

Spirit

www.fnha.ca A s Health and Wellness Quarterly

Fall 2012

The Harvest

*Northern Light:
First Nation communities
Kwadacha and Tsay Keh Dene open
up about living life in the North*



Canning
and Jarring

Natural
Digestion Tips

Sticking to Your
Wellness Plan

Traditional
Food and Field
Guides

The First Nations Health Authority: A Message from the CEO



Welcome to the first issue of *Spirit*, a BC First Nations health and wellness quarterly. As BC First Nations continue to walk our path to wellness, we introduce *Spirit* as a tool for sharing information, celebrating our successes, and supporting an emerging BC First Nations health and wellness network. The First Nations Health Authority is eager to share practical and fun tips on how to be well, create connections to services and to share the knowledge, talents, skills and innovations of our BC First Nations communities.

We live in an exciting moment where BC First Nations are designing our own health system – incorporating the best of our traditional knowledge, medicines and wisdom with contemporary medical techniques that will support us. *Spirit* is one vehicle that will help us to share the traditional knowledge given to us by our ancestors while recognizing the benefits of other systems of health and wellness that can aid us on our journey.

The historic BC First Nations health reform process is bringing together communities all over the province to have the important discussions surrounding the health of our people. As we have this conversation we are asking: What does it mean to be healthy? What is wellness? We are collectively determining and defining health on our own terms and in ways that are meaningful to us. The First Nations Health Authority offers this magazine as one tool to support health literacy and inspire our communities.

“Our relationships and responsibility to take care of our lands and each other comes from the wisdom and knowledge passed down to us on how to live respectful, positive and healthy lives.”

We know health and wellness is not just the absence of sickness or injury. Health is a combination of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. It begins with us making the right decisions in our lives but we must also address social, environmental, cultural and economic factors as a collective BC First Nations family.

We know our Nations, families and communities are what make us strong and keep us well. Our relationships and responsibility to take care of our lands and each other comes from the wisdom and knowledge passed down to us on how to live respectful, positive and healthy lives.

We hope you enjoy the first issue of *Spirit* and use this magazine as a tool for your individual, family, community and Nation’s wellness. We want to share the best and brightest individual and community stories, and to open doors for communication and collaboration between Nations as we work to create the healthiest BC First Nations communities and the most effective, innovative, and Community-Driven, Nation-Based health system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Gallagher'.

Joe Gallagher
CEO
First Nations Health Authority



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Cover: Kwadacha First Nation's former Chief of 38 years Emil McCook stands in one of the village's three greenhouses that are bringing the community back to the harvest. Read 'Northern Light' on Page 14. Photo: Trevor Kehoe

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Guest Contributors:



Patricia Ann Howard is of Métis ancestry and currently works with Northern Health as the Aboriginal Coordinator for the Blood Borne Pathogens Integration Team. She has a Master's in First Nations Studies from University of Northern BC with an emphasis on Aboriginal Health and the role traditional sustenance has regarding the overall health and well-being of Aboriginal people.

Read - 'Berries, Bison and Branches: Returning to Traditional Aboriginal Sustenance' on Page 26.



Gwen Phillips is a citizen of the Ktunaxa Nation and is a resident of the St. Mary's Indian Reserve near Cranbrook. Gwen has roots in the Tobacco Plains community near Grasmere that also extends into the Kootenai Tribe on the Flathead Reservation in Montana. Gwen has worked for her Nation for the past 29 years, primarily within the social sector as Director of Education, Director of Health, and Director of Traditional Knowledge and Language.

Read - 'Seeing the Forest, Not Only the Trees' on Page 12.



Dawn Morrison works from a basis of Indigenous food sovereignty and eco-cultural restoration and has an educational background in the areas of horticulture, ethnobotany, adult instruction, restoration of natural systems, and business management. Dawn's most recent professional developments include working with the Vancouver Native Health Society as the Program Coordinator for the Urban Aboriginal Community Garden/Kitchen Project, and as the Chairperson for the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

Read - 'Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Sharing Ideas, Time and Energy' on Page 8.

Welcome from National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo



It is my pleasure to introduce the inaugural issue of the First Nations Health Authority's *Spirit* magazine. Health and wellness for First Nations encompasses many elements – physical, spiritual, mental and emotional. The theme of this first issue is particularly relevant as our cultural practices and traditional foods are an important element of our overall health.

The harvest has always been one of the most important times of the year for First Nations people. It's the time when we work the land for long hours, but it is also a time to celebrate the strength, resilience and spirit of community, for we work together as families, communities and Nations. Whether it's planting the seeds, tending to the crops, gathering the harvest, fasting for a hunt or preparing the food, we all come together for the harvest and we all contribute something to the process. We stand as individuals, but it is only together as communities and Nations that we thrive and prosper.

This is very true for my own people, the Nuu-chah-nulth and our tradition of the whale hunt. It was only through working together as a group that we were able to hunt and harvest a whale many times the size of a single person. As part of our culture, prayer and ceremony took place before hunting and before setting out on the water. A single whale would sustain our community for a long period of time and the prayers would be with our people, giving them strength throughout the entire hunt. When we caught a whale we would give thanks to the whale, give thanks to the Creator and celebrate through song after the food was prepared, eaten and stored for the next season. The harvest was created together and shared together.

Proper preparation for harvesting resources for our health and livelihood requires respect and care for other living things, the earth and one other. When we walk with this respect we regain our balance and live in greater harmony with others and the environment that sustains us. First Nations know we live in a world of abundance where the earth provides everything we need if we take care of it. The harvest is a reminder of this abundance and the need for us to respect and protect creation. Our ancestors have known this and prospered from this knowledge for generations. As we see this prosperity and success continuing in First Nations across BC, we look back to the wisdom of the past to carry us forward to the future.

The kinship within our communities and families is still strong and as the harvest changes, we adapt with it as vibrant, independent and healthy First Nations people. What we harvest and the way we harvest may change over time, but our traditions, ceremony and prayers remain strong and we hold them close within our communities, families, and selves. These values will remain strong within First Nation communities and maintain the close relationship to our Creator and the land that will give life and sustenance to future generations.

I hope you enjoy the inaugural issue of *Spirit*. I congratulate all those who have worked hard and diligently to make it a reality. I look forward to all future issues!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SA', written in a stylized, cursive script.

Shawn A-in-chut Atleo
National Chief
Assembly of First Nations



The *Harvest* Issue

The harvest season is a special time for First Nations when we reap what we have sown over the spring and summer months. It's a time of celebration for what we have been given by the land, the water, the air and our creator. The harvest is not only about food and physical elements. It is also about personal growth, and the harvest of the self through changing seasons and passing years. We plant seeds in our daily lives through our every thought and action. Our life's work through the seasons and the seeds we tend to become our harvest of relationships, health, families and friendships. We must care for our seeds, give thanks and nurture the seeds of change that we plant in our lives, in our communities and in our world.

Harvesting is a time when Nations, communities and families celebrate together. It takes individuals coming together to make the harvest season a success, one cannot do it alone. Many BC First Nation

healthy land and water. In many communities and cities, our connection to the land and our food has been lost. The western food system is one of separation and often we don't know who grows our foods. Food is transported from afar, has lower nutritional content, and 'fast food' is all too common. For many First Nations communities this separation has never existed. Many are thriving off the land as they have for generations. Hunting, berry-picking, fishing, gathering medicines and other traditional activities are still a way of life and this knowledge is being passed on to the next generation where the seeds planted are growing strong.

The whole harvest process benefits our health - caring for the land is good for our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. A healthy environment is necessary for healthy individuals but as people have mastered the harvest of resources, for some this means taking more than

The whole harvest process benefits our health - caring for the land is good for our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellness.

communities embrace the ways of our ancestors who lived in close connection to the earth. All that was needed was to tend to the earth, to take care of the land, water, and animals. We should always give thanks to these elements and to our Creator for allowing us to thrive and to have healthy, happy families and Nations. All the knowledge we ever need exists in the trees, in the soil, in the air, on the mountain and in the water. The earth offers us all we need and it's the connection to our healthy lands that allow us to be well.

For generations, First Nations have known how to care for the land and that what is good for the earth is good for its people. The connection to the earth is a connection to spirit. To have healthy people, one must have

what is needed. Living in harmony with the land is first nature for many First Nations and our ancestors taught us not to waste and to always give back to the animals and the earth. It's not possible for a community to be healthy if the land or water is not. We depend on the land for our livelihoods, our well-being, our food, our families and future generations.

This is the first issue of *Spirit*, a quarterly magazine of the First Nations Health Authority. We hope the information you find here helps you on your wellness journey. We want to showcase the lives of BC First Nations, celebrate the victories and share information on our collective path to good health. Enjoy the last of this harvest season as we prepare for the winter months - a time of reflection, stillness, and ceremony.

-*Spirit*



BC First Nations, members of the RCMP and other community organizations arrive in Tla'Amin territory in early July as part of the Pulling Together initiative that unites the group to improve relationships and strike a new path.

Photo: Eileen Francis

Food and Medicine Field Guides Focus on *Traditional Knowledge*



Tekm e slaxans et e q^wo? ?es mlamn kt

All of our Food and Water is our Medicine

By Trevor Kehoe

Many years of planning and three years of hard work by a number of interior First Nations Chiefs, Elders, community members, and health societies have resulted in two extensive traditional food resource guides.

