The grassroots movement started in 2011, and since then has taken place each February near Valentine's Day, to show love for our mothers, daughters, grandmothers and sisters. This year it took place on February 12 with a

"Let's demand that other men be full of thought and reflection and action on the wellness of women around us, emut/Thank you."

number of events throughout BC and an official gathering on the steps of the BC Legislature in Victoria.

The invitation is for all men to come together to end violence against First Nations and Aboriginal women and children. Since its beginning, the campaign has grown and evolved over the years. In February 2014, fasting was added to the journey. As described by Lacerte, fasting is when you have no food or drinks (including water) from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep. This year, Lacerte

“For the sake of our Grandchildren’s Grandchildren, we need to know and understand that we have to be the change that we want to see in our communities, and a fundamental part of that change needs to be our ability to respect ourselves, heal ourselves, to take responsibility for our past and commit our lives to a healthier future.” Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

said that Elder guidance and teachings were added for those who dedicate a day of fasting towards this courageous cause.

“Our goal is to re-shape our society to one where women are treated with love and respect at all times” says Paul Lacerte, Moosehide Campaign founder and Executive Director of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. “The level of violence towards women in this country is shocking and totally unacceptable. We need to do more as men to support each other in our healing and also hold each other accountable for our actions. We need to stop taking a backseat on this issue and help drive the change together.”

On the day of the campaign, the ceremony began with a Men’s Sharing Circle, with healing energy and drumming. On the exterior of the circle, women are welcome to witness and share prayers. Following the sharing circles, speeches are made on the steps of the Provincial Legislature. In previous years, words have been shared by notable First Nation leaders, as well as provincial MLAs. A well-known supporter of the campaign is Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, who declared he will wear the Moosehide every day for the rest of his life, in full support and endorsement of this cause. By wearing the Moosehide, he hopes the conversation will be started and continue throughout the year to address these important issues.

“The primary purpose and function of the Moosehide Campaign is to raise awareness of responsibility of men as it relates and pertains to violence to women and children,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip. “For the sake of our Grandchildren’s Grandchildren, we need to know and

understand that we have to be the change that we want to see in our communities, and a fundamental part of that change needs to be our ability to respect ourselves, heal ourselves, to take responsibility for our past and commit our lives to a healthier future. The future of our people depend on our ability to take the challenge.”

Alongside Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, other supporters have included NBA player Damon Bell-Holter, the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair and more, showing support with thousands of others who attend the event each year. Victims and supporters also speak out about the challenges they had to overcome, including Sheldon Henderson, who stood up and spoke of his past and declared: “I understand the pain that women and children are going through, and as a young man here today, I’m going to break that cycle.” His stance was echoed by women who felt empowered by their promises, including a tearful mother, Esther Morris, who stated: “It’s so empowering to see you all engaged. Abuse damages your soul. I don’t want my kids to see that in their lives.”

Although the main event takes place in Victoria, other communities have taken their own approach to hosting this strengthening cause. Though there are areas on Vancouver Island that don’t have moose, that didn’t stop one community from participating. Instead they used deer hide and renamed their campaign “You don’t have to hide.” Another similar campaign takes place in a BC medium security prison, where the inmates initiated their own Bear Hide Campaign, standing up against violence against women and children.

The FNHA teamed up with The Moose-



Moosehide Campaign organizer Paul Lacerte and drummers on February 12.

hide Campaign to create a series of videos of First Nations leaders describing the importance of supporting this initiative and ending violence against First Nations and Aboriginal women.

Visit the FNHA Youtube page to witness the videos and be sure to connect with The Moosehide Campaign online at: www.mooshidecampaign.ca, on twitter@Moosehide_BC, facebook and use the hashtags #Moosehidefast #endviolence. The Moosehide Campaign takes place every February so all men are now challenged - prepare to plan an event in your community and join the fast next year! ■

Wounded Warriors

Taking care of the spirit of men

The challenges faced by men in their journey for mental wellness

LILLIAN ROSE, FNHA STORYTELLER & FNHA'S RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, AND EVALUATION TEAM

I'm not sure when the signs of his struggle with mental wellness began. I would say that it was around the time he started high school. Living in a single parent household was challenging, spending lots of time alone while his mother was at work. He didn't have the comfort of other brothers or uncles to guide him on his journey, he was on his own. He has lived his life without a lot of the joy or happiness that most of us experience as we live our lives. His closest relationships have ended and interpersonal conflict has created a feeling of numbness that pervades his day. He struggles with living alone, drinking to excess and generally just floating through each day without hope that things will or can get any better. He is a father, yet he never sees his children, he is a husband, but he has lost his wife, he is our uncle, he is our brother and he needs our help.



