



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIGENOUS TREATMENT AND LAND-BASED HEALING FUND

2018/19 - 2022/23

SPOTLIGHT PROFILES OF  
FUNDED INITIATIVES



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First Nations have been stewards of the land since time immemorial. Connection to the land is core to Indigenous identity. Relearning, reclaiming and revitalizing the wealth of traditional knowledge and healing practices held by First Nations is a foundational element of restoring balance and wellness for First Nations communities and members. Land-based treatment and healing can occur when individuals and communities return or reconnect to the land while using supports to reclaim traditional healing and wellness practices.

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) wishes to acknowledge the many Nations and communities who designed and implemented land-based healing initiatives and the staff who administered the Land-Based Healing Fund and supported project planning and implementation. We acknowledge and honour the Elders and Knowledge Keepers who share their invaluable wisdom for the betterment of current and future generations.

The FNHA Evaluation Team prepared this report in collaboration with Ference & Company Consulting Ltd. Evaluation learnings came from the cumulative insight and wisdom of FNHA executives, operational and regional staff, national and provincial partners and ministry representatives, land-based healing project staff and individuals supporting land-based healing work.

We would like to thank all contributors for generously sharing their experiences and perspectives, including the following individuals who consented to being acknowledged by name (listed alphabetically):

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous Treatment and Land-Based Healing Fund, commonly referred to as the LBH Fund, supports strengths-based, holistic and client-driven substance use treatment and healing programming that addresses aftercare and reflects family and community contexts.

Between FY 2018/19 and FY 2022/23, the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA) transferred approximately \$36.5 million to the FNHA for investment in land-based healing activities as part of the MMHA's 2019 [A Pathway to Hope](#) provincial strategy. The fund had a built-in escalator, increasing from \$2.5 million in FY 2018/19 to \$10.8 million in FY 2022/23.

The FNHA disbursed \$28.9 million (or 79%) of the allocated \$36.5 million through 318 contracts to 151 recipients throughout the province. Recipients mostly included Nations and communities, but also health service organizations, community health centres, non-profit societies, and FNHA-funded Treatment Centres.

An evaluation was completed to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the fund design and implementation, as well as learnings, early successes and wise practices from initiatives undertaken between FY 2018/19 and FY 2022/23. Please visit the [FNHA Evaluations webpage](#) to view the executive summary and full versions of the final report.

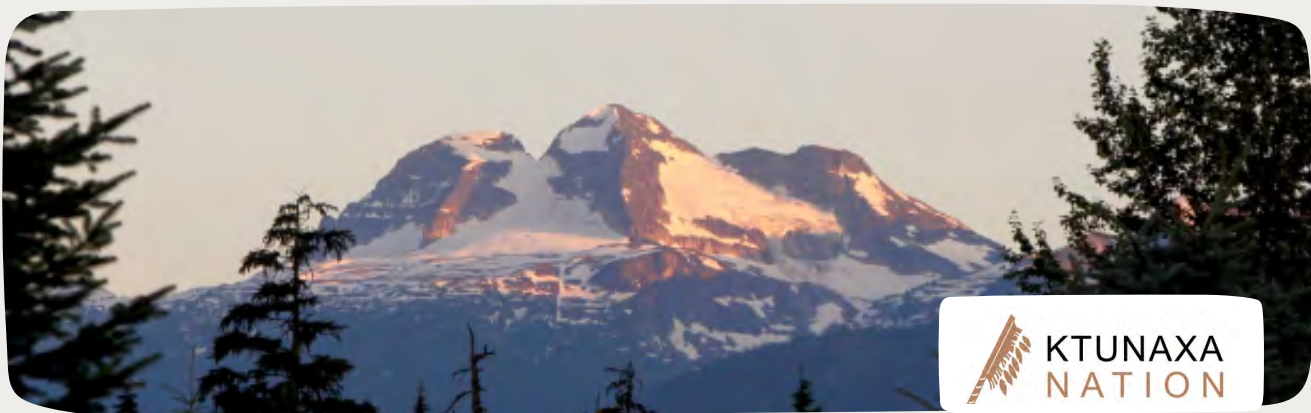
This document offers spotlights of successful land-based healing initiatives undertaken between FY 2018/19 and FY 2022/23. It aims to uplift the good work completed by First Nations communities, reflect the diversity of activities completed through the fund, and support lateral knowledge exchange among First Nations communities in BC.