These guides link First Nations with well-researched information related to locally found food, medicines and harvesting techniques. The collaboration was spearheaded by Siska

munities who know the traditional knowledge. A big thanks is due to Chief Fred Sampson of the Siska Indian Band and Chief David Walkem from Cook's Ferry Indian Band for their guidance and perseverance in making this a success."

The overall goal of the guides is to place strength in traditional knowledge to help First Nations utilize the respected natural

The Food Guide is also used to better understand the seasons, indicators, and appropriate times for gathering foods. It includes recipes, complete nutritional value charts, disease prevention techniques, physical activity recommendations, instructions on canning, cleaning fish and game, hunting, as well as a how-to build a pit oven, among other essential traditional harvesting information.

"If you are smart, from where you are standing now, (pointing to the mountain) to straight up the mountain, is all the food you can gather. There is the meat, berries, fishes, salmon and all the medicines that are on the land. If you know how, then you do not starve," Coldwater Indian Band member Paul Oppenheim

Traditions Society through Esh-kn-am Cultural Resources Management Services for the Heskwen'scutxe and Scw'exmx Community Health Services Societies located in Nlaka'pamux territory (near Merritt).

resources found in the local territories. The guides offer information that benefits the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness of individuals, families, and communities in the Nlaka'pamux Nation.

The administration champions who supported the project included Jim Adams, Scw'exmx Community Health Services Society; Jean York, Heskwen'scutxe Health Services Society; and Brenda Aljam, Esh-kn-am Cultural Resources. After all the years of work put into the project, many thanks have been given to all those who contributed knowledge, talents and ideas to the documents that will have an immediate, direct and long-lasting positive impact.

"A lot of work was put into this project. I think it's going to be a long-lasting success and increase the interest in traditional foods for many of our Nlaka'pamux communities," said Jim Adams, Executive Director of Scw'exmx Community Health Services, whose organization helped fund the project. "It was very much Elder-driven with help from those in the com-

The Traditional Field Guide information is broken down into seasonal plant-life and animals with traditional, scientific, and common names, physical characteristics, habitat found in, traditional uses, and management techniques. The invaluable harvesting techniques are put in a simple form that will now last for generations.

For more information contact: Esh-kn-am Cultural Resources Management Services at: 250-315-0085.



Trapper's Tea
K'éce?

Rhododendron neoglandulosum (Ledum glandulosum)

Physical Characteristics: K'éce? is a stout evergreen shrub that grows up to 40-80 cm tall. The leaves are oval to lance shaped and the leaf edges roll downward. They are sturdy, green and coarse on top. The leaves have green-white hairs with resin glands on the bottom. The flowers are white with 5 petals and 8-12 stamens, and grow in groups at the end of the branch.

Habitat: K'éce? can be found at mid-elevations in Southern BC. It tends to grow in wet coniferous forests, seepage areas, bogs and wet sloping areas.

Use: Interior First Nations would make tea and tonics from the K'éce?. It can be used to help soothe sore throats, colds and allergies. The tea is very relaxing and may cause drowsiness. Dried leaves can also be used as mouse repellents in closets and cupboards.



Soapberry
Sx'wúsm

Shepherdia canadensis

Physical Characteristics: Sx'wúsm is a spreading, deciduous shrub, 1-2 m tall with brownish branches covered with small, bran-like scabs and young branches covered with 'rusty spots'. Leaves are oval with dark greenish upper surfaces, and a silvery-whitish felt of hairs and rusty brown spots below. Flowers are yellowish brown, fruits are bright red with oval berries, juicy but bitter and sticky to the touch.

Habitat: Sx'wúsm is widespread from low to sub-alpine elevations in dry moist open forests, openings and clearings throughout BC with the exception of Haida Gwaii.

Use: Traditionally, Sx'wúsm were stored in baskets with dry grass and a little water, heated with hot stones, stirred until cool, made into cakes and dried in the sun for future use. Today Sx'wúsm is dried or canned, made into juice, ice cream and used as a flavouring agent in stews. Gathering takes place from July to September depending on elevation and weather. It can also be used as hand cream and for medicinal, spiritual and cleansing purposes.



Steelhead Salmon
Cóŋ'włe?

Oncorhynchus mykiss

Physical Characteristics: Cóŋ'włe? has a rounded mouth and green-yellow to orange and gold body when young. When they go out to sea they change to a silver colour. Cóŋ'włe? has numerous black spots on its body and when its ready to spawn a red line forms along its sides.

Habitat: Cóŋ'włe? occupy the Pacific Ocean alongside Asia and North America. They remain in the ocean for 2-3 years before returning to freshwater to spawn and can do so many times. Spawning grounds are located from Oregon to Northern BC in rivers, streams and tributaries.

Use: Cóŋ'włe? is an important food item for many First Nations. Salmon are caught using spears, netting and traditional fishing. Cóŋ'włe? can be eaten in many different ways in soups, stews, fried, boiled, baked, or dried, smoked, jarred, canned and stored through the winter.



Oyster Mushroom
łópnte? (q'am'es-éyq^w)

Pleurotus ostreatus

Physical Characteristics: łópnte? have a lopsided cap white to brownish in colour. It has a short stem with white gills running down its length and white thick flesh. Stems are not always located in the centre.

Habitat: łópnte? can be found in the spring and fall on stumps and decaying trunks of deciduous trees.

Use: łópnte? is gathered for food and can be dried for later use. It is considered edible when several are growing in a cluster, if growing singly it is best to leave alone.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Sharing Ideas, Time and Energy



Members of the Squamish Nation fish with dip nets in the Capilano River using a rock fish weir to channel their catches.

Photo: Philip Hogan

By Dawn Morrison - Chair, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty

As Indigenous peoples, upholding our sacred relationships to the plants and animals that provide us with our food is as vital to our health and well-being as maintaining our connection to the higher power, or ultimate life force that keeps our hearts pumping and lungs breathing with or without our conscious effort.

The rapidly expanding social movement towards food sovereignty provides a framework for appreciating and building on Indigenous wisdom, teachings and knowledge inherent

“Indigenous food sovereignty is a strategy for counteracting the destructive impacts of the fast paced technological model of food production, consumption and distribution that fails to nurture our sacred relationships with the plants, animals and earth that provide us with our food,” *Dawn Morrison*

in the traditional harvesting strategies and practices like hunting, fishing, and gathering. In a nut shell, Indigenous food sovereignty is a strategy for counteracting the destructive impacts of the fast paced technological model of food production, consumption and distribution that fails to nurture our sacred relationships with the plants, animals and earth that provide us with our food.

Priorities:

- Develop Indigenous Youth Leadership
- Develop online tools and resources
- Host community outreach meetings
- Develop Indigenous Food Sovereignty research strategy
- Advocate for the establishment of Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering reserves
- Share models and best practices for Indigenous food related action

The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) was born in March of 2006 out of a recognized need to carry the Indigenous voice in the various meetings, conferences and discussions that have taken place within the food security movement. Through participation in the BC Food Systems Network (BCFSN) Annual Gathering and strategic planning meetings, the Working Group was created to increase awareness of the underlying issues, concerns and strategies for increasing access to healthy, culturally adapted foods in Indigenous commu-

nities. The WGIFS seeks to apply culturally appropriate protocols and ancient ways of knowing through a consensus-based approach to critically analyzing issues, concerns and strategies as they relate to Indigenous food, land, culture, health, economics and sustainability.

The organization facilitates relationship building by organizing the time and space for regular meetings and discussions to better understand each other and our unique relationship to Indigenous land and food systems. Through the leadership provided by the WGIFS and the administrative support provided by the BCFSN and other project partners, a rapidly expanding Indigenous Food Systems Network (IFSN) has been born.

We are inspired by all the great work that individuals and groups are doing on Indigenous food related action, research and policy reform. We remain dedicated to facilitating and coordinating conversations that increase awareness of the relevant issues, concerns and strategies

The WGIFS strives to ensure Indigenous voices are carried from a strong and balanced representation and currently consists of participants from key communities and groups in each of the major regions around BC including:

- Traditional harvesters
- Farmers/Gardeners
- Community members
- Academics/Researchers
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Political Advocates

relevant to making Indigenous food sovereignty a living reality in the present day.

The IFSN Website was developed by the Working Group to allow individuals and groups involved with Indigenous food related action, research, and policy reform to network and share relevant resources and information. Visit the website and share resources at:

www.indigenousfoodsystems.org

The IFSN email Listserve enables communities to share relevant knowledge, information and resources, and participate in an online dialogue. Through electronic communication we link individuals, communities, and regional, provincial, national and international networks. Subscribe to the Listserve through this link:

www.bcfnsn.org/mailman/listinfo/ifs_bcfnsn.org

Happy hunting and harvesting!
For questions or to get involved contact: Dawn Morrison
Mobile: 250-318-7361
Email: dmo6842@gmail.com

Digestion Supports

Diet

Diet plays a huge role in proper digestion. Having a diet high in whole and traditional foods is important. Include high fibre (found in vegetables, beans, lentils, whole grains), essential fatty acids (found in nuts, seeds, fish), and plenty of water. It is very important to have mindful eating habits: sitting down to eat, chewing your food thoroughly and not being stressed or distracted when you are eating. Overeating, lying down after you eat, and eating certain foods such as sugar, fried foods, spicy foods, and alcohol can all cause digestive issues.

