



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Annual Report

2023/2024



## Contents

Message from the Board Chair

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Our Goals and Strategies

Our Guideposts

Goal 1: Governance and Partnerships

Goal 2: Access to Quality Services

Goal 3: Mental Health and Wellness

Goal 4: Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism

Goal 5: Health and Wellness Innovation

Conclusion

2023/2024 Financial Report

Statement of Operations

Revenue

Expenses

Net Assets



First Nations Health Authority  
501-100 Park Royal South  
Coast Salish Territory  
West Vancouver, BC  
Canada – V7T 1A2

[www.fnha.ca](http://www.fnha.ca) | [info@fnha.ca](mailto:info@fnha.ca)

©2024. Copyright for this publication is held by the First Nations Health Authority. ISSN 1234-1234

*The First Nations Health Authority acknowledges the unceded lands and territories of the self-determining First Nations where the work of this report took place in what is now known as British Columbia. We express gratitude to all those whose wisdom, knowledge and contributions are reflected.*

## Message from the Board Chair **Dr. Sheila Blackstock**

### **'Luu amhl good'y (My heart is happy)**

I am honoured and excited to step into the role of FNHA board chair. I want to start by expressing my deepest gratitude and appreciation for Colleen Erickson as she embarks on her well-deserved retirement. Colleen was appointed to the FNHA Board of Directors in May 2014 and became the board chair in May 2018. Her steadfast dedication to enhancing health care for First Nations is a legacy that will continue to inspire us.

As I enter this role, I hope to complement and build upon the exceptional work that the FNHA is doing to support First Nations peoples across the province. Reflecting on the past year, I am proud of the remarkable progress and achievements we've made.



Through dedicated effort, collaboration and commitment to our shared vision, we have navigated both extraordinary accomplishments and significant challenges. I am particularly proud of the work that has been accomplished with the First Nations-led Primary Health Care Initiative, our response to the toxic drug emergency, and our efforts in addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

Looking forward, we remain focused on deepening our partnerships and expanding our efforts in health service delivery so that every First Nations individual and family has access to the care and resources they need to thrive. Together, we will continue to build on our successes and drive meaningful change for a healthier, more resilient future.

### **Hami yaa nee loosim (I thank you all)**

Dr. Sheila Blackstock  
Board Chair, FNHA

Message from CEO **Richard Jock**

As we reflect on the FNHA's tenth year of operations, I am pleased to share our Annual Report for 2023/24. This milestone marks a decade of commitment to improving health outcomes for First Nations in British Columbia, and it offers a moment to honour those who have shaped our journey. I would like to acknowledge the retirement of our former Board Chair Colleen Erickson, and express appreciation for the many years of work and support that she has dedicated to the FNHA. Colleen's boundless enthusiasm and work ethic inspired many across the organization during her 10 years of service, and her presence will be deeply missed. As we honour the past, we also look to the future with great optimism. It is my pleasure to welcome our new Board Chair, Dr. Sheila Blackstock. Dr. Sheila Blackstock brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in health and we are grateful for her commitment to our work and mission.



I also offer my condolences to the family of our dear late Elder, Bill Cranmer, whose wisdom and guidance helped to shape the development and direction of our organization. His legacy will continue to inspire and guide us.

Reflecting on the past year, we are moved by the remarkable strength and resilience demonstrated by the communities we serve. We are grateful for your continued support and guidance. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff, leaders, partners and everyone working alongside us on this journey. Your passion and unwavering commitment deeply inspire and humble us.

Our annual report highlights the significant progress made in advancing health equity, self-determination and wellness for First Nations people across BC. One of the year's most impactful events was co-hosting the Ninth Gathering of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide with the First Nations Health Directors Association and the First Nations Health Council. This event united over 3,700 Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from across the globe to celebrate resiliency, honour Indigenous teachings and explore wellness, governance and self-determination. It provided a powerful platform for fostering deep connections, knowledge sharing and cultural exchange.

Another significant milestone was the development of a two-year implementation plan to guide our next steps on the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health.

The First Nations-Led Primary Health Care Initiative represents a monumental step in our journey of health service delivery, with over 100 First Nations communities actively involved in its development and implementation. With eight First Nations Primary Care Centres currently operational or in development, vital health services are now being delivered closer to home in alignment with Nations' cultural values and traditions.

In partnership with First Nations communities, Chiefs, health leaders, health care frontline staff and other provincial partners, we are committed to developing culturally safe mental health and wellness programs and supports. We continue to enhance our provincial network of healing centres and modalities as part of a comprehensive care continuum, designed to support communities in healing from trauma and tailored to the needs of community. As of July 2024, nine sites have been selected across BC to support the implementation of these healing centres. Additionally, the Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society completed construction of its new Helping House Treatment Centre on Cowichan lands. This facility, which now accommodates 32 beds, offers substance use and trauma treatment programs. Our partnership and support for these programs and initiatives reflects our commitment to addressing the root causes of trauma and addiction within our communities.

This past year also marked the eighth year since the Province declared the toxic drug crisis a public health emergency. The disproportionate impact on First Nations people remains a concern, with devastating losses felt in First Nations communities and our FNHA family. I express my deepest gratitude to everyone across the organization who helped us meet the many challenges that arose as we maintained our Level 2 emergency response this year. Your efforts to raise awareness and take action to support First Nations people are deeply appreciated.

As we enter the next year, we see positive change upon us and will continue the important work that we know remains to be done. We are encouraged by the work that has been accomplished to date and the partnerships that have been fostered over the past year. Together, we will strive to achieve our vision of healthy, self-determining and vibrant First Nations children, families and communities throughout BC.

Thank you for your support and dedication.

*In health and wellness,*

Richard Jock  
Chief Executive Officer, FNHA

## Celebrating Colleen Erickson Upon Her Retirement

After a decade of dedicated service and unwavering commitment as board chair for the FNHA, Colleen Erickson announced her retirement from the FNHA. Throughout her time at the FNHA, Colleen led with humility and compassion, always advocating for the improvement of First Nations health and wellness, grounded in the belief that cultural identity is foundational to well-being. She is deeply connected to First Nations communities across the province, frequently travelling to groundbreaking ceremonies and building openings, along with participating in every region and caucus, listening attentively to community voices.

Colleen played a pivotal role in shaping the FNHA's path and advancing its mission. Her leadership was instrumental in navigating the organization through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing toxic drug crisis and environmental health emergencies. Under her guidance, the FNHA refined policy frameworks and finalized the 10-year Successor Canada Funding Agreement, securing crucial resources to support excellence in service delivery and fostering positive relationships with provincial and federal governments.

As Colleen embarks on her next chapter, the FNHA expresses gratitude for her profound contributions. Her teachings, wisdom, and stories will serve as enduring sources of inspiration and guidance for the FNHA Board of Directors, the executive team, and the Board Secretariat for years to come.



## Introduction

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) 2023/2024 Annual Report highlights our collective progress on the goals and strategies outlined in our [2023/2024 Summary Service Plan: Paddling Together](#). The report also shares our ongoing work towards realizing our [Shared Vision](#) and the advancements made with partners to transform the health system and deliver health care services aligned with First Nations ways and perspectives.

We continue to track progress on our goals through performance measurement and this report shares both quantitative and story-based data on each of the measures in our Service Plan.

Five guideposts are woven throughout the report, highlighting the wisdom and guiding principles that ground all our work at the FNHA. The report also contains updates from each of the five regions, highlighting progress made towards our goals and the regional health and wellness plans for the Fraser Salish, Northern, Interior, Vancouver Coastal and Vancouver Island regions.





## Our Goals and Strategies

Our goals reflect the strategic-level aspirations of the FNHA for the duration of our Service Plan. In accordance with our ground-up approach to planning, the goals align with the priorities identified in regional health and wellness plans. Each goal is coupled with an outcome statement that describes the desired changed state resulting from our course of action. Strategies are also identified for each goal, which describe more specific mechanisms and processes by which the FNHA will work towards our desired outcomes. Lastly, our Service Plan outlines operational priorities for the 2023/2024 fiscal year. These priorities describe where and how efforts were focused this past year in relation to the goals and strategies.



### Goal 1: Governance and Partnerships

Drive transformation through the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure and partnerships by advancing work with health governance partners to take action on First Nations priorities around embedding First Nations health and wellness perspectives throughout the system.



### Goal 2: Access to Quality Services

Enhance access to culturally safe health and wellness and primary care that reflects First Nations perspectives of wellness, while advancing First Nations-led primary health care projects and nursing services and virtual options to bring services closer to home.



### Goal 3: Mental Health and Wellness

Enhance culturally safe mental health and wellness approaches. Healing from root causes of trauma through improved culturally safe mental health, harm reduction and substance use approaches.



### Goal 4: Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism

Advance First Nations approaches to addressing anti-Indigenous racism. Improve culturally safe health care experiences where First Nations in BC feel heard, valued and seen.



### Goal 5: Health and Wellness Innovation

Drive community-based and nation-based health and wellness innovation together with First Nations and other partners. Collaborate with partners to access sustainable funding for innovative program and service delivery models.

## Our Guideposts

Our Service Plan includes guideposts, which are topics of focus that flow across all five of our goals. They reflect what we consistently heard throughout our engagements with First Nations in BC and are intended to keep us grounded and offer ongoing direction as we implement our Service Plan's goals and strategies.



### **First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness**

We uphold a shared understanding of a wholistic view of health and well-being that understands health and wellness journeys are owned by the individual and influenced by families, communities, environments and other Social Determinants of Health.



### **Quality**

We weave cultural safety and humility and Indigenous-specific anti-racism practice into the health and wellness system to improve health outcomes for First Nations in BC. We also strive for excellence and continual improvement by seeking feedback from First Nations and building on wise practices to enhance the quality of programs and services.



### **Culture and Decolonization**

We work with our partners to address Indigenous-specific racism and transform the health system in ways that reflect the connection to land, language and culture that are foundational to First Nations health and wellness. We embrace wisdom and guidance from communities and Nations to embed First Nations priorities and perspectives in our programs, services, partnerships and operations.



### **Urban and Away-from-Home**

We work to address barriers and expand programs and services to support First Nations peoples living in urban areas and away-from-home who have not always been meaningfully included in service design or delivery.



### **Innovation**

We lift up, celebrate and support innovative, community-led approaches to transforming the planning and delivery of health services in ways that will improve health outcomes for First Nations in BC.

## Goal 1: Governance and Partnerships

*Drive transformation through the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure and Partnerships*



**Outcome Statement:** A transformed health system in BC reflecting First Nations priorities, supported by the First Nations Health Governance Structure.

**Strategy 1.1:** Collaborate with the First Nations Health Council (FNHC) and the First Nations Health Directors Association (FNHDA) to advance our shared vision and strengthen BC First Nations health governance and partnerships.

**Strategy 1.2:** Operate through excellence, strengthening regional decision-making and bringing services closer to home.

