



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

EVALUATION OF THE FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2019/20 to 2023/24

Executive Summary



Acknowledgements

The First Nations Health Authority and MNP LLP 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.



The FNHA Board of Directors, 2025. (Top row, left to right) Dr. Lex Vides, Marlene Erickson, Jack Page, Dr. Peter Eppinga, Greg Louie (secretary-treasurer), Lee Anne Cameron, board directors, and Leah Ballantyne, board vice-chair. (Bottom row, left to right) Helen Joe, Guiding Elder and Knowledge Keeper, Dr. Sheila Blackstock, chair of the FNHA Board of Directors (herein board chair), and Wilhemena Harry, former board director.



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Evaluation conducted by
MNP LLP in collaboration
with FNHA Evaluation Team.



A message from Guiding Elder and Knowledge Keeper Helen Joe

**Ey Swayel Mekwát,
Melíleqthet tel skwix, telítsel kwá
Ch'íyaqtel qas Stólō Nation.**

**Melíleqthet is my traditional name, I
am from Ch'íyaqtel and Stólō
Nation.**

In 2013, I was approached by the First Nations Health Council to sit on the FNHA Board of Directors. It was a time when our people had had enough and desperately wanted to improve health outcomes for First Nations people in BC by enhancing our involvement in healthcare decision-making, improving access to services, and addressing quality issues. I had the honour of serving as the Fraser Salish board representative from May 1, 2014, to March 31, 2024. Following my retirement as board director, I have continued to serve the board as a Guiding Elder.

Since the creation of the FNHA as the first and only provincial First Nations health authority in Canada and health and wellness partner to over 200 diverse First Nations communities and citizens across BC, the organization has been guided by a board comprised of diverse professional and in-community directors, all deeply committed to transforming the way health care is delivered to First Nations in BC.

During my decade of service to the board, I have enjoyed sharing teachings from my grandmother that incorporated cultural values and guiding principles which emphasized respect, honesty, love, wisdom, humility, courage and truth. These teachings shaped my contributions to the board and helped guide the way we support the FNHA and its staff. Over the years, staff regularly came before the FNHA Board of Directors to share updates on their work in community, outline future plans, and seek input and feedback.

The board not only provides corporate governance, oversight and subject matter expertise in the design and delivery of health services for First Nations in BC but serves to ground the work in culture and help sustain the organization's connection to the 7 Directives, foundational guiding principles and the voice of communities.

It is this dedication and connection to culture and the principles that supported the organization through the period of rapid change that occurred since the last evaluation of the board was completed in 2019. We have seen significant changes and improvements in the way health services are delivered to First Nations people in BC and faced multiple public health emergencies including the onset of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the toxic drug supply crisis, and multiple climate-related health emergencies.

Under the guidance of the board, the FNHA collaborated closely with First Nations in BC and health system partners to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of First Nations Elders and communities; stand up new programs and services to address unmet needs, including for additional mental health and wellness supports; and continued efforts to hardwire the First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness, advance cultural safety and humility and foster innovation.

The many health challenges that our People have faced over the last few years have led to imbalances on the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being of us all. Looking to the future, I am hopeful that the FNHA will continue to bring services closer to home and into community.

In health and wellness,



Melileqthet (Helen Joe)

Guiding Elder and Knowledge Keeper
Former board director,
First Nations Health Authority



Introduction

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is the first province wide First Nations health authority of its kind in Canada. In 2013, the FNHA assumed responsibility for the planning, management, delivery and funding of health programs and services for BC First Nations formerly held by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch - Pacific Region, as part of a broader mandate to work with the Province of BC to improve health services accessed by First Nations in BC.

In addition to the FNHA, partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure includes the First Nations Health Council (FNHC), the First Nations Health Directors Association (FNHDA) and the Tripartite Committee on First Nations Health, that includes the provincial and regional health authorities, the BC Ministry of Health and Indigenous Services Canada.

The work of the FNHA is grounded in the First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness¹ – an approach that defines the FNHA as a health and wellness organization. In accordance with the Shared Values of the FNHA, FNHC and FNHDA and the 7 Directives, the FNHA aims to pursue excellence in the delivery of its mandate.