Probiotics

Probiotics are the good bacteria needed to protect the digestive tract from 'bad' bacteria, viruses, yeast, and parasites. They also help to improve the immune system and regulate bowel movements. These can be found in yogurts, pickles, miso soup, tempeh, sauerkraut, and kombucha.

Licorice Root

Licorice root is a plant that acts as a demulcent, coating the digestive tract and acting as a barrier protecting the tissues. It also helps decrease inflammation.

Slippery Elm Bark

Slippery Elm Bark is a plant that also acts a demulcent therefore protecting the digestive tract and helping soothe any irritations that may be caused by ulcers, gastritis, diarrhea, or reflux.

Ginger Root

Ginger root is a plant that decreases inflammation in the body as well as decreasing nausea. It may help with digestive complaints related to pregnancy.

Aloe Vera Juice

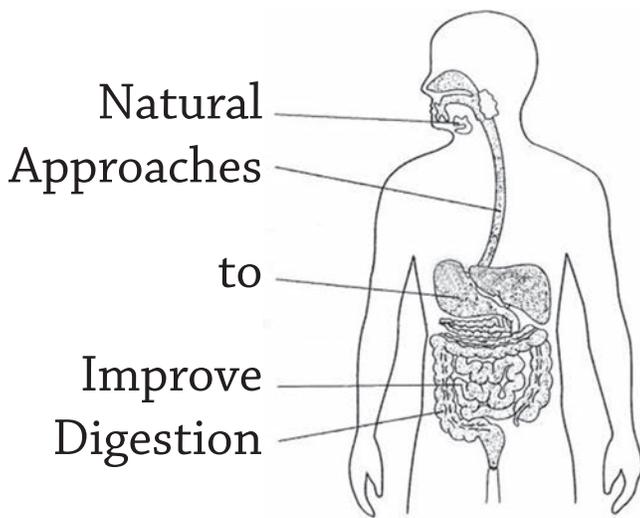
Aloe Vera juice is taken to soothe and heal the digestive tract. Aloe Vera acts to heal tissues externally as well as internally.

Digestive Enzymes

Digestive enzymes are needed to digest your food. Your enzymes may be depleted for many reasons such as taking prescription medications, eating the wrong foods, or drinking pop and alcohol. There are different enzymes to break down different foods and many different strengths depending on your needs.

Bitters

Bitter herbs and greens are used to stimulate digestion by increasing gastric acid and bile production and helping to strengthen and tonify the entire digestive tract. Bitters are taken before a meal and may include dandelion leaves, arugula, fennel, ginger, or chamomile.



By Dr. Georgia Kyba - Naturopathic Advisor

Many people suffer from digestive issues, from mild indigestion to severe conditions that need medical attention. Symptoms may include bloating, reflux, excessive gas, abdominal pain, and more serious symptoms resulting in irritable bowel syndrome or ulcerative colitis.

A number of different factors can contribute to these digestive issues including a frenzied lifestyle with too much stress, not eating proper meals or eating on the go, not choosing proper foods but eating foods high in sugar, salt, oils and preservatives, having food allergies, or being genetically predisposed to having digestive issues. Many digestive symptoms can be cured with a change in diet, natural remedies and lifestyle changes. Drinking too many acidic liquids like pop, coffee, and alcohol can also lead to digestion problems and the simple solution of sticking to water throughout the day can make a big difference.

Your digestive tract starts in your mouth and goes down through your stomach, small and large intestines, and all the way through your colon. It plays a major role in your health by allowing your body to absorb and metabolize vitamins, minerals and nutrients. This provides your body with the energy needed for all mechanisms in the body to occur: nourishment, healing, and for the body's many building blocks that sustain life.

For optimal health it is important to have optimal digestion. There are many ways to make small changes to your lifestyle and diet that can improve your digestion. Whether it is to address stress management, increase whole foods, reduce fried foods or use the aid of a natural remedy to improve your digestion, the short-term and long-term rewards will provide optimal health.

Contact Georgia Kyba at: Gkyba@fnhc.ca

Symptoms of Poor Digestion

- Bloating
- Belching
- Chronic Fatigue
- Nausea
- Indigestion
- Abdominal Pain
- Flatulence
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Heartburn
- Insomnia
- Acne

A Beginners Guide...

What You'll Need

- Favourite Recipe
- Mason Jars with tight fitting lids
- Pot large enough to cover all jars for Water Bath
- Pressure canning must be done with a certified, safe, functional and accurate pressure canner and cannot be homemade



Photo: Melody Charlie

The Basics

Home canning and jarring is a fun and easy way to preserve and store many different types of foods with secret recipes and special techniques being passed down over generations. Dad's jarred moose meat, Mom's salted fish and Granny's special jam recipe are yearly treats that are healthy and keep food fresh through the seasons.

Many First Nations communities have been preserving food for generations in a variety of ways. Along with canning, you can freeze, dry, cure, smoke, pickle and ferment to keep food fresh. Almost any type of food can be preserved, including fish, game, vegetables, jams, sauces, fruits, pickles, soups, stews and more.

Home canning is picking up steam as many families are returning to traditional harvesting techniques. For the first-timers here's a quick introduction to the many joys of jarring.

Plan Ahead

What will you be preserving? The type of food will determine the way you jar. For example: High acid foods can be 'Waterbath Canned'. Low acid foods must be 'Pressure Canned'.

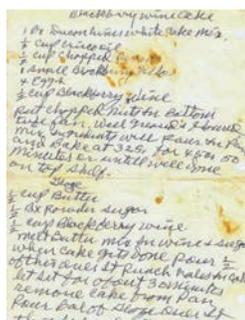
Low Acid Foods:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish and seafood
- Soups and stews
- Vegetables

High Acid Foods:

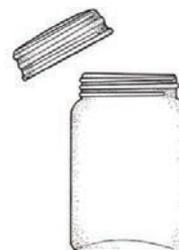
- Fruits
- Jams, jellies, spreads, sauces
- Pickles, relish, salsa, and tomatoes

1. Get Granny's best recipe. Safely combine, cook, and prepare your food.



Recipe →

2. Fill your jars with room for food expansion. Ensure a clean seal with no food residue between the lid and the threads. Tighten lids only 'finger-tight' so air can escape during the canning process. Do not screw on over-tight!



← Tighten lightly

← Expansion Space

...to Canning and Jarring

Keeping Your Food Safe

Home canning is simple and very safe when done properly, but must be done correctly to prevent food spoiling that can lead to serious illness. The process combines high temperature and time to eliminate harmful microorganisms. Proper home canning will create a tight seal to keep air and microorganisms out, and moisture and freshness locked inside. The key is to ensure you are maintaining a clean workspace, preparing your food safely, using the correct method of canning for your food type, at the correct temperature and time.



Photo: Davis McKenzie

Other Tips To Consider

When canned foods are first opened there should be a popping sound indicating the can was sealed properly. Canned food should be heated before eating to kill any bacteria that could be present. Before opening canned jars or eating canned foods, check carefully for:

- Broken seal • Bulging lid • Leakage • Gas bubbles • Mould • Cloudy liquid • Unnatural colour and smell • Soft, mushy or slimy food
- Foaming during cooking • When in doubt, throw it out!

Unsafe Methods

Some relatives or friends may 'swear by' certain methods of canning that they have been using for years such as open kettle, oven canning, steam canning, or using jars with wire or glass caps. These are unsafe and can lead to serious illness if spoiled food is consumed. Play it safe and follow all proper canning instructions and methods.

3. Set up your boil or pressure canning workspace with equipment.

Pressure Canner



Clock



4. Boil or Pressure can your jars for specified recipe time. Allow jars to cool for about 24 hours and you've got fresh jarred vegetables, salsa, fish, soup or game throughout the year!

Waterbath Canning →



Seeing the Forest, Not Only the Trees

By Gwen Phillips - Ktunaxa Nation

In the springtime, we speak of when the ground bursts open. In the summer, we say the berries are ripening at night. In the fall, the deer are mating. This is the way we as Ktunaxa people understand time. In our language the word for clock actually means little sun. In this modern age, we have given the months of the year names that reflect these natural, cyclical events that occur in nature.

Huckleberries and bitterroot, mint and yarrow - each one presents itself for use at a different time of year. Our foods, our medicines, our materials for building tools and making clothing all come from nature. Each animal, each plant, each mineral and each water source is life-giving and dependent on each other for their own lives. As First Nations people, when we look at the forest, we see so much more than the trees. We know a certain plant needs moist or dry conditions, or low or high elevation to grow. We know that some plants only grow after a fire, that others need to be eaten first and that their seeds are spread by the ones they nourish. I never tire of being with nature; it is always changing, yet so constant.