A Path Forward: Informed by and for First Nations communities in the area of mental wellness, this 10-year approach to facilitate action was released in 2013. Find it on the FNHA website under Mental Wellness.

Men have unique roles in our communities and families and in the relationships with people around them. Traditionally, they were our leaders, warriors, providers and protectors. Together, First Nations men and women created successful and vibrant communities, societies and families. Rich and diverse expressions of culture and language and a place on the land were the norm.

Unfortunately we are all too familiar with the present realities faced by many First Nations men and communities today. Statistics from *Healthy Children, Healthy Families, Healthy Communities 2008-10 BC First Nations Regional Health Survey* states that First Nations men living in-community in BC were less likely than women to report reaching out to their friends, family, or health care workers for emotional and mental health support.

Men often feel unable to talk about their problems to others due to the need to safeguard their role in society. It is also hard to recognize that a problem exists because we don't traditionally have a culture or language that clearly identifies issues like anxiety, depression, or mental illness. Most men do not make mental health a priority. They often put their own health and wellness at the bottom of the list. Men are often told to 'work through the pain', 'tough it out', and as a result can ignore all the signs that something is not right. The stereotype of the "stoic Indian" carves an image in our minds.

Men often may not have the language to describe and define what they are feeling. Other barriers include language and cultural practices, discomfort in talking about private issues, fear and a lack of trust that is rooted in racism. There are stigmas attached to mental wellness/illness that make it difficult for men to ask for help.

Why are First Nations men less likely to reach out for help? We know the need is there and we see the faces of those we love and care for struggling and suffering from the effects of grief, trauma, oppression, institutionalization, mental illness, violence and substance abuse. We know that not everyone who needs help asks for it. How can we help make it easier for men to reach out and get the right kind of help they need, when they need it?

BC First Nations have indicated that recovery, well-being and good mental health and wellness are a priority and require transformation from its current state. We also have to make sure our people know what services are available to them and how to navigate the system and get the best help possible. Below are some resources available for men, women and children in First Nations communities. Encourage the men in your life to reach out when they need help. ■

Resources Currently Available

First Nations Health Authority: Regional Mental Wellness Advisors

Emmy Manson	Vancouver Island	250-748-9760	Emmy.Manson@fnha.ca
Jodie Millward	Fraser Salish	604-329-2851	Jodie.Millward@fnha.ca
Shawna Nevdoff	Interior	778-489-2230	Shawna.Nevdoff@fnha.ca

*North Region and Vancouver Coastal Regions are currently hiring Regional Mental Wellness Coordinators, stay tuned to the FNHA website for announcements.

KUU-US Crisis Line Society

1800-558-8717

An accredited agency of the American Association of Suicidology and provides expanded services to all First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia

Indian Residential School (IRS) – Professional Counselling

Professional counsellors are psychologists and social workers that are registered with the First Nations Health Authority and have experience working with First Nations and Aboriginal people. A professional counsellor will listen, talk, and assist former students to find ways of healing from Indian Residential Schools experiences.

To follow the counseling aspect of the program, please call toll free 1-877-477-0775 to request a counselor or you can call the Indian Residential School Survivors Support Line, please call toll free: 1-866-925-4419.