The FNHA Board of Directors was first appointed in 2012 with the purpose of providing strategic leadership and corporate governance to support the FNHA in fulfilling its mandate and legal obligations. This includes upholding its Constitution, bylaws, policies and procedures. As the FNHA was newly established at that time, the board had a foundational role in setting the organization's strategic direction and stewarding the operations. The FNHA Board of Directors continues to be guided by this purpose and carries out its governance role alongside an executive team that leads work across several business areas.



¹First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness. Retrieved from: <https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-for-first-nations/first-nations-perspective-on-health-and-wellness>



Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair, 2025.

The board is composed of nine board directors: a board chair, vice-chair, secretary-treasurer and six other board directors. Five board directors are selected through regional nominations from First Nations in each of BC's five health regions, and four are selected at large. FNHA board directors are appointed at an FNHC general meeting by a FNHA Members of the Society² regional panel who reviews candidates against the board qualifications and competencies. The board is supported by an executive committee and three standing committees.

The first evaluation of the FNHA Board of Directors (2014/15 to 2018/19) was completed by external consultants, Watson, in May of 2019. This five-year summative evaluation was a legal requirement under the 2011 British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance³ (BC TFA). **While subsequent evaluations are not a legal requirement under the BC TFA, in 2023, the board voted to undertake a second evaluation in fiscal year 2024/25 to support transparency, accountability and continuous learning and improvement.**



FNHA staff gather for a group photo during the annual all-staff picnic held on Squamish Territory at Ambleside Park in Vancouver, BC, August 2024.

²FNHC members have a dual role and are also members of the FNHA Society. Update from the FNHC and FNHA on Framework Agreement Implementation. (2012) Retrieved from: <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/TransitionUpdate-FNHCandFNHA.pdf>

³Government of British Columbia, Government of Canada, First Nations Health Council and First Nations Health Society, "British Columbia Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nations Health Governance", 2011. <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/framework-accord-cadre.pdf>



Evaluation Overview

Purpose

The 2024 Evaluation of the FNHA Board of Directors tells the story of the board’s progress in fulfilling its corporate governance functions and core responsibilities, and the effectiveness of the board’s governance practices.

Evaluation objectives include:

- providing evidence to support the FNHA Board of Directors’ continuous learning and quality improvement;
- providing evidence to support FNHA leadership’s strategic planning and decision-making, including by serving as a line of evidence for the 2024 Evaluation of the FNHA; and
- supporting transparency and accountability to First Nations in BC, Tripartite Partners and partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance partners.

Scope

The evaluation covers fiscal years 2019/20 to 2023/24. The themes and topics examined within the evaluation are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of evaluation issues

Relevance

- Mandate and purpose
- Core responsibilities

Effectiveness and efficiency

- Board structure and capacity
- Board operations and administration
- Board relationships with FNHA executive leadership, Tripartite partners and partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure

Methodology

A participatory scoping process was undertaken by the FNHA Evaluation Team. A draft evaluation framework was developed with input from the FNHA Board of Directors and executive leadership. This framework formed the basis for the implementation plan, including the engagement pathways and processes.

Following a competitive process, the FNHA hired the independent consulting firm, MNP LLP, to conduct this evaluation in collaboration with the FNHA Evaluation Team.

The evaluation was undertaken in three phases:

- **Phase 1: Planning** (July to September 2024) focused on developing the implementation plan.
- **Phase 2: Knowledge gathering** (October 2024 to May 2025) included data collection and analysis, guided by the implementation plan developed in Phase 1. Phase 1.
- **Phase 3: Reporting** (May to July 2025) involved validation of preliminary findings with the board in February 2025, followed by drafting and finalizing of the report.



Knowledge was gathered through the following methods:



Literature, document and data

review: Reviewed over 300 documents to gather information on the board's roles, responsibilities and activities during the evaluation period as well as FNHA key documents relevant to board activities. Examples of documents reviewed include terms of reference, meeting documentation, board composition and skills assessments, committee reports, risk and conflict of interest registers, etc.



Key informant interviews with the FNHA Board of Directors, FNHA representatives and key governance and health system partners:

Twenty-two key informants were engaged, including the board chair, seven board directors, one former board director, nine members of the FNHA's executive leadership, one representative each from the FNHC, the FNHDA and Indigenous Services Canada.