**Strategy 1.3:** Champion health and wellness with partners to advance Social Determinants of Health.

### 2023/2024 Operational Priorities

- Progress work with health system partners in implementing recommendations from the Tripartite Evaluation
- Continue work to establish an effective and regionally responsive operating model for the FNHA
- Strengthen FNHA policies, programs and services in ways that uphold First Nations perspectives of health and wellness
- Bolster efforts to ensure First Nations perspectives and priorities are reflected in federal and provincial legislation and policies

## Stories of Progress

### Tripartite Partners Host the Ninth Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering

The Ninth Gathering of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide took place between September 11 and 15, 2023, in Vancouver, BC. The Gathering brought together 3,726 Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from Canada, the continental US, Aotearoa, Australia, Hawai'i and other geographies. In addition to attendees, close to 300 volunteers supported the Gathering, most of whom were FNHA staff.

The overall theme for the Gathering was *Resiliency through Indigenous Teachings, Celebrating Wellness, Health Governance, and Nation-Rebuilding*. Over the five days of the Gathering, the agenda included keynote speakers, youth and Elder activities, dancing, singing, nightly events, concurrent sessions and workshops. Participants shared that the activities and sessions were powerful, allowing them to gain knowledge and tools, forge new relationships and feel strength and solidarity.

The Gathering was a profound event, successfully cultivating deep connections and memorable experiences among its diverse array of participants. It served as a vibrant platform for Indigenous peoples to come together; celebrate and share their rich cultural heritages through storytelling, dance and song; and exchange knowledge. The event's atmosphere was infused with a sense of unity, shared purpose, meaningful interactions and cultural exchange.



*FNHA's (former) Board Chair Colleen Erickson joins participants in honouring our diverse cultures at the Gathering*



*A Gathering participant shares the practice and teaching of smudging with visitors*

### Celebrating 10 Years of the FNHA

On October 3, 2023, the FNHA hosted a 10-year celebration in Vancouver to reflect on the past and celebrate with traditional dancers and cultural crafts. The FNHA was established in 2013, beginning a new era in BC First Nations Health Governance and health care delivery by taking responsibility for the programs and services formerly delivered by Health Canada. The BC First Nations Health Governance Structure includes the FNHA, the FNHC and the FNHDA.

The FNHA and its partners at the FNHC and FNHDA take direction from the Chiefs and leaders of over 200 diverse First Nations living in BC. The FNHA continues to support and advocate for wholistic, integrated health and wellness services for members living in community, urban and away-from-home and rural and remote areas.



**Left to right:** (Wenecwtsin) Wayne Christian, deputy chair, FNHC; Richard Jock, chief executive officer, FNHA; Keith Marshall, president, FNHDA; Colleen Erickson, (former) chair of FNHA Board of Directors; Wade Grant, chair, FNHC

### **Richard Jock, chief executive officer of the FNHA**

*“The FNHA is proud of the accomplishments we’ve made over the decade and recognize there is still much to do on our journey forward. We continue to work against the effects of colonialism and systemic racism in the health care system to improve the lives of First Nations people in BC. Reflecting back, I recognize the many challenges we have overcome in the first 10 years. We’ve had to stay flexible and responsive to communities – acknowledging the response efforts to the wildfires, floods, COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects of colonialism, including the continued discovery of unmarked graves. Our challenges have resulted in successes and I look forward to the implementation of UNDRIP and DRIPA, knowing that the FNHA operates through the 7 Directives and is community-driven, nation-based.”*

### **Colleen Erickson, (former) chair of FNHA Board of Directors**

*“We have so much to celebrate, we really have had a positive 10 years of growth and transition in service of First Nations people in BC, who are the ones who said this organization is needed to take over our own health care. We've done well in serving the people in the last 10 years.”*

**Wade Grant, chair of the First Nations Health Council**

*“This milestone is our opportunity to reflect on the wisdom and guidance received from First Nations Chiefs, leaders and communities that guides our journey for health transformation in BC. From the creation of the 7 Directives that underpin our work, to creation of a new health authority in 2013 to the signing of a new 10-year funding agreement with Canada this past spring, the FNHC is proud of our role as advocates in service to the health and well-being of First Nation communities – the Title and Rights Holders. With our partners at the FNHA and FNHDA, we remain focused on our shared vision of healthy, vibrant and self-determining children, families and communities.”*

**Keith Marshall, president of the First Nations Health Directors Association**

*“While many strategies and action plans have been developed in the years, our organizational success is not measured by the documents, it's measured by the impacts that have been felt in communities, the countless lives that have been saved, and the health disparities that have been improved. This is our true measure of success! We must always remember that this work was all made possible by the First Nations Chiefs and Health Directors in this province who believed in themselves, and believed in each of you to help implement their vision. Transfer was a true act of self-determination. We have excelled ever since.”*

Update on the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health: A Framework for the Future

In February 2023, at Gathering Wisdom XII, 86 percent of Chiefs and leaders voted in favour of the [10-Year Strategy](#) the highest approval level of any resolution to date.

The 10-Year Strategy is a comprehensive framework designed to decolonize health care and promote a more integrated, whole-of-government approach to health care service delivery for First Nations people in British Columbia. The Strategy focuses on four key areas to address the Social Determinants of Health and enhance the health and wellness of First Nations individuals, families and communities:

- 1. Healing Approaches:** Enhancing trauma-informed care across all levels, including state-of-the-art clinic equipment and emergency transportation.
- 2. Cultural Infrastructure:** Rebuilding cultural infrastructure damaged by colonialism to reclaim and support healing practices and traditions.
- 3. Nation-Based Governance:** Implementing system changes to better accommodate approaches and solutions that meet the specific needs and priorities of Nations.
- 4. Sustainable Funding:** Establishing flexible and sustainable federal and provincial investment strategies for mental health planning and service delivery.

To facilitate the implementation of the 10-Year Strategy, the FNHA has collaborated with the FNHC and FNHDA to create an initial two-year implementation plan. This plan outlines key milestones, timeframes and critical decision points. Over the past year, significant progress has been made, including:

- sharing initial implementation considerations for feedback at Regional Governance Caucuses;
- drafting a reporting framework; and
- developing a funding distribution approach informed by communities.

This update reflects our commitment to advancing a whole-of-government approach to addressing the Social Determinants of Health and supporting the well-being of First Nations communities.



*Wade Grant, FNHC chair, and Wenecwtsin (Wayne) Christian, deputy chair, speak about the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health at the 2024 Health and Wellness Summit in Vancouver*

## Regional Initiatives

### Fraser Salish Region

#### *Partnership Accord and signing ceremony*

In the fall of 2023, the Chiefs and leaders who make up the Fraser Salish Regional Caucus passed a motion to approve a renewed Fraser Partnership Accord. Endorsed by the FNHA, this updated Accord was signed by the Fraser Salish Regional Caucus, Métis Nation BC, the Ministry of Health and the Fraser Health Authority. The Partnership Accord aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) and the Declaration Act Action Plan and builds upon the 2011 and 2020 Partnership Accords to strengthen the regional health governance structure. The creation of the Indigenous Health Collaborative Council (IHCC), a joint decision-making body, ensures that First Nations and Métis are equal partners in the design, delivery and evaluation of Indigenous health services, and that health services provided by the Fraser Health Authority are culturally safe and free from anti-Indigenous racism.

In February 2024, the Fraser Salish regional team, Métis Nation BC, Fraser Health and the Ministry of Health coordinated the Partnership Accord signing ceremony in Shxwhá:y Village, where the Pil'alt Warriors honoured the work.

The renewed accord commits the four parties to share decision-making and to transform the regional health system into one that is culturally safe, equitable, responsive to and accessible for First Nations and other Indigenous people living in the region.

A Memorandum of Relationship between the Fraser Salish Caucus and the FNHA was also signed to confirm and recognize the shared commitment to improving the health and wellness of First Nations people in the region, and to confirm the FNHA's roles and functions regarding the Fraser Salish Caucus commitments in the renewed Fraser Partnership Accord.

### Interior Region

#### *Secwepemc Health Caucus successfully transitions to become Le7 te Melámen Society*

The Secwepemc Health Caucus officially transitioned from a host agency to an independent, self-governing society effective March 31, 2024. A Le7 te Melámen Society Transition Ceremony was held on March 1 and was witnessed by Secwepemc community Elders and youth.

The Le7 te Melámen Society translates to “*Good Medicine Society*” and was brought forward by Robert Simon, a member of Skeetchestn Indian Band. The name was shared with Secwepemctsín Knowledge Keepers and Elders to be translated for the new Secwepemc Nation Health Society. The name signifies how Secwepemc medicine people would meet with their neighbouring Interior Nations to share knowledge and medicine and further their spiritual skills.

Le7 te Melámen Society was carefully selected by the Secwepemc Health Directors, Secwepemc Chiefs, and Board of Directors. The society is comprised of 16 Kukúkpí7 and 18 Health Directors, Health Leads from Secwepemcul'ecw and has six board members.

The Le7 te Melámen Society has operated through host agencies to deliver community-driven, Nation-based health and wellness initiatives for the Secwepemc Nation. As the organization continues to grow,



it became a priority to transition the Secwepemc Health Caucus to its own entity and become a Health Society.



### Northern Region

#### *Opening of the Lheidli T'enneh FNHA Office and nursing stations improvements*

In the fall of 2023, the Northern Region opened a new office on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh. With the region's growth, this new space was needed for the Prince George area to support regional and provincial staff. Special guests included BC Assembly of First Nations Chief Terry Teegee, FNHA Board Chair Sheila Blackstock and Lheidli T'enneh Chief Dolleen Logan. Lheidli T'enneh community members enjoyed food and were given gifts to recognize the partnership with the FNHA.



### Vancouver Coastal

#### *Regional Health Governance and Partnerships*

Over the past year, the Vancouver Coastal regional team achieved several key milestones, including:

- refreshing the Vancouver Coastal Regional Caucus Terms of Reference;

- updating the Regional Governance Structure and incorporating the FNHC evaluation; and
- developing principles for regional shared decision-making.

These efforts align with the FNHC’s commitment to evolve regional health governance based on First Nations’ needs and guidance both regionally and provincially.

In partnership with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, meetings took place to advance the refresh of the Vancouver Coastal Partnership Accord.

Additional highlights include:

- enhancing First Nations youth involvement and leadership at regional and sub-regional caucuses; and,
- coordinating a full-day ceremony during Winter Caucus to honour those affected by addiction or the toxic drug public health emergency. During this ceremony, attendees contributed to the Strengthening the Circle blanket, symbolizing resilience, knowledge transfer and data governance. The blanket will be housed in the region for community access.