# SPOTLIGHTS OF FUNDED FIRST NATIONS LAND-BASED HEALING INITIATIVES

## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO RELEARN, REVITALIZE AND RECLAIM TRADITIONAL WELLNESS PRACTICES

### SPOTLIGHT

#### KTUNAXA NATION: BIG BROTHER/UNCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



In the Interior Region, the Ktunaxa Nation offered Nation-wide Big Brother/Uncle mentorship programming to develop relationships and foster a sense of belonging, self-confidence and accountability through learning traditional and cultural activities and life skills together.

Programming included one-day and four-day culture camps, as well as services for individuals who are justice-involved. Programming provided opportunities for peer counselling, harm reduction and clinical counselling. The Nation hired a psychiatric nurse to provide detox, home support and mental health referrals for further psychiatric assessment.

Participants in the Big Brother/Uncle Mentorship Program practised their traditional language, learned about traditional medicines and healing practices, participated in sweat lodges, and learned traditional hunting and gathering practices.

# INCREASING MEMBERS' CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND STRENGTHENING CULTURAL IDENTITY

## SPOTLIGHT

### DĀKELH DENÉ NATION'S RECLAMATION OF A TRADITIONAL HIKING TRAIL AND COMMUNITY FEAST



In the Interior Region, the Dākelh Dené Nation mapped and cleared a hiking trail to the traditional mountain Besbut'a (Anahim Peak) and, constructed outhouse facilities to facilitate reclaiming of a traditional territory and foster connection to the land among members.

Two organized hikes were offered in the summer, one school-based for Ulkatcho youth and, one for community members. The initiative was organized and implemented by the community mental health clinician with support from Elders and up to 20 community members. Participants shared a community meal following the hike. Programming also included an Uncle Program, bringing men together to cut wood, hunt, fish and camp and, bring children up to the mountain to facilitate cultural and community connections and connections to the land.

LBH funds supported the construction of the outhouse, transportation costs, the community meal and Elder honoraria.

## SPOTLIGHT

### HAISLA TRADITIONAL SWEAT AND LAND-BASED MEN'S CAMP



In the Northern Region, a wellness lead, wellness counsellor and outreach worker came together in April 2021 to start a program to take young men to their ancestral territories in Kitimaat to reconnect with tradition and themselves.

The Haisla Nation communally built a traditional sweat with blessings from community sweat leaders and other community members. The Nation then hosted multi-day camps on traditional teachings and fishing through the summer and early fall for groups of three to four men at a time, with one per month over the summer for six camps in total. Participants included both men living in community and urban and away-from-home.

A few days before camp, the group prepared the trapping cabin and crab traps and presented crabs to the owner/Elder of the trap land and other Elders, emphasizing the important teaching of sharing with Elders and those who cannot get on a boat for themselves.

On day one of the camp, participants arrived in Kitimat, and in line with Haisla teachings, went to the beach to wash their faces three times to wash away the ego so they could see the beauty of the land. The participants set their intentions and pledged to respect the land, respect each other and themselves. After unpacking, they enjoyed the catch from their crab traps. The group reconvened at the beach, where they enjoyed the moonlight and some music, led by a member with a guitar.

On day two, after getting up at sunrise, the group headed to the beach for a Nuhkwlagila (cold water cleanse), followed by teachings of Nuhyem (Haisla law) to ground themselves through meditation and breathing exercises. The group planned the day over breakfast and set out on the boat to source some willow to build a sweat lodge. Based on the learnings and permission of a Tsleil-Waututh sweat leader, the group built the sweat lodge with willow, tarp and blankets, had lunch together around a campfire, and then headed to the beach to find the grandfathers (the rocks). They brushed the trails to the natural hot springs and enjoyed a bath—as the ancestors did for healing benefits. After dinner, they participated in a sharing circle around the campfire.