Evidence from all knowledge sources was analyzed and synthesized into a detailed presentation shared with the board during a meaning-making session (February 2025). Insights from this session were incorporated into this report. FNHA representatives, including senior executives and staff with subject matter expertise, reviewed the report before it was presented and approved by the FNHA's Board of Directors.





Key Findings

Board Fulfillment of Mandate, Purpose, and Core Responsibilities

1. The board is operating in alignment with the 7 Directives, Shared Vision and the mission and mandate established for the FNHA by BC First Nations through the foundational documents. It is fulfilling its purpose of providing strategic leadership and corporate governance oversight to support the FNHA in advancing its mandate and its legal obligations.

The 7 Directives and guiding principles are reflected in the FNHA's corporate policies, board policies, meeting packages and board orientation materials. Engagements with the board chair and board directors confirmed a good understanding of foundational and guiding principles and strong motivation to support alignment.

The evaluation also found that the board is fulfilling its purpose to provide strategic leadership support to, and corporate governance oversight of, the FNHA in fulfilling its mandate to serve and support the health and wellness of First Nations communities. Evidence gathered through documents indicates that board decisions regularly address strategic organizational priorities identified by First Nations in BC, and that its corporate governance practices are aligned with the FNHA's mandate. To further support its effectiveness, the board has continued to develop and revise board policies on a regular basis to support its functions, align with direction provided by First Nations in BC and reflect evolving best practices.



Poster depicting the 7 Directives that guide the work of the FNHA, FNHC, and FNHDA, as directed by First Nation Chiefs and leaders across BC's five regions.

2. The board is effectively providing strategic vision and oversight of the FNHA's goals and priorities in alignment with direction received from First Nations in BC.

This strategic vision and oversight are reflected in the board's support for the negotiation of a renewed 10-year Canada Funding Agreement with the Government of Canada in 2023 and input and approval of key planning and strategic documents. These include the FNHA's multi-year health plans, annual operating plans and other action plans, frameworks, visioning and strategy documents. These documents incorporate extensive input from First Nations in BC gathered by the FNHA and health governance partners.



Colleen Erickson, former FNHA board chair, joins other leaders from the Government of Canada, the FNHA and FNHC to announce a renewed 10-year Canada Funding Agreement for First Nations health care in BC, April 2023.

3. The board provided strong leadership in guiding the FNHA's response to multiple concurrent public health and environmental emergencies.

Between the fiscal years of 2019/20 and 2023/24, the board demonstrated proactive leadership in guiding the FNHA's response to multiple concurrent public health and environmental emergencies that necessitated reprioritization of time and resources and expanded collaborative efforts with Tripartite and Health Governance Partners. Through evolving priorities, the board remained flexible and adaptive and continues to balance governance and operational needs with immediate and emerging pressures.

4. The board has provided effective oversight of the FNHA's organizational risk through the detailed review and audit of the FNHA financial statements, audit reports, internal audit plans, financial decision sheets and oversight of the Enterprise Risk Registry Report. A refresh of the risk report is currently being conducted to ensure it reflects enterprise-wide risks that impact the whole organization.

The board provides financial oversight of the FNHA through discussion and approval of the annual operating budget, audited financial statements, audit reports, internal audit plans and financial decision sheets, as well as approving revisions to the Financial Accountability Management Framework.

The board oversees enterprise risk management through a quarterly review of the Enterprise Risk Registry. The Enterprise Risk Report, that is a review of the Enterprise Risk Registry, is led by the vice president of finance and is presented to the board. An updated risk policy was released in February 2024 which led to an introduction of a Risk Appetite Framework later that year. Currently, the vice president of finance and the board are interested in initiating a review and reduction of the risk report to ensure that all risks included are enterprise-wide and effect the whole organization. Risks impacting parts of the organization will be shifted to fall under the review of the chief executive officer (CEO) and chief operating officer (COO).

Internal board risk management is supported via a comprehensive FNHA Board Risk Management Plan. Potential risks include those related to individual board directors not adequately fulfilling the requirements of their roles, and the board or committees not meeting its obligations. This plan outlines the associated controls and mitigating action to each risk.