*During the Fall 2023 Vancouver Coastal Caucus, regional leadership and community members gathered together in ceremony to acknowledge the toxic drug crisis, honour loved ones and ground the toxic drug response work in culture.*

## Measuring our Performance

### Closer to Home

#### *Transfers of programs, services and staff*

- Completed transition of nursing operations to the Interior, Northern and Vancouver Coastal regions
- Increased regional engagement capacity through the addition of one FTE per region

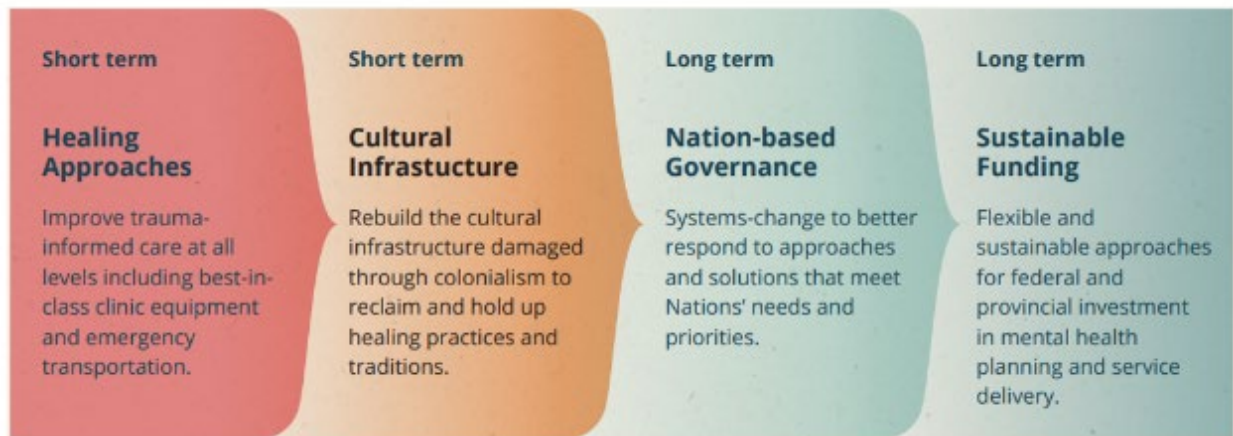
#### *Quality services delivered in communities or Nations*

- Two First Nations-led Primary Health Care Centres are operational, providing primary care closer to home; in addition, initial service offerings will be available at the remaining 13 Primary Health Care Centres by April 1, 2025
- New reporting system for FNHA treatment centres being supported by regional Addictions Specialists to fill empty beds **Decolonizing Health Systems and Nation Building**

#### *Stories of FNHA partnerships advancing improvements on social determinants of health*

The FNHA is partnering with the FNHC and federal and provincial governments to deliver on the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health.

#### *Four priorities to deliver on the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health*

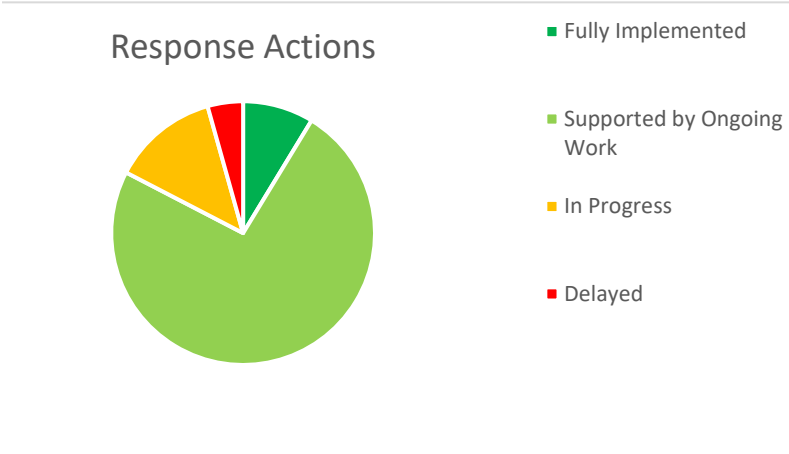


*The Strategy identifies four key areas of focus to address the social determinants of health and strengthen the health and wellness of First Nations individuals, families and communities.*

## Walking Together – We Are One

#### *Tripartite Evaluation Recommendations Addressed:*

The key purpose of the Tripartite Evaluation Report is to tell the story of change amongst the Partners and within the broader health system. The focus of this first, five-year Tripartite Evaluation report - released January 2020 - is on governance, tripartite relationships and integration. We continue to advance all Tripartite Evaluation recommendations. Of the 23 response actions, two have been fully implemented, 17 are supported by ongoing work, three are in progress and one has been delayed.



*Collaboration with Health System Partners:*

On February 26 and 27, the FNHA came together with the First Nations Health Governance Partners, the FNHC and FNHDA for a joint planning session to collaborate, identify pathways to work together better, and discuss ways to advance First Nations health priorities. As a result of this session, a collective work plan is being developed that will drive shared priorities towards tangible outcomes.



## Goal 2: Access to Quality Services

*Enhance access to quality health and wellness services*



**Outcome Statement:** Access to culturally safe health and wellness and primary care that reflect First Nations perspectives of wellness

**Strategy 2.1:** Advance timely and equitable access to culturally safe, team-based primary care.

**Strategy 2.2:** Champion the BC First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness with First Nations.

**Strategy 2.3:** Transform FNHA programs and services in areas such as First Nations Health Benefits, Health Emergency Management and Urban and Away-From-Home.

### **2023/2024 Operational Priorities**

- Implement the First Nations Primary Care strategy, including the opening of First Nations-led Primary Care Centres.
- Improve timely access to culturally safe care through eHealth and partnerships to advance enabling technology initiatives
- Support communities in adapting to a changing climate by strengthening community preparedness activities, with a focus on the most at risk of climate-related health outcomes
- Develop and implement a coordinated strategy supporting urban and away-from-home populations
- Educate and strengthen awareness of the First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness
- Continue work to transform Health Benefits and make patient travel more accessible to First Nations

## First Nations-Led Primary Health Care Initiative (FNPCI) Update

The FNPCI is a partnership between the FNHA, the BC Ministry of Health and participating First Nations. One of the main objectives of the FNPCI is to develop up to 15 First Nations-led Primary Health Care Centre (FNPPCs) in rural and urban locations across BC, three per region. Throughout 2023/24, the FNHA put significant emphasis on advancing the FNPCI, a program designed to enhance access to culturally sensitive and trauma-informed primary health care services for First Nations communities throughout BC. Developed and implemented by community self-determined approaches and leadership, FNPCI places a strong emphasis on First Nations perspectives and practices to provide and deliver primary health care services closer to home, and ensuring those services are aligned with Nations' cultural values and traditions.

During 2023/2024, over 100 First Nations communities were involved in the development and implementation of the FNPCI supported by the FNHA regional teams. Currently, there are two fully operational FNPPCs (Lu'ma Medical Centre and All Nations Healing House). The remaining 13 FNPPCs have completed and submitted service plans and are working towards opening for initial services offerings in the coming year.



*Waiting area at the Lu'ma Medical Centre. As part of the First Nations Primary Health Care Initiative, Lu'ma provides culturally safe and accessible primary care services for Indigenous families in Vancouver.*

## Éyameth: Weaving Health Together - A Commitment to Partnership Ceremony

In December 2023, FNHA representatives joined Sts'ailes First Nation and other health partners for a Commitment to Partnership ceremony at the future site of Éyameth ("Weaving Health Together" – Halq'eméylem): a First Nations Primary Care Centre.

The ceremony began with the capital project manager with Sts'ailes First Nation, expressing gratitude and emphasizing the centre's significance for both Sts'ailes members and the wider community. Participants then moved to Charlie Longhouse for a traditional lunch, where FNHA staff gifted quarters to all involved. The ceremony underscored the importance of these partnerships, with words spoken in the longhouse carrying legal weight in Coast Salish tradition. A local artist unveiled the new Éyameth logo, depicting healing hands holding sacred cedar branches in a heart shape. The event concluded with four witnesses confirming the ceremony had followed proper protocol. Éyameth, supported by the Sts'ailes Community Care Centre Society, will provide culturally appropriate health services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals.

#### Interior Region First Nations Primary Health Care Initiative Update – St'at'imc Primary Care Centre

The St'at'imc Primary Care Centre (SPCC) is one of three primary care centres within the FNHA Interior Region as part of the FNPCI. The St'at'imc Chiefs and Health Directors highlighted the devastating effects of landslides, fires and shortages of primary health care providers (e.g. doctors and nurse practitioners) within their Nation. This critical situation prompted the FNHA to engage with St'at'imc Chiefs and Health Directors at the June 2023 Interior Regional Caucus to explore the development of a primary care centre.

To further understand the health needs and gaps for the St'at'imc Nation members, community engagement sessions took place across all six communities in March and April 2024. Engagement is ongoing and will include future sessions, including urban engagement and Elders engagement, to provide updates on the SPCC. Common themes emerged from the initial engagement sessions, which will influence the development of a comprehensive service plan addressing staffing, programs, services, gaps and issues.

#### All Nations Healing House: A Year of Empowering First Nations through Team-Based Culturally Safe Health Care

On June 15, 2023, a celebration marked the unveiling of the name for the First Nations Wellness Centre in Williams Lake, now officially known as the All Nations Healing House (ANHH). Elders from 12 communities of the T̓s̓ihqot'in, D̓ākelh Dené and Secwepemc Nations selected the name. The ANHH, which opened in October 2022, is the first of its kind in the Interior Region and the first wellness centre to open in the region as part of the FNPCI.

The Healing House was conceptualized in 2018 when the FNHA CEO, Interior Health CEO and First Nation Leadership of the Northern Secwépemc, T̓s̓ihqot'in and D̓ākelh Dené Nations reached an agreement to develop a proposal for a First Nations Wellness Centre in Williams Lake.

The ANHH is now over one year in operation and offers excellent, culturally safe, integrated primary health care services for First Nations within the Williams Lake area, including 15 First Nations communities.

The FNHA regional team developed a one year operations report and assessment to improve the reach and quality of the services provided by the ANHH. From a quality assurance lens, this assessment examines the ANHH programs, services, and the roles and responsibilities of each team-based care position that has been implemented in the last year. The objective is to develop a clear understanding of the infrastructure, including capacity and resources, required to address gaps and challenges.

Further, the FNHA began holding new medical staff contracts to manage compensations and improve oversight of clinical quality of care. The ANHH began implementing the *All My Relations Complexity Model* pilot project in November 2023. The model seeks to measure patient complexity and inform panel sizes for primary care providers based on wholistic patient and community needs.

Visit the ANHH website at [www.allnationshealingwl.ca](http://www.allnationshealingwl.ca) to learn more.





## Stories of Progress

### Celebrating the Nuuchahnulth Seafood Garden Restoration Efforts

The FNHA supported the Nuuchahnulth Seafood Garden Project, an initiative aimed at restoring traditional seafood gardens in Nuuchahnulth territory. This project is part of a broader effort to bolster food sovereignty and security for the Nuuchahnulth communities by reviving traditional practices of managing intertidal zones for increased seafood production, while also helping to mitigate environmental damage, industrial activity and the impacts of climate change.

A highlight from the first six months of the project was a gathering of the Nuuchahnulth Youth Warrior Family in Huu-ay-aht territory to harvest traditional seafood and celebrate this last year of building clam gardens in both Tla-o-qui-aht and Huu-ay-aht territories. Attended by 80 individuals representing eight Nations, including 50 Indigenous youth between the ages of 10 and 25, the event saw youth dig for hiičín (clams), dive for tučup (urchin), relish fresh oysters and witness Elders searching intertidal rocks for hayištip (chitons). Those that attended enjoyed harvested seafood around a fire and later brought this food back to the villages to be shared with community members.

As restoration efforts continue, the Youth Warriors look forward to continuing their efforts to restore or build two other clam gardens in Kyuquot and Toquaht territories.