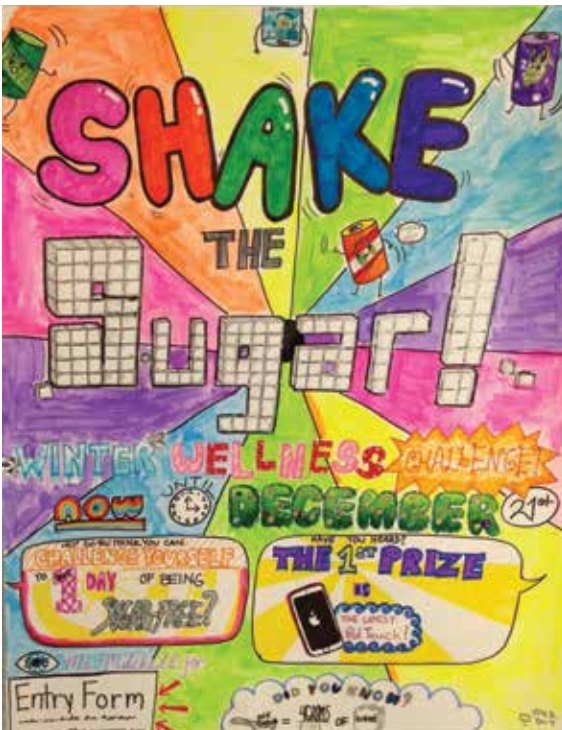
Health and Wellness Centre's (current as March 2015)

Carrier Sekani Family Services	Vanderhoof, BC	Phone 250-567-2900
Gya 'waa'tlaab Treatment Centre Society	Haisla, BC	Phone 250-639-9817
Het'Way'Noqu Healing Circle for Addictions	Vancouver, BC	Phone 604-874-1831
Kackaamin Family Development Centre	Port Alberni, BC	Phone 250-723-7789
Round Lake Treatment Centre	Armstrong, BC	Phone 250-546-3077
Namgis Substance Abuse Treatment Centre	Alert Bay, BC	Phone 250-974-5522
Nenqayni Wellness Centre	Williams Lake, BC	Phone 250-989-0301
North Wind Healing Centre	Dawson Creek, BC	Phone 250-843-6977
Three Voices of Healing	Invermere, BC	Phone 778-526-2501
Tsow-Tun Le Lum Treatment Centre	Lantzville, BC	Phone 250-390-3123
Wilp Si'Satxw House of Purification	Kitwanga, BC	Phone 250-849-5211
Inter-Tribal Health Authority	Nanaimo, BC	Phone 877-777-4842



Spirit Photo Gallery

Winter Wellness Challenge 2014





Winter Wellness Challenge 2014

Gym:
 10am Yoga for Parents & Preschoolers
 11am ABT (Abs, butts & thighs)
 2pm Latin Dance (No dance experience)
 3pm Family fit (Fitness for the whole family)

Quinsam Board room
 10-12 Weaving Group 1 (Must be registered)
 1-3pm Weaving Group 2 (Must be registered & L1)

KDCH Board Room 2nd floor:
 10-12pm Traditional Plants Group 1
 2-4pm Traditional Plants Group 2

KDCH Multi Purpose Room 2nd floor:
 10-4pm Walk thru: Respect Tobacco Display / D

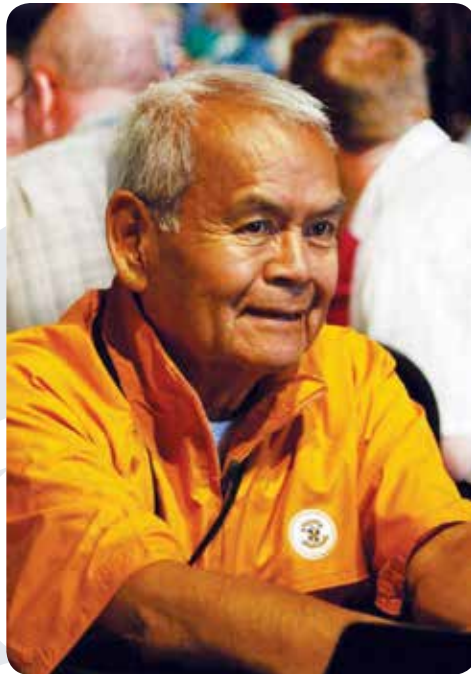
Gym:
 12pm Light Lunch Provided
 5pm Traditional Style Community Dinner



Spirit

SHARING CULTURALLY IMPORTANT
KNOWLEDGE & PRACTICES

Elders' Wisdom



Late Alvin Dixon,
Heiltsuk First Nation

*"You can go anywhere you want. Nothing can stop you.
Be brave about your past experience, confront it,
talk about it and move forward."*

Share Your Elders' Wisdom: Spiritmagazine@fnha.ca