On day three, after Nuhkwlagila, the group started a sacred fire to heat up the grandfathers and proceeded into the sweat lodge, following the teachings of the Lahkota from the Tsleil-Waututh sweat leader. During the sweat they were entertained by singing eagles and ravens: “we knew those were our ancestors telling us we were on a good path. It was a special moment.”



The group sang together. They celebrated the sweat ceremony with a feast and watched in awe as a grizzly bear “presented itself from the same direction as the bear’s spirit.” They discussed the trip experience in a sharing circle afterwards and shared advice and encouragement to prepare for their return home.

On day four, the group did grounding exercises and meditated, and Nuhkwlagila at the beach. The group started the journey back home together, pointing out ancestral landmarks along the way.



In the fall, during the last trip of this initiative, a day before the group was to head to Kitamaat, the outreach worker received a phone call from the Vancouver Police Department about a missing Haisla person in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The outreach worker found the missing person who accepted the invitation to join the trip to Haisla. The following day, the individual was reunited with his grandmother before proceeding to the traditional trap lands, where the group built a sweat. The group did some crabbing and took a bath in a natural hot spring. The outreach worker said to him: "four days ago you were in a back alley in the Downtown Eastside, and today you're sitting in the same spot where one of our ancestors possibly did, looking out into their traditional territory."

The community outreach worker, community wellness staff and a volunteer supported the initiative. LBH funding supported fuel costs, food, boat rentals and camping supplies; an existing traditional trapping cabin was used for accommodations.





## SPOTLIGHT

### HAISLA INITIATIVES FOR URBAN AND AWAY-FROM-HOME MEMBERS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER NATIONS



In the Northern Region, the Haisla Nation partnered with other Nations to support land-based healing for urban and away-from-home members. Inspiration came from a conversation held between an outreach care worker and an Elder about traditional hunting and fishing practices to prepare for wintertime.

Using a donated fishing boat and a sharing agreement to borrow vessels from the Freedom Boat Club, Haisla, Heiltsuk and Nisga'a urban and away-from-home members (particularly those living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and recovery homes), were taken out on the water to reconnect to nature, community and culture, and to learn traditional teachings and practices relating to food sovereignty.

Through partnership agreements, Nuuchahnulth representatives taught Haisla members how to jar fish and Squamish representatives took urban and away-from-home Haisla members out to clam beds.

## SPOTLIGHT

### KWAKIUTL LAND-BASED HEALING



In the Vancouver Island Region, the Kwakiutl Healing Centre implemented numerous land-based healing activities and events. These included:

- A three-day intergenerational family-based culture camp
- Indigenous games
- The cultivation of a community garden and traditional root gardens, canning events and a “gratitude” pit cook
- Workshops on yoga and breath work
- A community walk
- Activities such as singing, dancing, and water bathing
- Ceremony
- Traditional medicine-making



Six to seven community staff – including the cultural coordinator, community wellness worker, research support worker, land and resource worker and youth worker – supported the initiatives, along with Elders, a contracted land-based cultural support facilitator and contracted facilitators.

LBH funding was used for facilitators' term contracts and expenses associated with the various activities.



## SPOTLIGHT

### TAKLA LAKE NATION-WIDE INTEGRATION OF LAND-BASED HEALING INTO HEALTH SERVICES



In the Northern Region, Takla Lake implemented a Nation-wide initiative to integrate land-based healing into all areas of their health care services. Existing staff – as well as Elders – used LBH funds to deliver land-based support for members struggling with substance use (including home-based detox, traditional supports and medicines and sacred fire); support for residential school survivors and their families, staff, and community members; ceremony and activities including a cultural camp; and traditional food harvesting, including berry picking, medicine gathering, hunting and fishing.

Funding supported Elder honorariums and program supplies.

## SPOTLIGHT

### LAKE BABINE LAND-BASED HEALING

In the Northern Region, the Lake Babine Nation Health Department offers year-round land-based healing initiatives with Elders, adults and families to support healing, particularly from grief and loss.

Examples of activities undertaken include smudging and distributing smudging kits, harvesting and sharing soapberries, talking circles, sweat lodges, traditional cooking, nature walks, language learning and drumming. The health department accepts member referrals from the Band Office and, does outreach in community and in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.