Clam gardens in Kyuquot and Toquaht territories. *Photo credit to Gisele Martin*

### Virtual Health and Wellness Services Award

FNHA Virtual Health and Wellness Services continued to be delivered to First Nations people and their families, receiving high rates of overall satisfaction with clients indicating that they are receiving culturally safe care. In the 2023/2024 fiscal year, there were 11,846 physician encounters for the Doctor of the Day Service and 2,207 physician encounters for the Substance Use and Psychiatry Service.

Accomplishments this year include:

- changing clinic hours to increase patient time in each region;
- piloting a walk-in substance use clinic once a week with the Prince George Needle Exchange;
- successfully recruiting three new Doctor of the Day physicians, a psychiatrist and two substance use locums, and;
- holding the first ever in-person gathering of both service pathways to foster relationships among staff, engage in clinic-wide cultural safety and humility training and discuss opportunities for service improvements.

We are also pleased to share that in 2023, the FNHA Virtual Health and Wellness Services received a BC Quality Award in the category of “Strengthening Health and Wellness,” alongside partners in the Real Time Virtual Support Network. The award was accepted on behalf of the network by John Mah, VP of health benefits and services at FNHA; Dr. Terri Aldred, executive medical director of FNHA medical affairs and wellness office; and Dr. John Pawlovich, director of the Rural Education Action Plan and real-time virtual support lead at the Rural Coordination Centre of BC.

This award was made possible through the dedication and care of our frontline staff who work daily to deliver high-quality, timely and culturally safe virtual health and wellness services.



*Group shot from the first clinic-wide in-person gathering in November 2023*

[Read more about this award on the Health Quality BC website.](#)

### Enhancing Communication for Communities

The efficiency of FNHA's various call centres relies on having the right technology. In 2023, Information Management and Information Technology (IMIT) unveiled an upgraded call centre solution known as Ice Contact Centre. This solution is transforming how the FNHA communicates with First Nations communities.

The First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day ([FNvDOD](#)) and First Nations Substance Use Psychiatric Services ([FNSUPS](#)) teams connect patients with health care providers. The FNvDOD and FNSUPS are virtual primary care services offered to First Nations people and their families living in BC. With the new contact centre, these teams can:

- organize schedules more efficiently to make it easier for patients to get appointments;

- improve the way calls are directed to decrease the time patients have to wait on hold;
- provide access to health care services for rural and remote patients;
- set up automated appointment reminders;
- collaborate better with health care providers;
- allocate staff to the right calls depending on the queue line; and
- view detailed reports about calls to help support their teams with future planning.

The new contact centre enables staff to communicate more effectively with communities, facilitate smoother claims processing, deliver faster resolutions and improve client experiences. A number of service improvements have also been implemented to ensure:

- community members are warmly greeted at the start of every call;
- team members can control their own calling queue; and
- there is no disruption in providing important health care services.

IMIT provides technology support to the FNHA's internal staff and external partners. With the new Ice Contact Centre, the IMIT ServiceDesk team can better support staff and partners. Through this Contact Centre, staff and partners are greeted with a series of prompts and then are connected with a ServiceDesk agent with the right skills for their request.

Call centres are a key point of contact for supporting our communities and IMIT has been committed to making a better experience for clients.



### Regional Health Survey 4

The FNHA Surveys team collects data for the Regional Health Survey 4 (RHS4). The RHS4 is a national health and wellness survey funded by First Nations Information Governance Centre. In order to ensure easier access to participate, community members can access the survey by:

- a secure link; participants receive an emailed link and complete the survey on their own device without the support of a Knowledge Gatherer/Data Collector
- in person interview with a Knowledge Gatherer/Data Collector
- by telephone with a Knowledge Gatherer/Data Collector using the Telus Ice Platform
  - Calling is free for participants
  - Participants can request a call back or stay on hold
  - Managers/supervisors can view detailed reports

### Engagement Sessions Led by Urban and-Away-from-Home

The Urban and Away-from-Home (UAH) team conducted 21 engagement sessions in the Northern Region, spanning 12 locations and including four virtual meetings. In total, the FNHA interacted with 433 individuals through in-person sessions, surveys or virtual engagements. The purpose of this work is to identify communication and engagement pathways with the UAH population to support the FNHA's health and wellness planning.

Two comprehensive reports were developed from the engagement sessions: a "What We Heard" report and a preliminary "Health and Wellness Service Needs Report." These were drafted and shared with the Northern Region for feedback, and are helping to inform next steps regarding this important work. An Engagement Framework is also in the process of being developed.

Each regional team has a UAH regional coordinator to support the health and wellness of the UAH population in that region. Engagement strategies and implementation plans were developed for the Interior and Vancouver Island regions, with engagements occurring during summer 2024. Preliminary engagement planning is underway with the Fraser Salish and Vancouver Coastal regional teams.

### *Communications and events:*

In 2023/2024, the UAH team attended 59 in-person events across BC, building connections with over 3,500 individuals. These events aimed to connect the team with the UAH population, share information about available health and wellness programs and services and invite eligible individuals to participate in UAH engagements. Some of these events included;

- Powwows such as the Mother’s and Father’s Day Powwow,
- youth conferences such as Gathering Our Voices and
- celebrations including National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Event breakdown by region:

- Northern: 7 events
- Interior: 15 events
- Fraser Salish: 8 events
- Vancouver Coastal: 16 events
- Vancouver Island: 5 events

The largest event was the Mother’s Day Powwow, where the team connected with approximately 450 people.



### Medical Transportation Transformation

“Kucén,” which is Secwepemctsin for “to wander/travel far/abroad” is the FNHA’s administration system for Medical Transportation which supports patient travel clerks by creating a user-friendly and streamlined process to coordinate travel and accommodations, reimburse meals and mileage, and process payments for clients’ medical trips while automating program reporting requirements. In 2023/2024, community implementation of the Kucén system began, with 29 communities now using the system.

We also made the following enhancements to Medical Transportation benefits:

- Increased all meal rates in response to rising food prices in the province
- Updated escort coverage to support low-barrier access to medically necessary services for clients aged 65 and older
- Updated escort coverage for clients travelling to substance use treatment centres to recognize and support the unique needs of clients seeking treatment

- Increased private accommodation rates to better support clients who prefer to stay with friends and family when receiving medical care
- Adjusted temporary and standard mileage rates to align with current gas prices
- Introduced hospital parking benefits to alleviate the financial burden associated with parking fees during medical visits



## Regional Initiatives

### Fraser Salish

#### *Connection with Urban and Away Cousins*

A highlight of the year for the Fraser Salish Region includes the meaningful connections made with the UAH population.

A series of gatherings called “Nurturing Our Roots” was hosted across the region. By working collaboratively with partner agencies, these gatherings aimed to bring wraparound services and support to the UAH population. The events brought traditional practices and foods to community in order to improve access to these supports.

Another strategy to support the UAH population saw harm reduction educators attending events such as local farmers’ markets and overdose awareness events. This allowed them to share education and naloxone training, and to de-stigmatize substance use with members of the public.

### Interior Region

#### *Enhanced Role of FNHA in Emergency Management during the 2023 Wildfire Season*

The FNHA’s role in emergency management within the Interior Region has grown significantly since 2017/2018. From minimal involvement in early years, the FNHA’s participation in 2023 was transformative, positioning the organization as a critical link between community leadership, emergency response teams and impacted communities. This shift was driven by the need to respond quickly to emergencies happening within communities.

During the 2023 wildfire season, the most severe on record in BC, 2,216 wildfires consumed approximately 2.84 million hectares of land. Many of these fires were in the Interior Region. This unprecedented event put immense pressure on the region, with 24 out of 54 communities in the Interior activating their Emergency Operations Centres. Sixteen communities were put on evacuation alert and 13 faced full or partial evacuation orders. Notably, three communities suffered significant losses, with structures destroyed in the worst-hit areas.

Throughout this challenging period, the FNHA’s involvement was pivotal. The FNHA supported local Emergency Operations Centres and evacuation sites. The FNHA’s presence supported the health and safety needs of First Nations communities, facilitating navigation through the complexities of emergency response and recovery. This enhanced engagement marks a significant evolution in the FNHA’s approach to emergency management, highlighting its commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of First Nations communities during critical times.

The Interior Region 2023 Emergency Response After-Action Review report was prepared in collaboration with the FNHA Interior Region staff who provided support to communities during the 2023 emergency response season. The overall intent is to identify wise practices, lessons learned and areas of opportunity, and to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This review will serve as a learning tool to enhance the region's resilience, adaptability and effectiveness in supporting communities and Nations and addressing future emergencies.



*Interior Region staff supporting emergency response.*

## Vancouver Island

### *Vancouver Island Primary Care: Bringing Better Care Closer to Home – Medications in Community*

Members from many rural and remote communities often need to travel far from home to receive health care that might not have been needed if proper medication was on hand. Additionally, leaving rural and remote communities late at night or in poor weather conditions is not an ideal practice as it poses a risk to all involved.

The FNHA Vancouver Island Regional Primary Care team has been working with Dzawada’enuxw First Nation located in Kingcome Inlet and with Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation located on Gilford Island to implement a medications-in-community program that aligns with each Nation’s specific community health needs.

Through a partnership with Island Health, a project plan has been developed that enables safekeeping and dispensing of medications within each of the Nation’s health centres. Island Health has been a key partner in this work and has supported a pathway through acute care to refill specific medications in community as well as support implementation, annual review and inventory of the pathway using their pharmacy technician resources.

### *Vancouver Island Region – Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve*

Since November 2023, seven additional Vancouver Island communities have received Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) funding to provide high-quality childcare that follows the six components of Head Start: culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support.

The Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Ts’uubaa-asatx First Nations are now offering AHSOR to their families. Additionally, Pauquachin, Stz’uminus, Snaw Naw As and Tsawout communities, which already had AHSOR funding, are now offering no-fee childcare.

The Vancouver Island Region also welcomed two new AHSOR advisors in April 2023. Along with supporting communities in submissions for AHSOR funding, the advisors assist AHSOR programs with reporting, program evaluation, AHSOR 101 and developing a community of practice. In March 2024, the advisors hosted a very successful conference attended by over 60 AHSOR staff, which included networking, professional development and self-care opportunities.





*Participants listen to a speaker at the 2024 AHSOR conference, which provided an important opportunity to develop a connected community of practice at the regional level.*



*FNHA staffmembers Maureen Black (left) and Laura Guzman (right) make cedar bracelets as part of the cultural activities evening during the 2024 AHSOR conference.*

#### *Vancouver Island Regional Diabetes Strategy*

The Vancouver Island regional team is leading a comprehensive Regional Strategy for Diabetes, ensuring that no community is left behind. Throughout the fall and winter of 2023, IDEA Diabetes consultants Rebecca Sovdi and Barbara MacDonald, along with Indigenous Diabetes Educator Matilda Atleo, actively engaged with communities. Their collective efforts culminated in the presentation of a draft strategy at the 2024 Spring Caucus.

Community feedback has shaped several recommended actions, including:

- Culturally Safe Diabetes Education and Awareness: Providing education that respects and incorporates cultural contexts.
- Joyful Eating and Movement: Promoting healthy and enjoyable lifestyle choices.
- Culturally Safe Supports for Newly Diagnosed Individuals: Ensuring new diagnoses are met with effective and empathetic support.
- Timely Diabetes Screening: Enhancing the accessibility and timeliness of diabetes screening.
- Digital Systems for Health Services: Developing digital tools to support diabetes-related health services.