5. The board demonstrates its commitment to reciprocal accountability and transparency through regular presentations of the FNHA annual reports and audited financial statements to First Nations in BC at Regional Caucus and periodic evaluations and reviews of FNHA's policies, partnerships and programs and services.

The board has embedded practices that demonstrate its commitment to reciprocal accountability and transparency. One of the primary mechanisms for maintaining accountability to First Nations communities is through reporting at Regional Caucus sessions.

To date, the board has engaged in two external evaluations as a means of assessing its effectiveness and promoting continuous improvement. In addition to this evaluation, the board supported the 2024 mandatory evaluations of the FNHA and the BC TFA, the 2023 Evaluation of the FNHC⁴ and an internal 2021 After-Action Review of the FNHA's Phase 1 COVID-19 Pandemic Response. Learnings and recommendations from these evaluations and reviews helped support the board to make evidence-based decisions and participate in continuous quality improvement.

6. Given recent turnover of the board chair and board directors and the appointment of a new CEO, this is an opportune time for the board to assess and establish a standard CEO assessment process.

The CEO is accountable to the board for organizational and operational performance and for progress toward annual and long-term goals. The board is responsible for assessing the performance of the CEO based on these expectations.

Formal CEO performance reviews were conducted until fiscal year 2018/19; since then, the former board chair and former CEO met on a more informal basis to discuss goals and performance. With a new board chair and CEO in place, there is the opportunity to refresh how the board sets expectations and oversees the performance of the CEO.



Covers of the 2024 mandatory evaluations of the FNHA and the BC TFA, highlighting stories of progress in transforming First Nations health in BC.



(Left to right) Richard Jock, former FNHA CEO, Colleen Erickson, former FNHA board chair, and Wade Grant, former FNHC Chair, great honoured guests at the Ninth Gathering of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide held in Vancouver, BC, September 2023.

⁴First Nations Health Council, Exploring the Journey of the First Nations Health Council. (2023) Retrieved from: <https://fnhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Exploring-the-Journey-of-the-FNHC-What-We-Heard-Report-2023.pdf>

7. Between fiscal years 2019/20 and 2023/24, the board approved the updates of 67 corporate policies. As the FNHA has evolved, corporate policies have become more detailed, expansive and operational in scope to support consistency and policy compliance organization wide. There are opportunities to streamline corporate policy review processes to reduce the administrative burden on board directors.

The board works with the FNHA Corporate Policy Team to review and approve new and updated corporate policies. Recent updates to corporate policies supported enhanced relevance, effectiveness and clarity, including the use of more inclusive terminology and stronger alignment with evolving cultural safety and humility standards and policies aligned with the Health Data and Information Stewardship Framework.

Despite the overall strength of the corporate policy framework and approval process, the evaluation found the frequency and time commitment required for policy review placed a significant administrative burden on board meeting agendas. Currently, the Corporate Policy Team is working towards conducting a risk assessment of each policy to better understand what policies should be prioritized by the board, and what policies are more operationally focused and should be delegated to the CEO or FNHA Executive Strategy Team.

8. The board emphasized that policies must reflect the needs and priorities of First Nation communities and expressed interest in leveraging community engagement to ensure policy alignment.

There was expressed interest in leveraging engagement results and possibly further engaging with communities to ensure that new and revised policies are grounded in current realities and priorities. This includes exploring opportunities to strengthen regional capacity to support broader and more meaningful policy review processes.

"The policies are refreshed regularly and there is a good process. A team member from Corporate Policy presents at every board meeting. They provide updates on which policies were reviewed and refreshed, which need to be reviewed, the history of when they were last refreshed, etc. There is transparent and regularly scheduled tracking of the history of when they were reviewed or revised and the upcoming schedule."

- board director



Board Structure, Capacity and Operations

9. Current board membership and composition aligns with best practices and ensures the board has the skills and expertise to fulfill its mandate, roles and responsibilities.

The evaluation period saw a transition of 89 per cent of its membership including the board chair. Despite this considerable turnover, the board maintained productivity and efficiency, continuing to fulfill its corporate governance and strategic leadership functions. In the future, a more gradual cadence of replacing a board director every year or two years may support better knowledge transfer and seamless board operations.