## SPOTLIGHT

### KWAKWAKA'WAKW FAMILY TRAUMA AND HEALING PROGRAM, LIĠWĪLDAX<sup>w</sup> HEALTH SOCIETY

In the Vancouver Island Region, the LiġwĪldax<sup>w</sup> Health Society operates adult wellness retreats for 19+ adults, workshops, community gatherings, outreach efforts, group programs and training opportunities.

Three-, five- or eight-day adult wellness retreats options were hosted at the Wei Wai Kai Nation-owned Tsa-Kwa-Luten Lodge on Quadra Island between November and April in the tourism off-season, giving Indigenous staff members year-long employment. Participants included First Nations and Métis people from across the province. This unique modality featured Kwakwaka'wakw traditions and ceremony merged with western clinical practices; it also incorporated Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Coast Salish, Haida and Māori families teachings. The space offered healing and showed opportunities for how Indigenous members in recovery can help others lead healthy lives. Some participants that have gone through the programs have changed their life for the better and, are training to give back to their communities and help other community members choose life in recovery.

Wellness retreat programming included workshops on grief and loss, intergenerational trauma, addictions and trauma, life promotion, traditional healing and wellness. Supports included health coordinators and intake staff, Elders, traditional Knowledge Keepers and clinical support workers and contracted Indigenous facilitators, including cultural and traditional supports and clinical counsellors. Dedicated facility staff included a chef and other kitchen staff, lodge manager, front desk and housekeeping staff. The programs promoted harm reduction, suicide prevention and reinstating cultural identity.

LBH funding supported the rental of the lodge facility, food, transportation, facilitator fees, Elder and cultural support worker honorariums, and supplies.



**GRIEF & LOSS**  
TSA KWA LUTEN LODGE  
NOVEMBER 19TH-24TH 2023

This 5 - day empowering workshop offers an opportunity to identify healing processes after experiencing grief and loss. Everyone experiences grief, loss, and sorrow at some time in their life. The emotions can be enormous, join **Tammie Myles** as she helps guests navigate through their personal journey.

SESSION WILL BE ACCOMPANIED WITH ELDER/TRADITIONAL/CLINICAL SUPPORT

[HTTPS://WWW.EVENTBRITE.CA/E/GRIEF-AND-LOSS-TICKETS-742448482397](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/grief-and-loss-tickets-742448482397)

Meals, Accommodation, travel reimbursement provided within FNHA guidelines.

**Must commit to entire program and stay at the lodge. Guests must be 19+**

Any questions or concerns please contact Mellissa by email [intake@lkthealth.ca](mailto:intake@lkthealth.ca) or 250 287-0215 after hour calls will be returned following day

**Full-Waitlist Available**

# OFFERING CULTURALLY SAFE, LAND-BASED SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT AND SUPPORTS

## SPOTLIGHT

### SQUAMISH NATION HARM REDUCTION AND SUBSTANCE USE SUPPORTS

In the Vancouver Coastal Region, the Squamish Nation collaborated with the FNHA to provide community staff with online and in-person harm reduction training.

The community also hosted a National Overdose Awareness Day, inviting individuals affected by overdose for a day of remembrance and learning. Activities included members in community as well as those living urban and away-from-home.

Other activities supported through LBH funds included initiatives to show solidarity with substance users, promote clinical alternatives to street supply, encourage cultural understandings of harm reduction, translate harm reduction phrases into the Squamish language, promote Naloxone training and encourage healing and support through ceremony, drumming and singing.

Initiatives were supported by community staff and an FNHA harm reduction educator.



## SPOTLIGHT

### **NISGA'A VALLEY HEALTH AUTHORITY MULTI-DAY WELLNESS CAMP**

In the Northern Region, the Nisga'a Valley Health Authority delivered the Transformations Retreat, an alternative drug and alcohol treatment program to help members cope with long treatment centre waitlists. A community outreach worker operated a support group to help clients build toolkits to support community members for success and healthy living. Community members received mental health programs and services close to home, including art therapies and, access to an Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) specialist level 2, a registered nurse, neuropsychologist, crisis response coordinators and traditional wellness coordinators.