Throughout the summer of 2024, the team continued engaging with communities and further refined the strategy. The finalized plan will be presented at the Fall Caucus 2024, laying out a seven-year road map to address diabetes in a wholistic and comprehensive manner.

This strategy is the first of its kind in Canada. It exemplifies the FNHA’s commitment to inclusive and innovative health solutions, setting a precedent for diabetes care nationwide.



*Presentation of the Regional Diabetes Strategy at the 2024 Spring Caucus*

## Vancouver Coastal

### *Supporting Early Childhood Development*

To support healthy families and early childhood development, the regional team assisted with the funding application for the LEGO Build a World of Play Challenge, “Reclaiming Indigenous Children’s Futures through Home-visiting and Intergenerational Playspaces.” The Lil’wat Nation successfully secured funding, and the program will be tailored to their community’s protocols, traditions and culture, supporting caregivers from pregnancy through early childhood. This five-year project will also develop a natural play spaces to enhance land-based learning for Elders, children, youth and families.

## Measuring Our Progress

### Pathways to Access

*Clients' satisfaction with transformed FNHA programs and services:*

- Overall satisfaction: 41.2%, up from 39.9%
- Satisfaction with coverage of their claim: 50.5%, up from 48.5%

*Clients' satisfaction with accessibility and cultural safety of FNHA primary care services:*

#### **Survey of the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day Service:**

- **93%** of respondents satisfied overall
- **93%** felt the care they received was culturally safe
- **93%** would recommend the service to their family and friends.

*"Incredible experience with this service! Truly a life saver when I couldn't get into a clinic anywhere locally and was told the hospital was the only option. Very thankful this service exists." – FNvDOD Client*

#### **Survey of the First Nations Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service:**

- 92% of respondents satisfied overall
- 95% felt the care they received was culturally safe
- 92% would recommend the service to their family and friends

*"Calling in is always easy and non-judgmental. My doctor is always ready to listen and explain my questions to me. I look forward to each visit and will continue to work with my doctor for as long as I can and would like to for many years to come." – FNSUPS Client*

### Health Through Wellness

*Stories of FNHA initiatives and programs that effectively incorporate First Nations perspectives on health and wellness*

- The "[Summer on the Land](#)" posts, Mother's Day and Father's Day were the most engaged with posts of the year across FNHA's social media platforms and several hundred photos were received. This initiative will take place seasonally going forward.

*Stories of championing the BC First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness*

- The FNHA launched new cancer screening resources, including:
  - [Seven videos](#) featuring Dr. Nel Wieman and Dr. Nadine Caron discussing a range of topics from how to support loved ones, and traditional medicine and cancer
  - [A video](#) featuring FNHA staff
  - Four print resources: Cancer Screening Flipbook, Screening Programs in BC, Living with Cancer Booklet, and Preparing for the Journey: Wholistic End-of-Life Care for First Nations People Living in BC
- The Offices of the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer submitted feedback on Health Canada's documents regarding Medical Assistance in Dying.
- The *Strengthening the Circle* report, resulting from an internal knowledge exchange session, was reviewed internally by leadership and shared with event participants for validation. Revision of report based on feedback received is underway for a late spring internal release

- The OCMO Healing Indigenous Hearts (HIH) team, in collaboration with Interior Region team, delivered a training workshop in Williams Lake and completed a summary event report. The HIH team continues to support a six-month pilot project for the HIH Bereavement Support Group at Binche in Williams Lake and the Northern Region communities Nak'azdli and Yekooche. In-person HIH training for Vancouver Coastal Region is planned for next fiscal year

*# of speaking engagements, campaigns, events and initiatives delivered*

71 external health literacy wellness messages or campaigns were delivered by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.

## Goal 3: Mental Health and Wellness

*Enhance culturally safe mental health and wellness approaches*



**Outcome Statement:** Healing from root causes of trauma through improved culturally safe mental health, harm reduction and substance use approaches.

**Strategy 3.1:** Develop and implement a healing-from-trauma approach focused on the root causes of trauma, including residential school legacies.

**Strategy 3.2:** Enhance access to a continuum of mental health and wellness approaches, emphasizing cultural healing and prevention.

**Strategy 3.3:** Implement harm reduction strategies for substance use and the toxic drug crisis.

### **2023/24 Operational Priorities**

- Implement a framework to support and sustain region-specific, trauma-informed mental health and wellness supports
- Enhance supports for youth that facilitate traditional healing and prevention-based approaches
- Prioritize the implementation of coordinated, comprehensive, evidence-based and gender-specific approaches, supportive of efforts to reduce the impacts of the toxic drug crisis

## Stories of Progress

### First Nations Health & Wellness Summit Addresses Critical Health Issues Impacting First Nations in BC

From April 4th to April 6th, 2023, the First Nations Health & Wellness Summit gathered over 400 participants at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Vancouver to share community-driven practices for wholistic wellness. This strong turnout highlighted the collective passion for finding innovative solutions to health issues affecting First Nations children, families and communities in BC.

The Summit focused on exploring ways to address the disproportionate impact of the toxic drug crisis, health emergencies and recent findings from residential schools on First Nations health and wellness. Keynote speakers, workshops and interactive discussions emphasized community-based best practices. Participants were encouraged to bring these learnings back to their communities to foster positive change.

Practical training and education sessions enhanced participants' capacity to address trauma, addiction, harm reduction and overall wellness. FNHA's Acting Chief Medical Officer Dr. Nel Wieman delivered a captivating keynote on her personal journey toward wellness, starting from her childhood experiences.

Dr. Wieman recounted her struggles with food insecurity, facing racism in Thunder Bay and being discouraged from pursuing her dream of becoming a doctor. Despite facing racism in medical school, she found solace in running and support from Indigenous mentors. In her talk, she used the metaphor of the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, where broken objects are repaired with gold to create something more beautiful than the original. "People are more beautiful for having been broken," she shared, encouraging the audience to view their struggles as a source of strength and beauty.



### Healing Houses and Modalities

The FNHA continues to advance its vision of establishing a provincial network of healing centres and modalities as part of a comprehensive continuum of care. These unique healing houses and modalities aim to complement existing services and provide communities with support for healing from trauma.

Our approach focuses on collaboration and partnering with regions to identify both initial and potential sites for these centres. The specific services at healing houses are tailored to the needs of each community to address the root causes of trauma, incorporating both cultural and western mental health modeled approaches. As of July 2024, nine sites have been selected to support the implementation of healing centres or modalities across BC.

[Rebuilding the Circle](#), housed in Kackaamin Family Healing Centre, is in its second year of operation. They completed their prototype program, which is delivered to families with children who have been sexually abused, persons who have been sexually harmed and persons who have harmed others sexually. Phase two involves a mobile unit that will travel to communities to support this work.

This network of healing centres and modalities will enhance FNHA-funded programs, and help to foster a comprehensive continuum of mental wellness care for all First Nations in BC.

### *Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society Helping House Treatment Centre*

In January 2024, Tsow-Tun Le Lum (TTLL) Society finished construction on its new Helping House Treatment Centre, opening its new location at 2850 Miller Road on Cowichan lands. The relocation supported the expansion to 32 beds to provide substance use and trauma treatment programs; 20 of the substance use beds are funded through the FNHA

The newly built centre began accepting clients in January 2024. The facility has proven to be highly utilized, operating at near full capacity on a consistent basis. TTLL estimates that about 500 people participate in their on-site programs annually, with approximately 380 people using bed-based treatment, which includes support for substance use, grief and loss, and trauma programs. A new initiative for TTLL is to explore pre-treatment stabilization as part of their programming.

The majority of funding for the relocation and new construction came through the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding, with additional support from Corrections Services Canada and private donors. The FNHA continues to offer partnership and support to facilitate the program's ongoing success.



## Junior All-Native Basketball Tournament (JANT)

As part of our efforts to support youth wellness, the FNHA proudly supported the Junior All-Native Basketball Tournament (JANT) in March 2023. The event brought together 85 basketball teams at the SportsPlex in Terrace, BC, located on the unceded territory of the Tsimshian people, for an electrifying opening ceremony.

Hosted by the Nisga'a Nation, the ceremony commenced with a performance by the Gitlaxdax Nisga'a Dancers, captivating the packed arena with their energy. Mike Davis, a manager with the organizing committee, remarked, "I've never heard an arena so alive."

JANT featured four categories: U17 male and female, and U13 male and female, with teams from across BC competing in divisions North, Central and South. From 8 a.m. to midnight, the arena buzzed with activity throughout the tournament, fostering enduring friendships among youth that will endure for generations.



## Regional Initiatives

### Interior

#### *Mental Health and Wellness Planning in Communities*

Communities in the Interior Region underwent a mental health and wellness planning process that took place in 2023/24 offered First Nations communities the opportunity to identify and voice gaps in services and supports in relation to mental health. From this, the community's developed and implemented a plan on how the FNHA Interior Region Mental Health team could provide support, both directly and in partnership with Interior Health. Mental health and wellness planning in First Nations communities will continue in the coming year, and we are pleased that planning completed with the T̓silhqot'in. Harm reduction work plans were also completed with the Nlaka'pamux, Syilx, Secwepemc, and Ktunaxa.



*The Okanagan Indian Band Hosts Harm Reduction Program: Building Connection by Giving Back*

The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) hosted a harm reduction program for community members, substance users, their families, and OKIB staff, called Building Connections by Giving Back. The program integrated Syilx teachings and ways through various ceremonies, provided harm reduction training. OKIB strives to keep culture at the forefront of service delivery and to incorporate, Syilx methods whenever possible.

Key elements of the program included cultural and land-based teachings and ceremonies such as the Yuwipi ceremony, water ceremonies, drum groups and youth sweats. The program aims to raise awareness around harm reduction by sharing information and offering one-on-one and group training sessions.

A significant aspect of the program was the development of a sharps and paraphernalia collection initiative. Community members, clients and staff installed six disposal boxes throughout the community and launched a safe disposal campaign to support effective clean-up. During their weekly community sweeps, the group responsibly disposed of 524 drug-related items, including needles, tinfoil, bubble pipes and straight pipes. This initiative helped support the community's safety and cleanliness while fostering culture.



*Mental Health and Wellness Team Initiatives Monthly Webinar Series*

The Mental Health and Wellness webinar series was conducted three times per month and twice per month during the summer. This series, which will continue into the next fiscal year, saw consistent participation and addressed a range of topics, including mental health, harm reduction and crisis response.

**Northern**

*Northern Indigenous Guys Gathering*

The third annual Northern Indigenous Guys Gathering, focused on men's health, was successfully hosted by the Northern Region from November 1-3. The event featured retired NHL player Jordin Tootoo as our keynote speaker, whose profound speech resonated with attendees. Tootoo shared insights on overcoming various adversities, including hailing from a rural community, coping with family loss, depression and suicidal thoughts and battling substance use during his NHL career.

The Gathering attracted 309 participants over three days, culminating in the collection of 840 key points and recommendations from attendees. Beyond the enriching discussions, men had the opportunity to participate in healing sessions led by traditional healers. Additionally, they enjoyed the chance to interact with Jordin Tootoo, obtaining autographs and capturing memorable moments through photographs.