To guide recruitment efforts and maintain alignment with the evolving needs of the organization, the board uses a board skills matrix. This matrix helps identify priority areas for expertise and guides the selection of new board directors. In its most recent refresh in 2022, new focus areas were added, including health and healthcare operations and infrastructure development expertise.

The continued effectiveness of the board's three standing committees (Quality Improvement, Safety and Wellness Committee, Board Governance and Human Resource Committee and Finance and Risk Management Committee) reflects the board's ability to maintain strategic governance oversight and operational continuity during a period of significant turnover. Each committee has demonstrated a commitment to its mandate and continues to operate in alignment with its intended purpose.



Colleen Erickson, former FNHA board chair, speaks at the FNHA's 10-Year celebration, October 2023.



FNHA board vice chair Leah Ballantyne and board directors (Jack Page, Greg Louie and Dr. Lex Vides) recognize Richard Jock, former FNHA CEO, for many years of service to the organization and First Nations in BC, November 2024.



Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair, presents at the Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve 25-year anniversary gala in Vancouver, BC, November 2024.

10. Board directors found the onboarding process helpful and informative and report that onboarding efforts were further supported through informal mentorship. There are opportunities to further enhance the effectiveness of board director onboarding and offboarding processes.

New board directors participate in an onboarding process designed to provide the context, tools, and resources needed to fulfill their governance role. Opportunities identified by key informants to further enhance the effectiveness of board director onboarding include the creation of a formal mentorship program, the adoption of lengthier orientations to facilitate relationship-building between board directors and the FNHA Executive Strategy Team, and the inclusion of additional information on formal communication protocols.

Currently, the board does not have or undertake a formal offboarding process. Some board directors who resigned during the evaluation period participated in an informal, undocumented discussion with the former chair.

11. The board has a demonstrated history of commitment to board education and learning that shifted to meet immediate needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The board is now exploring new educational opportunities to align with professional development needs and the evolving role of the board as the FNHA matures.

During the evaluation period, group education was delivered through the annual board retreat, with a primary focus on First Nations traditional knowledge and learning. Individual education opportunities were also made available to board directors on an as requested basis, however, not all board directors may have been aware or utilized this training. Board directors expressed interest in expanding their subject matter expertise, particularly on best practices related to corporate governance oversight. As the FNHA matures as an organization, the board has an opportunity to explore new educational opportunities that align with the professional development needs of new and existing board directors and support the evolving role of the board.

"I feel it is important to have knowledge from outside sources on how to change or make changes towards the environment that we are in."

- Board director



(Left to right) Dr. Peter Eppinga, Dr. Lex Vides, and Greg Louie, FNHA board directors, 2025.



(Left to right) Yvonne Moon, Dease River First Nation executive director, Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair, and Monica McAlduff, FNHA CEO, at Hot Lakes Cultural Area where Kaska Dena people gather for traditional healing, 2025.

12. Board meeting materials and agendas are developed through a structured process that supports effective governance; however, there are opportunities to enhance agenda and meeting material development by increasing the involvement of board and committee chairs and improving the sequencing of motions.

The evaluation found that board and committee meetings are held regularly, are well organized and structured, and follow an established annual schedule. While meeting materials and agendas have evolved over time, there is an opportunity to continue strengthening alignment with strategic priorities through more formal collaboration between the board chair, CEO and secretariat in agenda development. The board also identified potential improvements to meeting flow, including reorganizing agenda items to prioritize decision-making and reviewing motions after related discussion items to mitigate risks associated with maintaining quorum and supporting timely decision-making.

13. The Office of the Board Secretariat provides strong administrative and communication liaison support to the board. There is an opportunity to further clarify its composition, roles and responsibilities and reporting structure.

The Office of the Board Secretariat plays a key role in supporting board operations by providing administrative, coordination, and logistical support. The evaluation found that documentation practices were strong, with well-maintained records demonstrating effective administrative support for board operations. While the Office of the Board Secretariat is fulfilling a critical administrative support function, some board directors indicated a need for greater clarity regarding its composition, specific roles and responsibilities and reporting structure, particularly in relation to the CEO and the board chair. In addition, it was suggested it may be helpful to provide executive support staff (e.g., administrative staff supporting executives and the board) with ongoing professional development related to best practices in corporate governance oversight.