The Ktunaxa People have very important ceremonies that give honour to the plants and animals we use. Failure to honour the plants means that their value or nutrition might be lost or they might leave and go somewhere else where they were respected,” *Gwen Phillips, Ktunaxa Nation*

The Ktunaxa People have very important ceremonies that give honour to the plants and animals we use. Feasts and ceremonies are held to honour the plants that are giving themselves to us for our food and medicine. Failure to honour the plants means that their value or nutrition might be lost or they might leave and go somewhere else where they were respected. We have stories, songs, prayers, and dances all to give thanks and pay respect.

While waiting in line at a grocery store, I overheard a couple of non-Native women talking about going huckleberry picking. They stated that last year they got over 50 gallons and made wine out of most of it. That

same year, they had grizzly bears in their town-site, which was unheard of at the time. When we were taught to pick, we were taught to pick a bush and leave a bush for the bears, coyotes and other animals that depend on this food source as well. We never stripped the bush's leaves leaving only twigs, and we never made wine. We used this highly nutritious food to make dried berry cakes to last us through the hard, Rocky Mountain winters.

We, the First Nations of BC, are taking over the administration of Health Canada resources. We have the perfect opportunity in front of us to unite ourselves in governance, not just over health programs, but over health resources - our health resources: our traditional foods and medicines.

Our ancestors didn't have the diseases and illness we have because they were active by hunting, fishing, gathering, praying, dancing, preparing our foods and medicines, clothing, tools, weapons, housing and art. There was no welfare, but we fared well. I think if we are truly serious about re-establishing a wellness system, and getting away from this

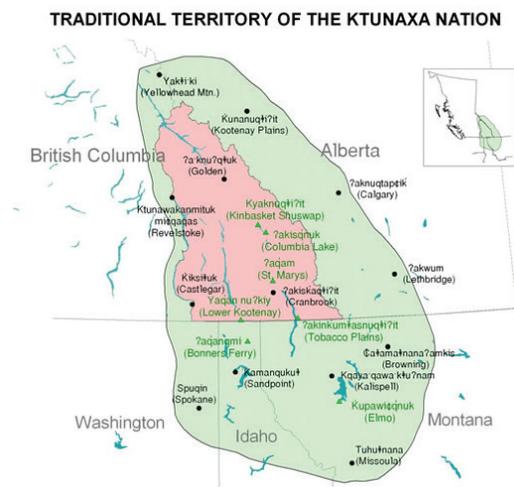
sickness system, then one of our very first assertions should be to protect the non-timber forest products from further destruction, over-use and disrespect.

I have great concern for our people's future and for the future of the forests upon which we depend. There are very few regulations that exist in provincial law to protect these resources. More and more high country is opening up to recreational vehicles and resorts, and more of our lowlands are turning into ATV tracks. We, as First Nations people, must unite ourselves and assert our own authority to care for our lands.

www.ktunaxa.org



A historic photo shows a Ktunaxa Nation family working together preparing dried meat, Circa 1930.
Photo Courtesy: Ktunaxa Nation Archives





Practicing safe techniques in the hunting, storing and preparing of game are important to avoid illness. Photo: Trevor Kehoe

Healthy Hunting

- **Be Safe:** Know your surroundings and always be aware of any other people who may be in the area. Always regularly check your equipment to ensure its in proper working order.

- **Take a Good Look:** Assess the animal to see if there are any signs of sickness, injury, infection, or illness.

- **Keep it Clean:** Always ensure cleanliness when handling your kill. Use a clean knife and avoid contaminating the carcass by using a muslin cloth or similar bag to protect from insects, dirt, and bacteria.

- **Transporting:** Have a clean place to store the catch when transporting and try to keep it as cool as possible.

- **Field Dressing:** Learn how to properly field dress an animal from an experienced hunter or through a formal educational session. Improper field dressing can result in serious illness.

- **Storing:** Skin is a natural barrier against contamination. After your game is skinned let the meat dry out to avoid bacteria growth. Hang the meat out of the direct sun and in a cool dry place. Refrigerate meat you plan on eating and freeze the rest for future use.

- **Preparing:** Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after handling raw meat. It's safest to cook raw meat all the way through however if you choose to eat meat rare, cook the outside surface to eliminate bacteria.

How-to: Start a Community Garden

Starting a community gardens is easy, fun and will not only supply you with home-grown healthy vegetables, but create a space where your whole community can gather, strengthen your relationships and interact with each other. Working the land is good for the mind, body, and spirit, and everyone can contribute in some way. Organize garden parties, classes and clubs for all age groups, and share in the harvest together!

1: Gather Together

Community Gardens need community! Get yours excited about building a garden. Organize volunteers and get an idea of how many want a permanent plot at the garden.

2: Get the Land

Depending on how many plots and the size, find an easy to access piece of land in a common area. Choose land with plenty of sunlight and away from any industrial development. If possible pick land with fertile soil so you won't need to bring it in. Also consider your water source, depending on your climate and crops.

3: Get the Gear

You'll need fertile soil, gardening tools, seeds, and wood or wire fencing to keep animals out. Rally your volunteers to find equipment you can share in town and get supplies donated if you can. Look for community grants or start up a small fundraising team, you won't need much!

4: Plan for the Seasons

Learn more about what are the best crops to plant during different times of the year. Find out more about 'companion planting' and permaculture tips to see how you can get the most out of your garden.

5: Make it Happen

Many hands make light work, organize a building day and make it a fun community event. Dedicate time to your garden - the more you put in the more you get out!

6: Share

Organize educational classes around starting and maintaining a plot as well as harvesting and preserving tips. Discuss your successes and lessons with other gardeners and remember to share the harvest!

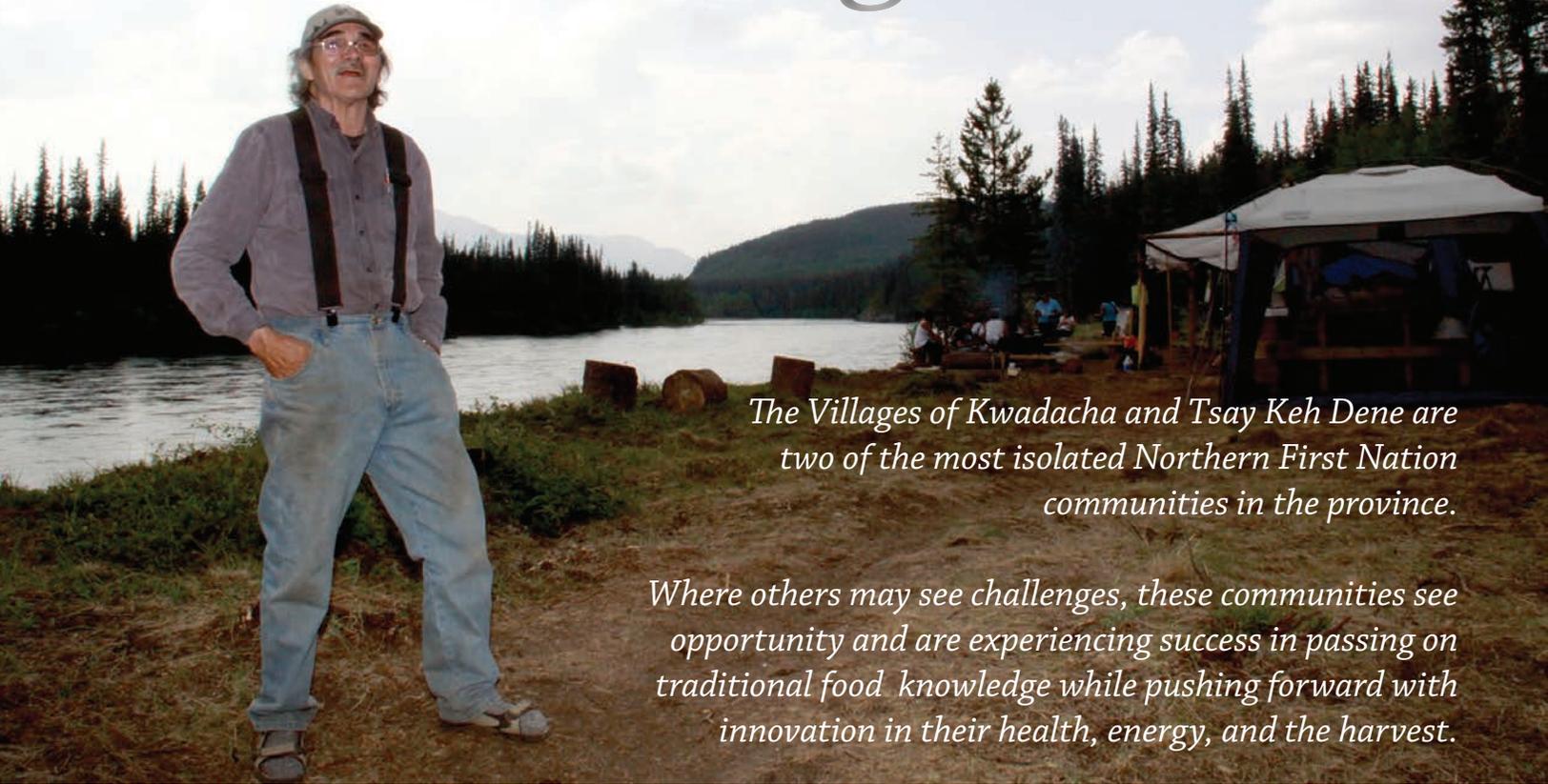
7: Have Fun

It's a learning experience so have fun! Be prepared to learn something every season and grow with your garden.