#### *Future Leader and Knowledge Keeper Exchange*

From October 17-19, the FNHA Northern Region hosted a Future Leader and Knowledge Keepers Engagement Forum. This gathering was designed to foster intergenerational connections, amplify delegate voices, and exchange valuable resources. With a total of 254 attendees, including 86 Knowledge Keepers and 85 future leaders, the forum yielded an impressive collection of 1,941 key insights and recommendations.

Representing all 55 First Nations communities in Northern BC, participants were treated to an evening performance by the acclaimed Haisla hip-hop duo, Darren “Young D” Metz and Quinton “Yung Trybez” Nyce, known as the Snotty Nose Rez Kids. Their outstanding performance not only entertained but also engaged the audience, as everyone was invited onstage to dance and sing along to some of the group’s most beloved songs.



Darren “Young D” Metz and Quinton “Yung Trybez” Nyce, known as the Snotty Nose Rez Kids performing at a Future Leader and Knowledge Keepers Engagement Forum in the Northern Region

## **Vancouver Island**

### *Mobile Harm Reduction Response*

The FNHA Vancouver Island Region has worked alongside communities to find new ways of addressing the toxic drug poisoning crisis. Indigenous harm reduction programs and practices in the region include new mobile services aimed at providing culturally safe services for people who use substances.

*Hamiksilas's Anise, or Auntie's Kitchen*, is a food truck that offers meals to community members at no cost as a means of fostering community connection and building relationships. An initiative developed by Kwakiutl First Nation on Northern Vancouver Island, the goal of Auntie's Kitchen is to reach out and reduce stigma and isolation that can have deadly consequences for those who use substances.

“Food is medicine, especially in the context of reducing isolation and creating community,” stated a worker with one of the communities served by the food truck.

An important aspect of Auntie's Kitchen is the connection to the land through traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, gardening and gathering local foods and medicines. These activities are open to all community members.

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council has expanded their harm reduction outreach program to include a new van, providing mobile services to truly meet people where they are at. The outreach van includes safe supplies, harm reduction services and cultural supports. The van offers support to people in Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Tofino, with an aim of engaging with Nuu-chah-nulth members to increase their access to care and social services.

The van also offers wound care, with the goal of eventually bringing on broader nursing services.



*Hamiksila'sas Anise, or Auntie's Kitchen, is a food truck initiative developed by Kwakiutl First Nation that offers meals to community members at no cost, as a means of fostering community connection and building relationships*



*The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council outreach van safe offers supplies, harm reduction services, and cultural supports to Nuuchahnulth members in Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Tofino*

#### *łokwimas - You are Strong Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative*

The FNHA Vancouver Island Regional Mental Health and Wellness team partnered with N'alaga Consulting to offer the łokwimas – You are Strong: Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative training, in each of the three family groups: Nuuchahnulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish.

The goal of łokwimas is to strengthen youth in communities and empower them to thrive, heal and reclaim their ancestral cultural identities as acts of resistance against the impacts of colonialism. The training weaves together suicide prevention strategies from a social justice lens, Indigenous worldview teachings, trauma-informed yoga and land-based, culturally rooted healing methodologies. The training intends to offer life-affirming connection to Indigenous identity, the land and culture to support Indigenous youth to be resilient.

For each of the trainings, local Knowledge Keepers were consulted to adapt the Youth Suicide Prevention guidebook to include language connected to teachings about land, wellness, culture and healing, as well as trauma-informed yoga forms. Guidebooks included teachings in Nuučaañuł, Kwak'wala, Hul'q'umi'num and SENĆOŦEN.

In total, 59 participants attended this Indigenous-led training. Feedback was positive, with participants reporting that the training inspired them to want to learn more of their language and implement more cultural teachings and grounding exercises in their work. The łokwimas framework is meant to be shared. Participants were invited to take what they learned and adapt these learnings to include local

Elders, knowledge, teachings, language and culture in their communities.



*Participants of the ʔokʷimas – You Are Strong: Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative training*



*The aim of ʔokʷimas is to strengthen youth in communities and empowers them to thrive, heal and reclaim their ancestral cultural identities as acts of resistance against the impacts of colonialism*

#### *Community-Led Tripartite Response in the North Island*

In the spring, Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw, Kwakwaka’wakw and Quatsino First Nations declared a State of Emergency to address the unprecedented number of toxic drug poisoning deaths in the North Island. FNHA and Island Health joined the Nations to stand up an Emergency Operations Centre to follow the community’s lead and voice in response activities.

### *Establishing Youth and Elders Advisory Councils in the Vancouver Island Region*

Over the past year, the Vancouver Island Region actively engaged both Elders and youth in its initiatives. The wisdom and experience of Elders grounded these efforts, while including youth to bring their perspectives to health and wellness planning and to offer them the opportunity to be mentored. In 2023, the inaugural Youth Advisory was established, including one youth representative from each of the three cultural families (Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth). The Vancouver Island Region is now working to expand this advisory to include three youth from each cultural family (two from in-community and one away-from-home).

Similarly, the Vancouver Island Region is creating an Elders Advisory. Over the past year, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and former health leaders involved in health governance have been engaged in a focus group to shape the role of the Elder's Advisory. The goal is to formalize the inaugural Elders Advisory in 2024, which will be made up of three Elders from each cultural family.



*The Vancouver Island Partnership Accord Steering Committee honoured regional health champions with a blanketing ceremony at the Fall 2023 Vancouver Island Regional Caucus. Health champions included inaugural Youth Advisory members: Kaitlyn McMahon-White (Snuneymuxw), Jessica Wadhams (Alert Bay), and Janelle Johnson-Sabbas (Huu-ay-aht), as well as Island Health Executive Director of Centre & North Island, Max Jajszczok*

### **Vancouver Coastal**

#### *Addressing Environmental and Public Health Emergencies in the Region*

Addressing environmental and public health emergencies remains a priority in the Vancouver Coastal Region. Key regional developments in 2023/2024 included:

- **Toxic Drug Response:** Increased measures for wholistic support, including funding for harm reduction resources, enhanced treatment options and tailored training opportunities.
- **Community Self-Determination:** Initiated engagement with First Nations communities to design three new sub--regional health emergency management positions in the Central Coast, Southern Stl'atl'imx and South Coast sub-regions.
- **Emergency Response Training:** Provided crisis response planning, critical incident debriefs and trauma-informed care training for 30 community members, demonstrating a commitment to community resilience and preparedness.

- **Environmental Public Health:** Continued support for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, with a focus on healthy housing and increased housing inspection requests.
- **Student Program:** Welcomed a summer co-op student through FNHA's First Nations Student Program to support health emergency management, community engagement and the toxic drug response, fostering career development for future First Nations health care leaders.

## Measuring Our Performance

### Healing Journeys

*Stories of healing and impacts of harm reduction approaches:*

The Vancouver Island Regional Indigenous Harm Reduction team facilitated the initiative “Increasing Healing and Wellness for Indigenous People Who Use Substances.” The initiative provides a safe space for all people who use substances, and focuses on harm reduction using cultural and community building programming, including harm reduction circles, Indigenous women’s and youth art groups, and cultural and art programming.

People who came to these programs consistently expressed gratitude for having a dedicated space for Indigenous people who use substances. Unhoused Indigenous youth who use substances have been coming to all activities and have expressed that they feel safe and good coming to these programs.

*% reduction of First Nations toxic drug overdose incidents and deaths in BC:*

Sadly, there was a **24.7%** increase in the number of First Nations toxic drug poisoning deaths in BC from January to June 2023 (222 compared to 178 in previous year).

*Stories of integration of healing from trauma approaches*

The FNHA is developing a youth-facing harm reduction education campaign to empower youth to engage in meaningful discussions about drug use.

### Two-Eyed Seeing

*New/expanded mental health and wellness programs and services supported by the FNHA*

- Youth mental health and wellness programming:
  - Gatekeeper Train the Trainer Program complete (youth suicide prevention)
  - Vancouver Island: Teen Y-Mind Medicine program on stress and anxiety
  - Interior: Several resources (harm reduction, sexual health, sex trafficking) and partnerships developed and conferences attended to build relationships.
- Five suicide intervention trainings were hosted and delivered in each FNHA region, including Youth Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training and N’alaga, with a focus on youth participation.
- Land-based healing (LBH) activities: 112 ongoing projects. All five regions administered funding to communities to support LBH initiatives at the community level, including:
  - LBH camps
  - Grief and loss programs
  - Intergenerational knowledge exchange initiatives
  - Ceremony and traditional healing practices
  - Traditional knowledge revitalization.
- Seven sites were selected to implement of healing centres or modalities across BC.
  - Two additional sites in the North will be confirmed over the next three months.



- health and cultural supports provided at 18 former Indian residential school sites and three former Indian hospitals .

*Client satisfaction with mental health and wellness services*

“I really enjoyed sharing experiences, telling our stories, and hearing from Elders, Chiefs and Traditional Teachers.” – Participant at Indian Residential School Training and Honouring Session

“We bring hope to the people. So, we must always rise and stand above all the challenges. We are powerful as a collective. Be proud of the fact that we save lives.” – Participant at the IRS Training and Honouring Session

“Being a youth being able to come to these events is really important to me. If I was just at home, I don’t live in my community, so being able to learn from other Indigenous peoples is really important and it means a lot to me.” – Participant at Seasonal Learning Series

## Goal 4: Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism

*Advance First Nations approaches to addressing anti-Indigenous racism in health*



**Outcome Statement:** Culturally safe health care experiences where First Nations in BC feel heard, valued and seen.

**Strategy 4.1:** Work with partners in BC to support a racism-free health system with embedded cultural safety and humility practices.

**Strategy 4.2:** Champion cultural safety and humility in BC through regional innovation, First Nations-led responses and service excellence.

**Strategy 4.3:** Advance First Nations approaches to addressing complaints.

### 2023/24 Operational Priorities

- Continue work to prioritize Indigenous-specific racism efforts across FNHA and in regions
- Champion cultural safety and humility as an organization
- Promote the adoption of the Cultural Safety and Humility Accreditation Standard
- Support the development and implementation of safe regional pathways to receive and address feedback from First Nations clients

## Stories of Progress

### FNHA’s Journey towards Cultural Safety and Humility

In 2021, the FNHA, alongside the FNHC and FNHDA, embarked on a transformative path with the launch of the [Anti-Racism, Cultural Safety and Humility \(CSH\) Framework and Action Plan](#). This initiative aimed to cultivate a racism-free health system, deeply entrenched with CSH practices, while positioning these organizations as advocates for CSH in BC. A subsequent update in December 2021 highlighted significant implementation efforts, showcasing tangible progress towards these strategic objectives and reaffirming the FNHA’s dedication to nurturing a health environment that is culturally safe and equitable.

Noteworthy engagement activities, including a session with FNHA leadership at the Executive Strategy team retreat in February 2024 and ongoing dialogues with First Nations communities, play a pivotal role in this process.