## SPOTLIGHT

### **THUNDERBIRD WOLF CULTURAL CONSULTING**

In the Vancouver Coastal Region, external contractor Thunderbird Wolf Cultural Consulting was hired to provide year-round one-on-one support on the land for men, women and families within the southern St'at'imx communities who wanted to make a change in their substance use behaviours and overall well-being. Services focused on healing from trauma and substance use disorders and included camping, hunting, fishing, smudging, ceremony and berry picking.

Funding supported consulting fees/salaries, supplies (e.g., food or traditional medicines), transportation and fuel.





# BUILDING RESILIENCE AND SUPPORTING HEALING AMONG FIRST NATIONS YOUTH

## SPOTLIGHT

### NAWALAKW YOUTH CULTURAL CAMP



**Nawalakw** is a cultural camp and territorial reclamation movement that provides week-long cultural camps for Kwakwaka'wakw school children and annual community camps at Hada (Bond Sound) in the traditional and unceded territory of the **Kw̓ikw̓as̓utinux̓w** people, one of the four tribes of the **Musg̓amakw Dzawad̓'enux̓w**.



Located in the Vancouver Island Region, the helicopter or boat accessible camp is delivered by Nawalakw with full support from the Nation. The movement includes youth employment and training opportunities for Nawalakw, local businesses and within the ecotourism industry. It also supports the long-term vision of operating a social enterprise that encompasses a seasonal eco-lodge, adult healing programs, climate change research programs and, most importantly, the revitalization the Kwakwaka'wakw culture and Kwak'wala language within the traditional territories.



Programs offered at hi'mānis ǰakūtǰa'aṡsi – a place of forever learning – include:

- School camps for students in band-led schools and those living within Kwakwaka'wakw territories, as well as for classes in School District 85 that have a significant percentage of Kwakwaka'wakw students
- Community camps in the summer
- Year-round language and cultural revitalization programs
- Camps specifically tailored to at-risk youth, and children and youth in care
- Adult wellness programs offered through relationships with local organizations

Considerations were underway to host 2SLGBTQIA+ specific youth camps.



Individuals involved in delivering the camps reported participants' increased confidence in cultural knowledge and ability to speak words in Kwak'wala, increased school engagement, positive behavioural changes and a reduction in RCMP involvement among participating youth.

Nawalakw camps are operated by 35 staff and term students who work as members of the language team, operations for Hada, maintenance workers, housekeepers, guides, cooks and support staff. Available supports include an FNHA youth counsellor, Knowledge Keepers and Elders. Infrastructure and supplies include a 2,500 square foot facility with sleeping quarters for participants, Elder rooms, staff quarters, a full-sized kitchen, outdoor food preparation shelter, indoor washroom facilities, storage shed, shelter boats, fishing equipment and outdoor gear.



Federal funding supported the feasibility study and planning. Philanthropic and private donations funded capital investments, and program and operational expenses were supported by various funding sources including LBH funding. Student wages were funded by Canada Summer Jobs and private donations.



## SPOTLIGHT

### **BABINE LAKE REDISCOVERY YOUTH PROGRAM**

In the Northern Region, the Lake Babine Nation Health Department offered an outdoor cultural education program that provided youth with positive lifestyle examples and encouraged them to explore nature, foster self-discovery and build community relationships. As a Nation-wide initiative, the project connects members from the communities of Donald's Landing, Pendleton Bay, Tachet, Old Fort, Sunny Side and Fort Babine.



Youth participated in storytelling, songs, drumming, personal reflection, ceremony and a canoe trip on Babine Lake.

Participating youth and Elders described the youth canoe trip as an emotional experience. Individuals observed improved cultural preservation, stronger community connections and the greater unity and mutual support.

The youth program was supported by the traditional wellness coordinator, camp coordinators and facilitators, a camp cook, Elders and summer students. Funding was used to cover costs for tents and camping supplies, safety and expedition equipment, arts and crafts supplies, food, transportation and fuel, mandatory training (guide, first aid and safety), Elder honoraria, and instructor and facilitator salaries.



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