A community garden can be started in no time with a small group of dedicated volunteers, some supplies and a vision. Photo: Trevor Kehoe

Northern Light



The Villages of Kwadacha and Tsay Keh Dene are two of the most isolated Northern First Nation communities in the province.

Where others may see challenges, these communities see opportunity and are experiencing success in passing on traditional food knowledge while pushing forward with innovation in their health, energy, and the harvest.

Elder and former Chief of Kwadacha, Emil McCook stands on the banks of the Finlay River at the community built Elders camp.

Story and Photography by Trevor Kehoe

Northern BC is known for its vast area of land, diverse geography and remote communities. The region is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes, untouched wilderness, and expansive peaks and valleys full of wildlife and largely unspoiled territory in the country.

Communities, villages, towns and even cities in the North share common experiences, but are

building a remote Elders camp with a focus on traditional knowledge transfer, these communities are walking a path of wellness together. Both communities have populations of between 400 and 500 people in their respective towns and outlying areas.

Many rural and remote communities in the North have their non-traditional foods delivered by truck, air or boat. By the time the

Members of the Kwadacha Nation are taking this full circle approach and combining efforts on a number of initiatives including the creation of a traditional Elders camp only accessible by boat up-river from the Village. The camp has become an education centre with scheduled informal classes that youth, adults and Elders can join, spreading the traditional knowledge that has allowed the Nation to thrive for generations.

Whether it be game-changing innovation in energy and food self-sufficiency or building a remote Elders camp with a focus on traditional knowledge transfer to the next generation, these communities are walking a path of wellness together.

often isolated from each other and at times, can seem disconnected from the rest of the world. The relationships found in these remote communities however are often tighter than in any big city and the close interactions with others offer many possibilities for local initiatives to grow from grass roots ideas.

The communities of Kwadacha and Tsay Keh Dene, located nearly 600 km North of Prince George have always known their independence and community connections make them strong. Whether it be game-changing innovation in energy and food self-sufficiency, or

perishable food reaches a community, it may have spent more than a week in transit, leaving only a few days of shelf life and significantly lower nutritional value than something that was picked, caught or grown locally. The purchase of a \$7 Northern green pepper or head of lettuce is not only an unsustainable practice but shows the challenge of accessing healthy food sources that have been attributed to diet related health issues. Returning to the traditional ways of harvesting local foods is bringing these and other First Nation communities full circle and it's this connection to food and the land that maintains the spiritual connection to harvesting.

“When we talk about health and food it's very important. At one point before we were put on reserve we were nomadic people. We traveled a long time ago and were not confined. We don't abuse the land, we respect it,” said Emil McCook, the former Chief of Kwadacha for 38 years and a respected leader in the community. “We've learned about the harvest our whole life. All the plants here, we know when to harvest them. The food from the land is healthy. We know the store bought food is not healthy. The education here continues the traditional way of living, our kids can go to university but they won't forget what they learned here.

“The food from the land is healthy, we know the store bought food is not healthy. The education here continues the traditional way of living, our kids can go to university but they won’t forget what they learned here,” *Emil McCook, Kwadacha Nation*



Access to an ample supply of fresh fruits and vegetables can be a challenge for many remote communities.

Progress is happening, there’s lots of smiles and our people are happy and at home out here.”

The education circle in the camp is ensuring the essential traditional knowledge transfer of the harvest but also the ways to live a healthy life spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. Beside the dining table is a schedule board of the daily lessons taking place. Anything from fishing, hunting, traditional cooking, nutrition, craft-making to spiritual lessons could be on the agenda for any given day. All classes are well attended by all age groups, showing the interest and relevance of the information outside of the typical classroom setting.

“It’s a pharmacy up here,” says Faye Seymour, vice-principal of Kwadacha’s local school and a teacher at the camp. Seymour lists the bagged medicines all recently harvested in the area and their uses - raspberry leaves, balsam, soapberries, yarrow, juniper, fireweed and others. A Carrier-Sekani Traditional Ethnobotany resource manual sits on the dining table that

seats almost 50 people. Dinner time at the camp is truly a community effort with everyone contributing in some way by hunting fresh game, gathering, cooking together, cleaning together and sharing in the harvest – together. The kitchen is stocked better than many urban apartments with local game, fish, plants, berries and medicines all harvested locally.

Back in town Emil McCook has spearheaded the development of three community greenhouses that have become a beacon of activity over the years. Socializing, helping out and learning year by year has opened up the community to understanding more about harvesting vegetables and flora: what grows best, when and how. What’s grown in the greenhouses is freely available for the community to pick and with more greenhouse plans on the table, the seed of the harvest is sprouting in town.

Down river in Tsay Keh Dene there is much activity and development including a project that will change the way the community creates and uses energy, as well as their access to healthy

foods. An \$8 million Biomass energy initiative will convert waste wood into renewable heat for public buildings and a proposed greenhouse facility, and sell the excess electricity back to BC Hydro to generate income. Along with the local employment, it’s a win-win situation that’s planned to begin in Spring of 2013.

The project has huge potential for other rural communities and could easily be followed by other Nations looking for greater energy self-sufficiency and a secure, efficient and sustainable source of highly nutritional foods. With ample supply, the local Elder, school and family food programs flourish.

“We’re working to become more self-sufficient and to have a healthier community,” said Tsay Keh Dene’s Chief Dennis Izony. “To do this we have to look at education, employment and economics, along with health.”

The Village has been physically moved four times in the last 50 years due to the construction of the W.A.C Bennett Dam and the

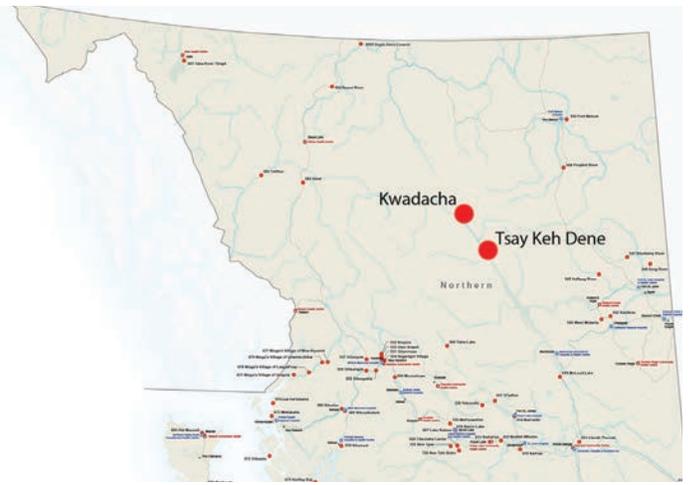


Teacher Faye Seymour and Elder Agnus Snow show off the locally picked medicines at the Elders camp.

Seymour lists the bagged medicines all recently harvested in the area and their uses - raspberry leaves, balsam, soapberries, yarrow, juniper, fireweed and others.

flooding of the Williston Reservoir by BC Hydro in the 1960's. Over 300,000 acres of traditional harvesting grounds, burial sites and forested lands were flooded causing a loss in plant and wildlife biodiversity, and leading to increased isolation and dependence. In the Spring when the water level is lowered by the dam, dusty sediment is exposed to air and during a windy day both communities can be caught in a 'desert-like sandstorm'. The fine particulates exposed in the storms are thought to be directly connected to high levels of asthma, respiratory illnesses and skin irritation in both communities, particularly in Elders and youth.

Industry's impacts on the traditional way of life for First Nations are a constant battle for communities across the province and the country. The nearby Thompson Creek Metals Mt. Milligan Mine has been a contentious development for the Nak'azdli Nation over what has been called a lack of consultation, negative environmental impacts and an unfair deal. Many communities are calling for more strict environmental regulations and enforcement on industries that are changing the natural environment and impacting traditional ways of living.



Elder Mary Jean Poole stands beside tanning moose hide at the Kwadacha Elders camp.

For those who live in rural and remote communities, the topic of health care is often on the mind. Questions about service delivery, emergency care, and employing personnel can be difficult. Grass roots initiatives like establishing full-time nurses in each of these communities have been great lessons in "community collaboration, planning and finding the key action needed," according to Paul Coppard, the Finlay Health HUB Coordinator.

Communities at a Glance

Tsay Keh Dene:

Kwadacha:

56.6°N - 124.6°W GPS 57.5°N - 125.4°W

412 Approximate Population 507

Health Infrastructure

**Health Clinic,
Aboriginal Infant
Development Program,
Mental Health and
Child Care, Elder's
Centre, Safe House**

**Health Clinic,
Aboriginal Infant
Development Program,
Mental Health and
Child Care, Aboriginal
HeadStart, Spinell Lake
Youth Camp**

Tsek'ene

Language

Tsek'ene

Dennis Izony

Chief

Donny Van Somer

www.tsaykeh.com

Web

www.kwadacha.com



Meal time at the Kwadacha Elders camp is a celebration with everyone coming together to create and share the food.