These engagements serve as a conduit for gathering vital cultural perspectives and experiences, and help to inform and shape the Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism (ISAR) Action Plan. These comprehensive initiatives underscore the FNHA’s commitment to fostering a culturally safe, inclusive and equitable health system, deeply rooted in respect for Indigenous cultures and practices.



*FNHA CEO Richard Jock delivers the introductory speech at the FNHA executive strategy team’s cultural safety retreat*



*FNHA Executive Strategy Team at CSH Retreat*

[FNHA’s Oral Health Team Promotes Cultural Safety and Humility at the Pacific Dental Conference](#)

In March 2024, the FNHA’s Oral Health team presented on cultural safety and humility at the Pacific Dental Conference. The presentation was attended by approximately 200 attendees and focused on practical strategies for creating culturally safe oral health environments in the context of ongoing colonialism in Canada. The session was presented by Sakshi Sharma and Knowledge Keeper Len Pierre of Katzie First Nation, and the panel included FNHA clinicians Marlene Araujo (RDH), Terry Buhler (RDT) and FNHA contractors Dr. Cam Robson and Dr. David Zaporinuk. FNHA’s Ashley Lessard of the Klahoose First Nation facilitated the panel discussion.

The retreat focused on personal journeys and discussed the impact of incorporating relational practice into work. It included discussion on the unique needs of individuals and communities, and highlighted that clients often carry the weight of intergenerational trauma, which can impact their trust in health care providers. By prioritizing cultural safety and humility, providers have built trust, tailored services, and achieved improved oral health outcomes.



*Oral Health team at the 2024 Pacific Dental Conference, after hosting an impactful session advocating for culturally safe oral health care for BC First Nations*

[BC Cultural Safety and Humility Health System Community of Practice](#)

The FNHA and Métis Nation BC have partnered to host a monthly Community of Practice (CoP) to break down silos and promote knowledge exchange across BC’s health system. The CoP brings together BC health system quality leaders, Elders, patient partners and Indigenous health partners from health and social service organizations who are working towards aligning to and adopting the BC CSH Standard within their organization. CoP members are dedicated to improving the cultural safety and humility of their organizations and this shared space will allow for continuous learning and support as they embark on this work. The CoP is an opportunity to meet regularly to learn from each other in the spirit of transformation, system improvement, decolonization and improved alignment to the CSH Standard.

In February 2024, the CoP came together for four days of shared learning and in-person collaboration at Songhees Wellness Centre. The gathering enabled CoP members together to foster deep relationship-



course also emphasizes self-awareness in cultural safety and humility, with comprehensive training in anti-racism and anti-oppression.

Feedback from participants in the pilot cohort will be used to inform the final iteration of the course before it becomes more widely available.

## Regional Initiatives

### Fraser Salish

#### *Traditional wellness experiential learning*

The Fraser Salish Traditional Wellness Experiential Learning is a powerful initiative developed by the Fraser Salish Region to bridge the gap between health care providers and Fraser Salish First Nations communities. In 2023/24, delivered in close partnership with communities, the program provided health care practitioners the opportunity to learn about the colonial experience, cultural identities and traditional wellness practices that define the Fraser Salish communities. For each event, health care practitioners met at a central location and travelled as a group by bus while a facilitator shared cultural context and knowledge. Upon arrival, participants were met by community members who opened their hearts to share their truths, healing systems and practices in an effort to destigmatize traditional medicines, foster appreciation for the integrity of cultural healing practices, promote the integration of wholistic care and share personal and collective histories.

As individuals on the front lines of the health care system, practitioners were asked to use this knowledge and understanding to foster transformative change and a greater future for the health care system.

Health care providers who participated experienced a profound change in their understanding, knowledge and cultural humility. Participants expressed a desire to learn more and to experience more immersive cultural practices and implement cultural activities into clinical care. Participants were moved and humbled by the kindness of communities in their sharing and demonstration of culture.

Swá:lewel, “Breathing life into your words” was the guiding message of a final event that took place on March 7 at Seabird Island. The event invited participants to recognize the program’s impact and the grace, humility and good intentions of those involved.

The Traditional Wellness Experiential Learning will continue with a new series starting in 2024.

#### *Cultural Safety and Humility training*

As part of efforts to transform the health system, the regional team collaborated with Fraser Health and Métis Nation BC to develop C̓h̓i:ya:̓əstəl', a new cultural safety and anti-racism training program for Fraser Health Authority employees. Communities informed the vision of the training and participated in sharing their stories for video content within the course. Common themes include regional histories, cultures, wellness practices and transformational stories. Participants, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers and youth, also shared lived experiences of racism within the health care system.

The final version of the training took place in summer 2024. The target is that all Fraser Health Authority staff (over 40,000 people), in addition to all physicians, will complete the training by 2027. Fraser Health will cover backfill for staff to meet this goal.

### Vancouver Island

#### *FNHA Quality and Island Health collaboration*

The FNHA provides a culturally safe pathway for First Nations people and communities to share feedback on their experiences occurring anywhere in the health care system. In an effort to increase access and awareness of supports available, a new FNHA’s quality and safety analyst was established to be on site at West Coast General Hospital in port Alberni, providing opportunities to discuss First

Nations access to quality care with both medical staff and community members, while also sharing cultural safety resources.

This new FNHA process will allow visibility and transparency to be woven into the current Vancouver Island Health Patient Care Quality Office. It will also allow for concerns to be shared more safely and confidentially through the FNHA, as it can be challenging for individuals to share negative experiences directly to the health authority. Lastly, this will provide the FNHA with an opportunity to better understand the inner workings of a Vancouver Island Health facility, providing insight on how to collaboratively and effectively improve the quality experience for First Nations people accessing health care at West Coast General Hospital.



*FNHA Quality & Safety Analyst Krista Joseph (left) and Senior Advisor Cultural Safety and Humility Desiree Holmes (right) are strengthening collaboration and partnerships to improve quality care and support the development of tools, resources and strategies supporting cultural safety and humility.*

#### *Resident physicians commit to cultural safety and humility*

In August 2023, the Vancouver Island regional team collaborated with the UBC Strathcona Program to enhance cultural safety and humility within their residency program. The objective was to integrate residents into on-reserve health clinics and embed cultural safety and humility training into their curriculum.

Staff from the regional team engaged with UBC resident physicians at the Strathcona site in Campbell River to discuss the importance of quality care and cultural safety and explore the implementation of recommendations from the *In Plain Sight Report* (2020). In preparation for this discussion, residents read the Remembering Keegan Case Study Reflection (2022).

During the session, residents reflected on their personal commitments to cultural safety and humility. They made public declarations of their intentions for future practice through the “It Starts with Me” pledges. The experience was positively received by all attendees, and the FNHA has been invited to continue this important work.





*UBC Strathcona resident physicians and the FNHA senior advisor of cultural safety and humility share their commitments to cultural safety and humility*

*Relationship building between Nations and residents from Strathcona Family Medicine*

From August 1-3, the FNHA facilitated a visit of nine residents from the UBC Strathcona Family Medicine Residency Program to three remote communities: Dzawada'enuxw, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis and 'Namgis. The aim of this trip was to strengthen relationships at the residency level with rural and remote First Nation communities.

The trip was an initiative to foster cultural safety and humility among future health care providers. Currently, individual residents shadow health care professionals. This visit, however, allowed a group of residents to engage directly with community members. Without any formal agendas, they shared meals and participated in meaningful discussions, fostering organic conversations and helping the residents become familiar with the land, culture and people of these communities.

This innovative approach to relationship building is expected to enhance the quality of care provided to First Nations communities and support the ongoing professional development of health care providers in rural and remote areas.



*During the summer of 2023, BC Strathcona resident physicians participated in community relationship-building visits to three remote communities: Dzawada’enuxw, Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis and (pictured here) ‘Namgis*

## Vancouver Coastal

### *Advancing Culturally Safe Health and Wellness Services in the Region*

Over the past year, the regional team supported the advancement of culturally safe, accessible health and wellness services for First Nations. Key highlights from the past year include:

- **New Primary Care Centres:** Developed service plans for two new First Nations-led Primary Care Centres in Southern Stl’atl’imx and Nuxalk Nation territories, joining Lu’ma Medical Centre in Vancouver. Both centres are set to begin service delivery by the end of 2024.
- **Treatment and Wellness Centre Feasibility Study:** Completed a feasibility study for a new centre in shíshálh Nation territory, focusing on transformative healing from substance use. Ongoing discussions with shíshálh Nation leadership will shape the centre’s governance and engagement.
- **Healing Modality Sites:** Selected sites for two new regional healing modality projects in Lil’Wat Nation and Heiltsuk Nation territories. These initiatives will create a provincial network of healing modality sites, complementing FNHA-funded programs and enhancing the continuum of culturally grounded mental health and wellness care. Both Nations have begun planning with community and sub-regional partners.

## Measuring Our Performance

### Measuring Our Progress

#### *Adoption of cultural safety and humility standards by health service organizations*

The FNHA completed a self assessment to assess the organizations alignment with the BC CSH Standard. Subsequent alignment and improvement activities will be a joint effort between the Quality Team, the CSH Team, and individual departments who require support to improve their alignment with the BC CSH Standard.

#### *Stories of FNHA-related work and accountability among health system partners*

The FNHA continued to work with health system partners to increase accountability, including:

- submitting the self-assessment methodology article for journal publication;
- presenting the BC CSH Standard at **two** provincial venues;
- Co-chairing with Métis Nation BC the CSH Standard Community of Practice to share learnings around assessment and implementation for BC organizations; and
- continuing to develop of learning tools for Accreditation Canada, staff, clients and surveyors.

#### *Complaints models embeds First Nations feedback pathways*

- **The Interior Region** team worked to provide timely response and follow up of all complaints received by using FNHA pathway and standard operating procedures.
- **The Vancouver Coastal** regional team continued to co-develop a pathway with dialogue with system-level partners.
- The **Vancouver Island** regional team:
  - Took steps to build partnerships with the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia to provide feedback and support on the development of their Cultural Safety Strategy
  - discussed future needs of quality and cultural safety, identified improvement areas regarding regional internal quality processes at the FNHA and attended Health Quality BC (HQBC) to provide feedback on HQBC's work to include First Nations-specific context regarding restorative approach efforts in the health care system.
- **The Fraser Salish** restorative complaints pathway completed a second full year of data gathering.
- **The Northern Region's** complaints pathway is evergreen. The region worked in partnership with internal and external partners on support system improvement and complaint resolution, with the intent to encourage integration of the First Nations perspective on health and wellness within restorative approaches.

#### *Regional anti racism and cultural safety initiatives*

- **The Interior Region** worked towards building anti-racism and cultural safety initiatives that are Nation-led.

- **The Vancouver Island** Cultural Safety and Quality team worked with health system partners to create opportunities for change and system improvements.
- Within the **Northern Region**, the Director of Engagement supported ongoing cultural safety and humility work and attended and participated on engagement panel discussion at CSH Standard Health System Gathering, gleaning and sharing insights on assessment practices and experiential learning.

## Goal 5: Health and Wellness Innovation

*Drive health and wellness innovation together with First Nations and other partners*



**Outcome Statement:** Innovative community-driven, Nation-based wellness initiatives are supported and amplified throughout the health system.