14. The board incorporates First Nations ways of knowing and being into its operations through implementing opening territorial acknowledgement and prayers and including a Knowledge Keeper at board and committee meetings.

The board has demonstrated a commitment to incorporating First Nations ways of knowing and being into its governance practices. The Knowledge Keeper emphasized sharing teachings from her grandmother with the board and incorporating cultural values and guiding principles that emphasized respect, honesty, love, wisdom, courage, and truth into board and committee meetings.



Greg Louie, FNHA board director, joins fellow members of Ahousaht First Nation in opening Vancouver Island Caucus, November 2024.

Board Relationships with Partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure, Executive Leadership, Tripartite Partners, and BC First Nations

15. The FNHA, FNHC and FNHDA work collaboratively to support the health and wellness priorities of First Nations in BC while upholding strong, but separate, governance and operational roles. As the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure evolves and matures, there is an opportunity to continue to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the FNHA, FNHC and FNHDA, particularly around engagement and advocacy on behalf of First Nations in BC.

As the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure has matured and evolved, and the partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure have sought to respond to emergent needs, priorities and directives from community, the delineation of roles and responsibilities in some areas have become less distinct. Some FNHA board directors expressed concern that community members' understanding of the FNHA's roles and responsibilities in relation to the FNHC's and FNHDA's have become blurred, resulting in community's dissatisfaction with actions against inaccurately perceived roles. To address this, FNHA board directors suggested further clarification and communication is needed for both community members and health system partners to reinforce the distinct and complementary roles of the FNHA, FNHC, and FNHDA.

16. The FNHA Board of Directors has contributed to advancing FNHA's partnerships and has established and maintained strong connections with the partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure. While the board regularly supports and approves collaborative efforts with partners, there is an opportunity to further clarify roles and responsibilities of the partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure and enhance the process for the FNHA Members of the Society to approve FNHA board members.

Throughout the evaluation period, the board has maintained well-established partnerships with the FNHDA and FNHC and has collaboratively worked to coordinate activities, strategy, and messaging. The FNHA board chair works closely with the Chairs of the FNHC and FNHDA and participates in meetings that support alignment across the Health Governance Partners, including Regional Caucuses, the Tripartite Committee on First Nations Health, and standing meetings with FNHC and FNHDA.

FNHC members are also members of the FNHA Society. The FNHA Members of the Society are responsible for the recruitment and appointment of the FNHA's Board of Directors. As part of the 2024 BC TFA Evaluation, it was found that there is a need to strengthen internal processes regarding how the FNHA Members of the Society separates business and politics and ensure the appointment of board directors are informed by operational rather than political considerations.



(Left to right) (Wenecwtsin) Wayne Christian, former FNHC deputy chair, Richard Jock, former FNHA CEO, Keith Marshall, former FNHDA President, Colleen Erikson, former FNHA board chair, and Wade Grant, former FNHC chair at the FNHA's 10-year celebration, October 2023.

17. Roles, responsibilities, and communication pathways between the board, its committees and FNHA leadership are generally well established, with opportunities to further clarify and formalize communication protocols.

Open communication pathways exist between the board and FNHA executive leadership, and between the board chair and CEO. Members of the Executive Strategy Team attend board and committee meetings as guests, and several vice-presidents are regular attendees in committee meetings.

Board directors indicated that while communication is generally open, there are opportunities to further clarify and support a shared understanding of the communication pathways between the board and executive leadership within the organization. In particular, board directors expressed a desire for a more clearly defined communication structure that positions the board chair and CEO as the primary link between the board and FNHA staff. A few board directors also reported that their direct queries to staff are not being addressed, which was acknowledged by the former CEO and other leadership. These concerns highlight the need to document and formalize the desired communication pathways to support clarity and consistency moving forward.

18. The board has established and maintained strong connections with Tripartite Partners (the Province of BC and the Government of Canada). The board regularly supports and approves collaborative efforts between the FNHA and Tripartite Partners.