Tsay Keh also recently celebrated a true ‘Tripartite approach’ success story in launching their airport runway solar lights to increase emergency medevac support access with solar power team Carmanah technologies helping out. The nearest hospital is an eight-hour logging road or about a one-hour medevac flight – this is essential time that can mean the difference between life or death in an emergency situation. Issues still exist with weather conditions and the degree of ‘emergency’ in some situations but the lights will now make the community visible and able to consider business opportunities that the increased runway access might open.

The development of a new shared state-of-the-art geothermal band office and health centre in Kwadacha will offer many services for both communities and has been years in the making. According to Kwadacha’s current Chief, grabbing the attention of government and funding officials can be a lesson in patience, especially when development is needed to increase independence. When your community is not easily found on a map and ‘small’ communities are over 10 times its size, development, innovation and attention sometimes only occurs after emergency situations call for action.

“We’re working to become more self-sufficient and have a healthier community,” said *Tsay Keh Dene’s Chief Dennis Izony*. “To do this we have to look at education, employment and economics, along with health.”

“Where we’re situated it’s a challenge to get federal and provincial governments to understand what life is like for us up here. It’s unfortunate but it’s almost like out-of-sight, out-of-mind. Change doesn’t come until something drastic happens,” said Kwadacha’s Chief Donny Van Somer. “When they consider a small northern community to be Smithers or Fort St. John - we’re off their radar and they sometimes forget us. We want to be completely independent and self-sufficient and these projects help us to do that.”

The Village of Kwadacha recently took over ownership of their general store from Northern Food Services in an effort have more control of food options and prices available for their community. With other developments underway in town, the next project will be similar to Tsay Keh



(L-R) Scot Cannell of Carmanah Technologies, Finlay HUB Co-ordinator Paul Coppard, Tsay Keh Dene Chief Dennis Izony, and Peace River North MLA Pat Pimm stand behind one of the newly installed runway solar panels at the Tsay Keh Dene airstrip.

Dene’s greenhouse that will create a few jobs and supply fresh veggies to the town. The two rural Nations are reaping the bounty of the region as they have for generations. With more knowledge transfer, development and innovation taking place, both communities are moving forward in a positive light. In the past, First Nations of the area lived together, worked together and harvested together. There are issues that each community will face over time but they are indeed stronger with their close community collaborations.

A number of factors, including the creation of trading posts and the construction of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, led to separation of the communities and altered the traditional nomadic lifestyle. These and other imposed events have not been forgotten and there are still outstanding concerns that need to be addressed for Tsay Keh Dene, Kwadacha and many other Nations. Today First Nations throughout the province are moving forward with their own initiatives and returning to the traditional ways that kept them healthy in the past. Independently, all that is needed is a healthy environment to thrive in as they will for the next seven generations.

“We educate our young people that we’re not different people,” said Kwadacha’s former Chief Emil McCook. “Our ancestors may come from different areas but we are all one people.”

“We educate our young people that we’re not different people,” said *Kwadacha’s former Chief Emil McCook*. “Our ancestors may come from different areas but we are all one people.”



Kwadacha’s former Chief Emil McCook (L) and current Chief Donny Van Somer stand outside the village owned store and restaurant.



Fish and Shellfish Safety

Fish and shellfish are a very nutritious food option, and provide an important source of protein, iron, B vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids. They are also high in essential minerals and low in calories, saturated fats and cholesterol. While fish and shellfish are good for your health, they may be exposed to chemical contaminants, germs and natural toxins such as biotoxins, which can build up in their flesh. Cooking may kill bacteria, viruses and parasites present in fish and shellfish, but does not destroy marine toxins or other chemical contaminants. Pregnant women, young children, Elders, and those with a weakened immune system are more likely to experience illness if they get shellfish or fish poisoning.



Photo: Fiona Devereaux

Harvesting

Do not harvest in waters with high contaminant levels, in 'Closed' areas or Shellfish within 400 feet of a wharf and at least 1000 feet from sources of pollution or treatment plants.

Storing

Store cooked and uncooked fish and shellfish at 4°C or freeze at -18°C until ready to be prepared. Keep live shellfish covered with wet cloths or sacking to retain moisture. Cooked shellfish should be used within 3 days.

Cooking Fish

If you eat fish raw, you should freeze first for at least 7 days at -20°C to kill any parasites that may be present and also to prevent bacteria from growing. Cook fish using methods that allow the fat to drain, such as broiling, baking, boiling or grilling.

When cooking fish, the internal temperature should reach at least 63°C. Drain and throw away any excess fat after cooking.

Cooking Shellfish

Cook fresh shellfish as soon as possible to recommended temperatures to kill any germs. Make sure fresh shellfish are alive prior to cooking (normally the 2 halves of bivalve shellfish should be tightly closed).

- Boil: Add shellfish to boiling water for 3 to 5 minutes after the shells open.
 - Steam: 4 to 9 minutes.
 - Fry: at least 10 minutes.
 - Bake: in a preheated oven for at least 10 minutes.
- Discard any shellfish that do not open once cooked.



Photo: Howard Humchitt

With information from Health Canada

Programming Opens Doors to Residential School Healing Journey

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) is a BC provincial support service organization committed to providing information, education, advocacy, emotional and cultural support, and workshops as they pertain to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. One of our many goals is to continue to create awareness among Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors, their families, youth and Canadians. Our main office is located in Vancouver with three regional offices in Kamloops, Prince George and Terrace.



Photo: Trevor Kehoe

Historically, the IRSSS pioneered the residential school response in Canada. Our programs and policies were adapted nationally and are still the model in use. In addition to responding to survivors' individual needs, the IRSSS developed initiatives to address the collective scope of the issue. The current Truth and Reconciliation Commission process was initiated directly through IRSSS' work as was the National Crisis Line and Independent Assessment Process improvements and its support systems. If you have questions or require any information please reach us online at: www.irsss.ca or toll free at 1-800-721-0066.

Current IRSSS Programming

The **Elders Support Program** offers emotional, traditional and spiritual support to bridge any language or culture gaps and provide culturally appropriate services to the Survivor during the stages of the Settlement Agreement. For more specific information, please contact: maxinewindsor@irsss.ca or melanievivier@irsss.ca

Currently, our **Workshop Coordinator**, Angela White, has worked diligently to develop relationships and continues to work quite closely to develop programming. The main topics for request include Indian Residential Schools History and Colonialism of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. For more information about the workshops we provide, please contact: angelawhite@irsss.ca

In October 2011, IRSSS began a new project that is funded by LUMA Native Housing Society called the **Homelessness Partnering Strategy** (HPS). One of our goals is to bridge the connectedness between homelessness, those at risk of being homeless, and the IRS legacy in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside. With the support of the entire IRSSS team we are able to offer a wide variety of free workshops in the Lower Mainland: Grassroots Reunification, Rediscovering Traditional Healing, Anger Management, Confidence Building, Goal Setting and much more. Collectively we bring a wealth of expertise through working directly with IRS survivors and their families for more than 16 years. For more specific information about the HPS Project please contact: brenttom@irsss.ca or bonniehenry@irsss.ca

In February 2012, IRSSS began another new project called the **TRC Commemoration Project** which involves hosting Youth events in BC. The goal of this project is to bring youth of all Nations together (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to learn about the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the IRS experience and other issues that have affected us as peoples. The first step of the process with each regional event is to develop a Youth Committee from the host region to assist with the organization of their event. For more specific information about the TRC Commemoration Project please contact: devigoberdhan@irsss.ca or sandragreene@irsss.ca



Eating Right on a Per Diem Budget

Travelling for medical needs can be stressful. Aside from the health condition itself, there is commuting, accommodation, and trying to maintain a proper diet, among other challenges. Often the per diem (daily expenses) allowed for food under Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) patient travel is at a rate that affording healthy food can be difficult for travelers.

While there are policy and other systemic changes that need to be addressed under patient travel, these tips can be used in the interim. A low per diem can make it difficult to afford the highest quality foods but eating right can be easy with a few small decisions and making the effort needed to ensure a healthy diet.