**Strategies:**

- Champion BC First Nations initiatives, supporting capacity building and the sharing of innovative practices
- Advance First Nations data governance principles, health research partnerships and evidence-based data
- Leverage innovative partnerships to advance creative health and wellness initiatives

**2023/24 Operational Priorities**

- 5.1 Support and amplify community-based innovative approaches to advancing health and wellness priorities.
- 5.2 Expand strategic partnerships to advance creative wellness initiatives.
- 5.3 Facilitate the development of First Nations-specific data and research for decision-making.

## Stories of Progress

### Transforming Rural Health Care Internet Connectivity

In October 2023, the FNHA successfully completed the initial phase of the Redundant Connectivity Project, introducing Starlink satellite services to enhance Internet reliability in rural and remote communities. This initiative has significantly improved connectivity, as it has dedicated bandwidth to health centres and nurses' residences, which we hope will lead to expanded coverage and enhanced operational efficiency. Better connectivity translates to better quality of care.

*“Having access to faster IMIT services in Kwadacha has drastically improved our ability to provide telehealth services to community members. We have expanded these services to include psychiatry, physiotherapy and other specialized services. Additionally, improved Internet connectivity has been vital for emergency response when we have critical patients that need to be seen by RUDI (Rural Urgent Doctor In-aid) doctors. Because we are so remote, this is important for patient care,”* said Rebecca Tallman, health centre director at Kwadacha.

Future expansions of the Starlink internet services are planned for several First Nations Primary Care Centre facilities in the next fiscal year.



*Installation of Starlink satellite system*

### FNHA Leads Knowledge Exchange with Māori and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority

The FNHA hosted two knowledge exchange sessions in March and April, welcoming Māori representatives from Aotearoa/New Zealand and guests from Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) in Northern Ontario. Participants exchanged insights and lessons learned in delivering health services to First Nations and Indigenous communities, while also exploring opportunities for improvement by drawing upon experiences from diverse regions.

The first session, held on March 12 and 13, featured collaboration with nib and Toi Ora, providers of health insurance and navigation services for Māori communities. Māori representatives shared insights into the collaborative efforts of the Hapū (sub-tribe) Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and nib, which led to the development of the Toi Ora Tick—an accreditation program aimed at fostering culturally positive health care experiences for Māori individuals.

The second session, held on April 4 and 5, saw the FNHA hosting 22 staff members from the SLFNHA, which serves 33 Anishnabe communities in Ontario. During this session, the SLFNHA team shared invaluable innovations in medical transportation and accommodations. Given the similar size and geography of SLFNHA’s jurisdictional area to that of FNHA’s Northern Region, the insights provided by SLFNHA are of great value as the FNHA continually strives to enhance the quality and accessibility of its services.

These knowledge exchange sessions not only facilitated the transfer of wisdom to enhance health outcomes for First Nations communities but also fostered a sense of unity. They provided a platform for creating a strong community of First Nations built on mutual respect and support, with the common vision of improving health care for First Nations communities.



*Traditional Knowledge Keeper, Sheryl Rivers, shares Coast Salish teachings through stories and song during the Māori – FNHA knowledge exchange*

### Emergency Air Evacuation Infrastructure Project

There are jurisdictional and programming gaps in the funding of emergency evacuation infrastructure, negatively impacting many BC First Nations. There is also significant variability in the type and quality of emergency evacuation infrastructure in First Nation communities.

Gaps in emergency evacuation infrastructure investments means evacuations are occurring in higher risk situations increasing life, health, safety and regulatory risk.

In response to these needs, FNHA started a project to learn more about emergency evaluation infrastructure and undertake demonstration projects.

In phase 1 of this project, the FNHA took steps to assess air evacuation infrastructure options and related pros and cons. Additionally, the FNHA learned about current infrastructure regulations, and developed information resources to support community-based site assessments and infrastructure design planning.

In phase 2, the FNHA took steps to develop heliport assessments and related reports, as well as provide support for select renovations and construction activities on new or replacement heliports. The FNHA

has also been supporting the establishment of interim heliports, submitting landing plates for acceptance by air ambulance providers, and providing radios and turbo flares to support safe helicopter landings.

At this time, the FNHA has assessed Heliport locations in 20 communities, supported one renovation to an existing heliport, funded one new heliport construction, identified 13 interim Heliport locations, supported construction of two interim heliport sites, advanced 10 interim landing plates, and deployed radios and turbo flares into 10 communities.

The outcomes of this project will support communities and enhance the delivery of quality health care to First Nation communities across BC.

Video: [Helicopter Without Borders](#)



### FNHA Elevates Community Engagement with the Voices System

In ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with First Nations communities and enhance operational efficiency, the FNHA’s IMIT team launched the Voices system with the Health Benefits Community Relations team and the Primary Care/eHealth and Virtual Health Innovation team. Using Voices, these teams can more effectively manage interactions and ongoing engagements with community members, and achieve the goal of improving health and wellness outcomes for First Nations in BC.



Having a unified system has eliminated previous communication silos, allowing teams across the broader organization to feel connected and collaborate more efficiently. Community relations representatives can now easily access data and track the entire life cycle of community requests. The platform has empowered teams to view reports that provide valuable insights, enabling them to make more informed, evidence-based decisions and ensuring follow-through with community members.

The launch of Voices marks a key milestone. This project’s success underscores the potential of technology to foster better communication, informed decision-making and, most importantly, stronger relationships both internally and with the communities the FNHA supports.



## Regional Initiatives

### Interior

#### *Safeguarding health through water: FNHA's ongoing commitment*

The FNHA prioritizes the health and safety of First Nations communities, with particular focus on the quality and safety of drinking water.

A notable success story this year came from the Interior Region, where the FNHA team played a key role in supporting the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation. This community faced a longstanding boil water advisory, affecting quality of life and health. Through concerted efforts and collaboration, additional homes were connected to the community water supply, which led to the successful removal of the boil water advisory.

Further extending its impact, the FNHA's commitment to water safety and Indigenous leadership was showcased on an international stage. In October 2023, Environmental Public Health Services Regional Manager Stephanie Tooke represented the FNHA at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28, held in Dubai. Participating in a panel, Tooke spoke on the theme of Indigenous women's leadership in managing drinking water.

This appearance was not only a testament to the environmental health improvements being made within First Nations in Canada but also positioned Indigenous leadership as being vital to global environmental stewardship discussions.



*Stephanie Tooke speaks on a panel at the Canada Pavilion at COP28, where she discussed innovative climate solutions being explored in her community*

### Northern

#### *Empowering healers: Building skill for community wellness*

Under the facilitation of Embers of Hope Counseling and Training Services, the Northern Region offered training to empower natural healers with the technical expertise and confidence to make a real

difference in communities. The training covered essential topics such as mental health awareness, trauma-informed care, suicide prevention and cultural safety.

It also underscored the significance of delivering culturally appropriate healing skills that are deeply rooted in an understanding of unique cultural intricacies and historical trauma.

The outcomes of the training were profound, with many participants experiencing personal growth and assuming larger roles within their respective communities across the region.

## Measuring Our Performance

### Community-Driven, Nation-Based

#### *Stories of First Nations health and wellness initiatives building capacity in communities*

- The FNHA Health Surveillance team produced a series of regional health system data reports. Informed by significant engagement with regional teams, the reports share data on priorities specific to each region in areas such as: culture as medicine, mental health and wellness, community connections, sense of belonging, primary care and chronic conditions.
- **Interior:**
  - Healing Indigenous Hearts Train the Trainer training: 25 participants took part and shared stories of losing loved ones to toxic drugs.
  - Preparation for upcoming Nation-led Toxic Drug Forum April 23-24: Working towards concrete outcomes and a Toxic Drug Nation-Driven Taskforce.
  - Monthly Mental Health and Wellness webinar series: Three 2.5-hour webinars per month related to mental health and substance use topics such as drug checking strips.
- **Fraser Salish:** Many instances of health and wellness initiatives and capacity development embedded throughout the regional team's work.
- **Northern Region:** Hired a traditional wellness coordinator.
- **Vancouver Coastal:** Annual budgets finalized and community contribution agreements drafted and finalized. Continued efforts to ensure business continuity following the public health emergency. Increase in community activities through regional funding and an increase in funding requests. Reports can be made available upon request.
- **Vancouver Island:**
  - Held an Indigenous-Led ʔokʷimas Youth Suicide Prevention training delivered in the Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish Family Group.
  - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training train-the-trainer offered in partnership with the Island Health Authority.
  - Supported the coordination and facilitation of 'Na'nakwala Gaxan's Gathering for youth in March 2024.

## Lifting One Another Up

#### *New partnership initiatives*

The FNHA progressed a number of new partnership initiatives, including:

- new cross-government collaboration to support the 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health;
- partnering with Simon Fraser University to establish a new medical school; and
- hosting and participating in knowledge exchanges with the Māori Health Authority and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority.

*Stories of innovative partnerships*

- The FNHA participates in the Provincial Health Innovation Network, alongside representatives from the five regional health authorities.
- The FNHA has applied for and received funding from the provincial Health Innovation Pathway Program for the following two projects:
  - improving access to pharmacy services for clients and clinicians in rural and remote First Nations communities through virtual services, and artificial intelligence in First Nations primary and virtual care

**First Nations Decision Making and Control**

*Initiatives generating new First Nations specific data for decision making*

- 100% of ongoing health surveillance work generates new First Nations-specific data for decision-making
- Health systems reports for all five regions produced for spring caucus and 18 Sub-regional/Nations-based reports produced for fall caucuses
- Monthly reporting for both the toxic drug and COVID-19 public health emergencies, and 12 monthly community situation reports created for both
- Provincial and regional toxic drug infographics created to summarize mid-year and end-of-year toxic drug impacts on BC First Nations
- Infographic created summarizing breast cancer and breast cancer screening among BC First Nations
- Infographic created with and overview of provincial Perinatal Health Data
- Youth substance use and mental health detailed at length in comprehensive reports shared with regional teams, and five regional infographics developed and shared at fall caucuses
- New data supporting injury surveillance developed late in 2023, which will result in new and expanded reporting in FY2024/2025 for key topics such as suicide, falls among Elders and other injury deaths and hospitalizations
- Ad hoc requests for data from teams across FNHA, Regional teams, and from communities on a broad range of topics including health care utilization, toxic drugs, perinatal health and primary care.

## CONCLUSION

In 2023/2024 the FNHA achieved significant progress on our operational priorities and in all five goal areas of our *Paddling Together* Plan:

1. Drive transformation through the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure and partnerships
2. Enhance access to quality health and wellness services
3. Enhance culturally safe mental health and wellness approaches
4. Advance First Nations approaches to addressing anti-Indigenous racism in health
5. Drive health and wellness innovation together with First Nations and other partners

During the past year, we continued to support First Nations in BC through navigating on-going challenges such as the toxic drug crisis, climate related health emergencies, and the unmarked burial sites associated with residential schools. We also continued work with partners to address ongoing anti-Indigenous racism and inequities in the healthcare system. In all of our work, we remain flexible and adaptable while maintaining our ongoing commitment to pursue excellence in programs and services and operations, grounded in the 7 Directives and direction given to us by First Nations in BC.

## 2022/2023 Financial Report

To come from finance.

Statement of Operations



Revenue

Expenses