



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness



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For Immediate Release

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First Nations Elders Talk About Healthy Medication Use Through Indigenous Storytelling

An Indigenous Storytelling project, *Coyote's Food Medicines*, was launched today in front of an audience of 4,000 Elders at the BC Elders Gathering to encourage conversations about wellness and how to manage medications for a healthy life. Secwepemc Elders created the *Coyote's Food Medicines* story, using traditional knowledge and humour to raise awareness of the issue of multiple medications and their potential impact on health.

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Shared Care's Polypharmacy Risk Reduction Initiative (a partnership of Doctors of BC and the BC government), and Interior Health worked with Elders, initiating conversations that led to the creation of the Coyote story. During one of these conversations, Secwepemc Elder Jean William shared her impressions, "In the past, our Elders didn't take lots of medication, mostly just aspirin. But now cupboards look like pharmacy shelves."

One of the most important and yet often overlooked risks to wellness is use of multiple medications. There is a point where taking multiple medications – known as 'polypharmacy', can actually make individuals feel sicker, where the risks of medications can outweigh the benefits.

"With the launch of the project, we're opening up a conversation with Indigenous populations, guided by Elders to promote and enhance medicine management and wellness," said Health Minister Adrian Dix. "With the *Coyote's Food Medicines* project, our partners are showing how health-care information can be interesting, engaging and culturally respectful."

The *Coyote's Food Medicines* project aims to promote healthy conversations between patients and providers—such as doctors, nurses and pharmacists—to help prevent side effects and adverse events, such as falls and injuries, from taking multiple medications.

"When Elders are able to guide the creation of health and wellness resources for them and their peers, the project will be more meaningful and successful," said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair of the First Nations Health Council. "*Coyote's Food Medicines* shares traditional knowledge and builds on the teachings of our ancestors to face the health issues of today."

"This project shows how respecting culture and involving communities can improve health," said Dr Eric Cadesky, president of Doctors of BC. "It is a good example for all health care professionals to do what we can to provide safe environments for these conversations to take place."



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With the guidance of the Elders, and all partners involved, the hope is that this message is widely shared through this unique story for greater awareness on managing medications to stay healthy.

Cindy Preston, FNHA pharmacist shares, "Although medications are meant to help us feel better, the Coyote in this story reminds us that there are also risks. We should always ask questions about our medications and have a review of all our medications with a pharmacist or doctor at least once a year to make sure the medications we are taking are keeping us well."

Coyote's Food Medicines was created with the guidance of Elders Jean William, Cecelia de Rose and Clara Camille with the support of Danielle Smith from Interior Health and with illustrations by Georgia Lesley.

Dr. Keith White, Physician Lead for the Polypharmacy Risk Reduction Initiative, who was instrumental in the project concept, states; "We feel this story can provide a platform for discussions among First Nations families and their health care providers, to help initiate regular medication reviews and find options that optimize health and minimize risks of multiple medications."

Copies of the book are available [online](#) and at the Healthy Medication Use booth at the Elders Gathering from July 11-12, along with materials to help track medications, and tips on how to talk about medications with health providers.

Media Contacts:

First Nations Health Authority
604-831-4898
media@fnha.ca

Doctors of BC
778-828-9164
ldespins@doctorsofbc.ca