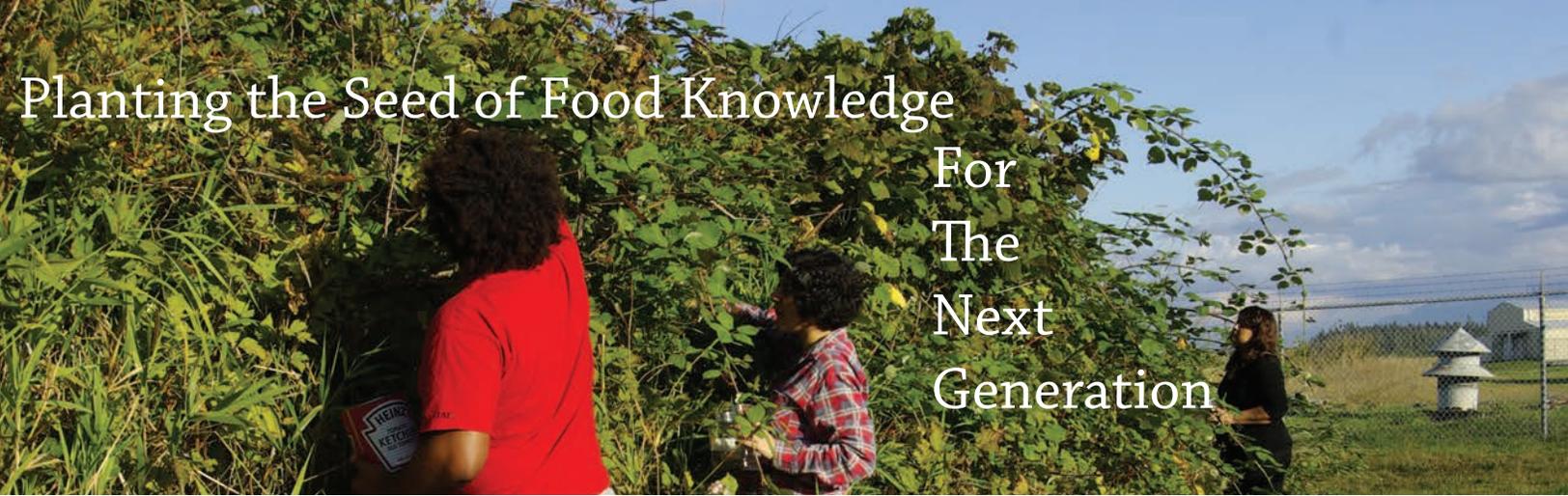
The NIHB rate for food is \$31/night for adults and \$15.50/night for children under nine years of age. The rates decrease for stays of more than five days and decrease again for stays of more than two weeks. Eating properly during medical stays is an important part in the healing process and while it can be difficult, it's not impossible to have healthy meals while on the road.

The recently opened Skwacháys Healing Lodge in Vancouver is one example of improvements to services available to First Nations patients.

Nutritious Tips on a Budget:

- 🍎 Fruits and vegetables – try shopping at the smaller stands.
- 🍎 When planning your trip, request a hotel room with a kitchen or at least a fridge if possible. If so you can plan meals ahead and save.
- 🍎 Bring jarred or dried fish, meat or other options. With a simple side like rice and vegetables you can have a full meal for a low price.
- 🍎 Seek the deals – check out daily specials, and healthy options that don't break the bank.
- 🍎 Go Bulk - buying foods in bigger quantities will last longer and be cheaper in the long run.
- 🍎 Many hotel rooms offer in-room coffee or tea. Hotels usually only provide a few portions so bring tea and coffee from home to make in your room if you can. Bring a water bottle – tap water is usually good quality and you can save money rather than buying bottled water.
- 🍎 Local First Nations or Friendship Centres sometimes have evening events that include dinner.
- 🍎 Visit friends or extended family who live in town.
- 🍎 Contact the Aboriginal Patient Liaison (where available) for local tips.

Planting the Seed of Food Knowledge For The Next Generation



Getting kids involved with their food can be fun and help create positive long term eating habits.

Photo: Jesse Hemphill

By Suzanne Johnson - Registered Dietitian, Okanagan Nation

Early childhood education can be an important first step to understanding food security. It is in the teaching of our children and their experiences of our foods that they will grow to be productive members of our society who know where food comes from and who are able to sustain themselves somewhat from the foods that our great mother earth has to offer. In the traditional South Okanagan lands of the Syilx people, of whom I am a part, early July is the time to pick 'Siya' or the Saskatoon berries. As a mother and a health care provider in a First Nation community, I am doing my best to model healthy choices.

Involving children in food as much as they are interested and able is one of the keys to creating a healthy eater.

Following the ways of our ancestors is important to me, which means doing my best to harvest and gather our traditional foods. I take my two-year-old daughter to a Siya bush. I tell her that this is our Yilmixem Siya (Chief Saskatoon) and that he is one of the Chiefs that brought food to our people so we could survive. She easily repeats the word 'Siya' and picks a couple of berries before she gets distracted by something else. We have already put tobacco down at the base of the bush to say thank you to Yilmixem Siya for sharing himself with us so that we can survive and be healthy and strong. It's hard to say how much of this she will remember, the main thing is that I have brought her out and that I continue to do so, as it is with experience and repetition that children learn. As First Nations people in each of our own ways, we have learned and will teach how the foods that the creator made were given to us and what we need to do to sustain their existence.

I find these teachings do not happen by sitting children down and teaching them a lesson from a book or video, but by going outside and providing the opportunity to observe and help with the tasks required to get each individual food job done. These are cherished times that

allow young ones to know that they are connected to family, the land and even something much greater. More and more, communities are creating opportunities for their members to make that reconnection to the land. For many summers, our Syilx health department has been taking families into the mountains to gather berries and bring them back to the Wellness Centre to learn different ways of preserving them for use later in the year. Like many First Nations communities in BC, we have also been tending to a community garden that supplies fresh produce for the Elders and people who help out in the garden.

Get your kids excited about food!

Keep it simple, fun and interesting!
Get in the garden, go berry picking,
fishing, and hunting.

Involve them in preparation
and cooking in the kitchen.

Let them pick the recipe and get creative!

Eating food together is a
great teacher about sharing.

Remember to give thanks!

Last summer the Syilx Fishing and Hunting camps brought families from the seven member bands together. Their intentions were to be on the land to hunt and gather, but equally importantly, to be together as families, extended families and a Nation. Traditional knowledge keepers were present to teach the skills, stories and language that go with being together on the land. This type of activity serves to enhance food security as each person at camp is able to share in what is caught, so long as they have contributed in some way. The camps ensure that the Elders are provided for and social and health programs ensure that families who have greater needs are present and also provided for. The positive memories, learning of language and culture, and time together provide an incredible opportunity for many to heal and enjoy themselves.

Food security is also being brought into Early Childhood Development programs such as the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and the Aboriginal HeadStart Program, a community-driven childhood development program available in over half of BC First Nation communities as well as many off-reserve sites. This program creates opportunities for BC First Nations up to age six to be connected to everything that promotes healthy future generations including health screening, nutrition, parenting skills, language development, cultural connection and learning.

Many of these programs involve learning amount food by offering healthy meals and snacks, and by creating a positive atmosphere where everyone sits down together to enjoy. Children are offered food with no pressure to eat, allowing them to experience new foods at their own pace and pay attention to their in-born knowledge of how much to eat. In a sense, they are sitting down as family, which is a traditional practice that we have moved away from in today's world of busyness and distraction. To instill this idea with the families that are involved in the programs, family lunches and dinners are hosted by the HeadStart Program site on a monthly basis.

Involving children in food as much as they are interested and able is one of the keys to creating a healthy eater. Even in the preparation of your dinner tonight, you can involve your children – even the toddlers (be prepared for a little mess and to have to finish the job). Get them to help with tasks such as washing the potatoes, setting the glasses on the table, or stirring the pancake batter. Help make food important by creating as many opportunities as possible for children to experience, watch and be involved with food and we will have a next generation that continues to be healthy and strong.

Contact Suzanne Johnson at:
Suzanne.Johnson@hc-sc.gc.ca

Sticking to Your Wellness Plan

By Janene Erickson

It's that time of year again! Summer is over, the weather is starting to cool, and Fall is the time when many of us re-kick off our fitness campaigns we created back in January.

Once you establish an exercise schedule, it can be easy and with a little bit of organization and dedication, you will find your fitness campaign can keep your schedule in order and give you an expected and appreciated break every day or week. One of the greatest strategies for success, whether you are starting from scratch or getting back on track, is the consistency of your workout, not the specific plans, activities, or routine.

Fitness plans are our commitments to take care of ourselves for the long haul and bring benefits like increasing energy, improving mood, promoting better sleep, combating negative health conditions and diseases, controlling weight, and creating more healthy social opportunities. So, you've got to have a plan that fits easily into your life's schedule, not an 'ideal' schedule, but your real life with its real obligations. If you've got an unpredictable work schedule, or children to run around, then realistically your time for exercise may only be in the morning.

Start small with 15, 20 or 30 minutes each time you can realistically fit it into your schedule. Aim for at least three times per week. Do that for a couple of weeks until it becomes part of an easy routine that works for you and you can maintain easily. You can build from there, whether you want to increase the frequency (4-5 days/week), the endurance (keep it 3 days/week but go for 45 min), or the intensity (depending on the activity). Whatever option builds easily into your life is going to benefit you.

Again, start small and take it slow. If you are reading this then you are already on your health journey, start a plan you know you can stick to and watch how easy it is for you to be successful. Build off of your successes and you will see how easy it is to be healthy.

Remember: You Can Do It!



Sylix Community members get moving during the 2012 Spring Unity Run near Castlegar.

Photo: Karlene Harvey

Start and Maintain your Plan!

-  *Schedule your workouts:* Write them down with specific activity and time.
-  *Be accountable:* Set your goals, tell your friends and recruit others to work out together!
-  *Focus on the positives:* You are already a healthy person and deserve to be at your best health all the time. Use personal affirmations, tell yourself and believe that you can do it!
-  *Be prepared for those times you feel like skipping your workout:* No one knows you better than you. Mornings may be tough, if you skip a session make a commitment for another time.
-  *Support your plan with rest and a healthy diet:* Count back 8 hours from the time you have to get up and commit to being in bed by that time. A healthy diet will also lead to more energy and a more restful sleep.
-  *Have Fun!* Do active things that you enjoy like gardening, biking, walking, playing a group or individual sport. It makes it easier and passes the time.