The board engages with the Tripartite Partners through the board chair's involvement in relationship-building and strategic coordination efforts. The board chair represents the FNHA in meetings with government ministers, health authority board chairs and other senior government officials.

19. The board utilizes engagement input and directly engages with First Nations leadership during Regional Caucuses. Clarity is needed around the board's role in directly engaging First Nations, and the FNHA's role as a conduit between regional health authorities and communities. Increasing engagement contributes to engagement burden and may contribute to a lack of coordination of engagement priorities and timelines.

The board leverages extensive engagement input gathered by the FNHA and its health system partners to inform fulfillment of its core responsibilities.



(Left to right) Monica McAlduff, FNHA CEO and Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair, present at the First Nations Health Foundation's inaugural Together in Healing Gala, June 2025.



(Left to right) Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair, and Denise Lacerte, FNHA director of strategic initiatives, at the Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve 25-year anniversary gala, November 2024.



Dr. Sheila Blackstock, FNHA board chair presents at the FNHA and Aboriginal Housing Management Association Memorandum of Partnership event, May 2024.

The board also directly engages First Nations health leadership at spring and fall Regional Caucuses. Feedback from community leadership and members provides the board with important insight that informs their work.

Board directors have expressed a desire to conduct further direct engagement with First Nations health leadership and communities. Given increasing engagement efforts by partners within the BC First Nations Health Governance Structure and Tripartite Partners, there is potential for further overlap and duplication in engagement and exacerbation of the engagement burden. Further clarity is needed around the board's role and involvement in engaging First Nations in BC relative to engagement efforts undertaken.

Another area that requires further clarification and guidance from the board related to engagement is the FNHA's relationship with regional health authorities. The 2024 BC TFA Evaluation found that while previously the FNHA has played a key role as a conduit between the regional health authorities and communities, the respective roles and responsibilities of the regional health authorities and the FNHA have become more "muddled". Representatives from both parties expressed concern that the increasing levels of direct communication between regional health authorities and First Nations, in the absence of the FNHA, can create tensions and lead to overlap and duplication of efforts at a time when the capacity of communities to engage is already stretched. There is an opportunity for the board to review the structure of these relationships, given the developments and changes in recent years.

20. In alignment with guidance from First Nations in BC, the board can provide strategic direction on the FNHA's evolving role as a funder, partner and deliverer of health programs and services and the organization's structure, operating model and regionalization approach.

As documented by the 2024 FNHA Evaluation⁵, the FNHA has an evolving role as a funding partner, interim delivery partner, and deliverer of programs and services.

As the FNHA continues to refine its organizational structure and regionalization approach, differing perspectives on its future role and mandate as a service delivery provider present both challenges and opportunities for the organization. There are mixed views among community representatives regarding their vision of the FNHA's role in service delivery. These varying perspectives underscore the importance of continued engagement, strategic clarity and adaptability as the FNHA continues to evolve its organizational structure.

As the FNHA continues to mature and evolve, the board can be instrumental in leveraging engagement input and direction from First Nations in BC to inform strategic direction on FNHA's desired role including the ideal operating model.



Representatives from Tsow-tun Le Lum, FNHA, Island Health, Correctional Services Canada, Cowichan Tribes, and the Power to Give celebrate the Sacred Ceremonial Grand Opening of the newly relocated Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society in Duncan, BC, September 2024.

⁵First Nations Health Authority, Evaluation of the First Nations Health Authority 2019/20 to 2023/24 (2024) pg. 38



Conclusions

The 2024 Evaluation of the FNHA Board of Directors confirms that the board is successfully providing strategic vision and oversight of the FNHA's goals and priorities and is operating in alignment with the 7 Directives, Shared Vision and the mission and mandate established for the FNHA by BC First Nations through foundational documents. During the evaluation period, the board provided strong leadership and guidance to the FNHA, including guiding FNHA's response to multiple concurrent public health and environmental emergencies while remaining flexible to balance governance and operational needs with immediate and emerging pressures and priorities.

The board continues to strengthen relationships and partnerships with First Nations in BC, the FNHDA, FNHC and the federal and provincial governments. The board continues to promote the inclusion of traditional practices and protocols in meetings and the nurturing of cultural safety and humility alongside traditional health and wellness in FNHA policies.

There are opportunities for the board to examine opportunities to enhance and refresh board processes of fulfilling core responsibilities, board director onboarding and capacity development, and board administration and operations. Finally, the board may wish to discuss and provide strategic direction and guidance on FNHA's desired role and operating model, FNHA's role as a conduit between regional health authorities and communities, as well as both FNHA's role and the board's role in engaging directly with First Nations in BC.





Recommendations

The recommendations arising from the evaluation are as follows:

1.Examine opportunities to enhance board processes for fulfilling core responsibilities.

The board can strengthen its internal processes through:

- Continuing to provide strategic guidance on enterprise risk management in collaboration with the vice president of finance, including supporting the review and refresh of the Enterprise Risk Registry and Enterprise Risk Report. This process can enhance risk governance and clarify oversight responsibilities by distinguishing enterprise-level risks from operational or localized risks, which may be delegated to the CEO and COO.
- Streamlining the corporate policy review process to reduce the administrative burden on board directors, including amending the policy review schedule to every five years or streamlining internal policy review processes and approval pathways to delegate more operationally focused policies to the COO, CEO or other Executive Strategy Team members.
- Refreshing an annual CEO performance review process. The board can develop this process to be aligned with First Nations ways of knowing and being.



2. Examine opportunities to enhance board director onboarding and capacity development.

The board can strengthen onboarding and capacity development by:

- Examining opportunities to further enhance the effectiveness of board director onboarding including the creation of a formal mentorship program, the adoption of lengthier orientations to facilitate relationship-building between board directors and the FNHA Executive Strategy Team, and the inclusion of additional information on formal communication protocols.
- Documenting the communication pathways between the board, board chair, CEO, and others to support onboarding of new board directors and the preservation of information and feedback processes.
- Exploring new educational opportunities for the board directors and board executive support staff that align with their professional development needs and their evolving roles, including supporting professional development related to best practices in corporate governance oversight.

3. Streamline, clarify and refresh board administration and operations.

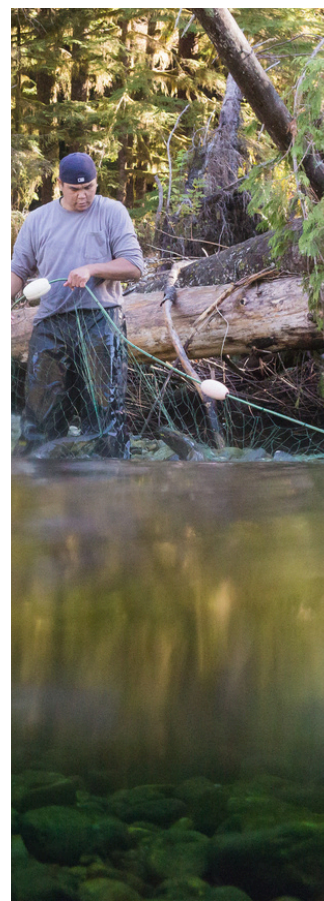
Board administration and operations can be strengthened through:

- Increasing the involvement of board and committee chairs to enhance meeting material development and change sequencing of motions to maintain quorum.
 - Agendas can have topic and decision items aligned and in the sequence of: For Decision, For Discussion, and For Information.
 - Forward each motion for discussion and voting after each agenda item.
- Further clarifying the composition, roles and responsibilities and reporting structure of the Office of the Board Secretariat.
- Continuing to promote the inclusion of traditional practices and protocols in meetings and the nurturing of cultural safety alongside traditional health and wellness in FNHA policies.

4. Enhance the board's strategic direction and guidance

In alignment with guidance from First Nations in BC, the board can provide strategic direction and guidance on the following areas:

- Continuing to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the FNHA, FNHC and FNHDA, particularly around engagement and advocacy on behalf of First Nations in BC.
- Clarifying the role of the FNHA as a funder, partner and deliverer of programs and services, and the organization's structure, operating model and regionalization approach.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the FNHA as a conduit between regional health authorities and communities.
- Examining the board's role in engaging with First Nations in BC, as the board has expressed a desire to conduct further direct engagement with First Nations health leadership and communities.





First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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