Did You Know You Can Now Register Newborn Births Online?

No fee is charged for online registrations within 30 days of a birth. Parents can also go online to apply for a birth certificate as well as Canada Child Benefits and Social Insurance Number. Registration only takes about 20 minutes. Parents will need basic information like the Baby's full name, mothers personal health number, location and date of birth.

For more information on the registration process or to register the birth of a newborn, visit: www.vs.gov.bc.ca. Parents without access to a computer can still request a paper birth registration form from the Vital Statistics Agency by calling 250-952-2681 in Victoria or 1-888-876-1633 toll-free in other parts of the province.

Planning Our Wellness Journey Together



Photo: Trevor Kehoe

By Grand Chief Doug Kelly

When I was told the theme of this issue of *Spirit* was the 'Harvest', I recalled the powerful message shared by Chief Wayne Christian on October 13, 2011, after Canada, the Province of BC and the First Nations Health Society signed the historic Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nations Health. His message described a very powerful vision for First Nations health and the words still ring true.

"There are two things we must do: We must work hard and we must plan. We wouldn't be here today if our ancestors did not plan out how to work with the seasons, how to travel with the medicines, how to go hunt the food – the salmon, the four-legged. We would not be here if they did not plan that out. We would not be here if they did not work hard, if they didn't go out and do those things," said Chief Christian.

"When we speak of our ancestors, we speak of health. It's not just in the hospital, with the doctor. It's on the land and it's with our traditional healers. It's with our people that can heal us as a people, it's through our songs and ceremonies that will bring us in a good way, bring back the life to our Nations. Bring back the life of our young people. Bring back the hope that we need."

Our ancestors worked hard for nine months of the year to gather and put away food to get through the harsh winters. Our ancestors respected sacred laws, and harvested game, fish, plants, and medicines from our homelands. We relied on one another, supported one another, and helped those that needed help. Our ancestors were physically active, ate healthy foods, and took care of one another. Our ancestors lived long healthy lives.

Every parent and every grandparent wants to create a better place for their children and grandchildren. Reflecting upon the words and

"Our ancestors respected sacred laws, and harvested game, fish, plants, and medicines from our homelands. We relied on one another, supported one another, and helped those that needed help. Our ancestors were physically active, ate healthy foods, and took care of one another. Our ancestors lived long healthy lives,"

Grand Chief Doug Kelly

teachings shared by Chief Christian, we must work hard and we must plan to create a better world for our children. Children learn from their parents and grandparents. If we want healthy children, then parents and grandparents must show our children how to take care of our mind, body, emotions, and spirit in a good way. The journey to healthy families, healthy communities, and healthy Nations begins with family leaders.

Chief Christian continued, "It is not only about health in terms of the physical health, it's our spiritual health. And the health where it comes from again is the land, from the water, from the trees, from the fish, the four-legged, from the winged ones. Health comes from those and we've been separated from those for too long."

In May 2012, I participated in the health assessment at the First Nations Health Authority's Gathering Wisdom V...*Continued on Pg: 25*



Spatsin First Nation Chief Wayne Christian during his memorable speech at the Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nations Health signing ceremony in October 2011.

Photo: FNHA



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1. Barb Touchie of Yuuthluithaht First Nation picks some traditional medicine in her territory. Photo: Melody Charlie.

2. Takla Lake First Nation Elder Josephine West prepares smoked salmon with her granddaughter Kayla Williams at a Fort Babine Village salmon harvesting camp. Photo: Cathy West.

3. Joanne Collison is seen harvesting Ts'iihlanjaaw (Devil's Club) during a traditional plants harvesting trip near Haida Gwaii. Photo: Eileen Hayles.

4. Pauquachin community members built a traditional Pit Oven for some of their veggies. Photo: Kate Kittridge.

5. Pauline Jones shows off her harvest bounty of semi-wild apples from Haida Gwaii. Photo: Eileen Hayles.



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Send us your best high resolution photo with caption and credit to: spiritmagazine@fnhc.ca



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4.

BC First Nation Youth Interns in Uganda for HIV/ AIDS Solutions



By Philip Hogan

Heiltsuk youth Ayla Brown recently returned from an internship in Uganda, Africa working with the Canada Africa Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CAP AIDS). Her experience was life-altering and full of many important lessons that she brought home with her to apply in BC. She spent five months, from February to June 2012, working in Uganda with communities to help caregivers and people affected with HIV.

Brown applied for the internship to learn about HIV/AIDS work in Africa, to enable her to make comparisons with the HIV prevention work being done with First Nations, and to learn about a different perspective and approach to assist her work with the Heiltsuk Nation's Health department where she has been working for the past six years. CAP AIDS is an NGO based in Africa and Canada working in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania.

Brown spoke of the approach taken in Uganda where efforts are to improve the lives of both the HIV patients and caregivers. There is more of an approach to treat the social conditions of poverty and a community vision that is not as apparent in Canada. An example was the purchase of a \$50 bicycle for caregivers which allowed them much more mobility and increased the income (tripled in some cases) they could make which in turn improved the lives of the patients in their care. Brown feels this approach could be used in Canada to achieve changes that are lasting rather than focusing entirely on individual patients' medical needs.

One problem faced in both locations is a lack of understanding about how HIV is transmitted. In both countries there is a stigma attached to the disease, causing many social and emotional problems for people facing HIV infection. Uganda has made significant advances in combatting

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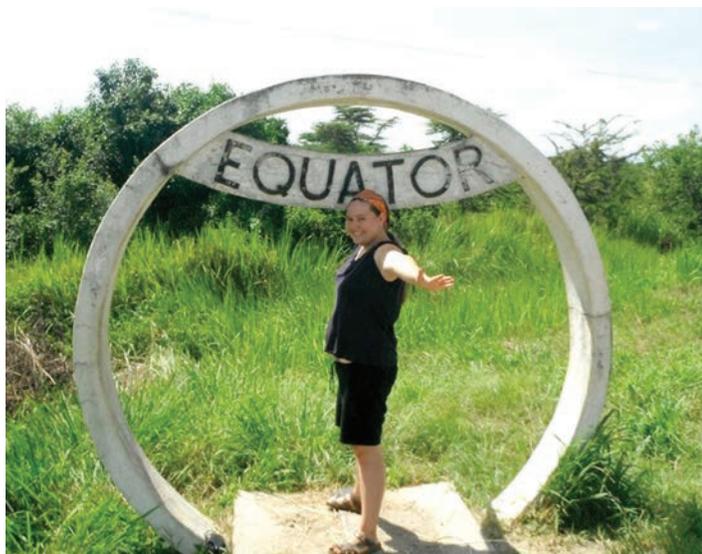
While Uganda is considered a 'developing' nation and Canada a 'first world' nation, there are similarities between some First Nations who have dramatically lower standards of living than other Canadians and many Ugandans, particularly in the rural parts of the country. HIV is a big issue for both communities and there are many valuable lessons to be learned in both countries.

this problem – with an estimated 80 per cent of the population having a good understanding of the disease. Brown described prolific messaging about HIV and prevention that appears on the radio and billboards in Uganda that is not apparent in Canada.

Ugandan approaches to prevention focus on voluntary testing and counselling, which has been found to be a very effective way to minimize new infections. The rationale is that if people know they are free of the disease they will take steps to ensure they remain uninfected and if they are infected they will learn through counselling how to remain healthy while taking steps to prevent further spread of the disease. Brown believes the approach in Canada is largely based upon ABC – Abstinence, Be Faithful and Condoms which she considers the least effective. She said the voluntary testing and counselling approach is superior, though there remain issues of accessibility for First Nations, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Brown found the culture in Uganda very different in some ways, but also saw similarities. The Ugandans eat a fried bread that is quite similar to First Nations bannock called 'Mandzai', it's widely available in restaurants, shops and on street corners. Brown also appreciated the many languages that are spoken – the fact that Indigenous languages exist side-by-side with each other and with other languages. In keeping a blog about her trip, she was able to capture her lessons, emotions and adventures, and relay the message to others.

"Many languages firing around me at rapid speed. Even though I don't understand them, it was enjoyable to be in a place where everyone still



Heiltsuk youth Ayla Brown finds her balance at an equator marker during her Uganda experience.

Photo Courtesy: Ayla Brown

speaks their native language and English,” she said in one blog entry. “Soon there were a ton of curious children. I started to talk to them and exchange some words in Heiltsuk and Acholi. It started with hello, good bye, thank you. Then we moved on to body parts. We sang head and shoulders in English, Heiltsuk and Acholi. I sang for them in my language and they sang for me.”

Brown also saw a feeling of gratitude in Uganda for the things people had, and when she made a presentation to the Heiltsuk community, she found that Elders really related to this. These Elders remembered when they didn't have food every day and how grateful they were when they did. The Elders, as well as Brown, saw value in teaching the youth about this and working to revive this spirit of gratefulness.

Ayla Brown currently works for the Heiltsuk Hailikas Health Centre and is planning on returning to school through the NITEP (Native Indian Teacher Education Program) in Bella Bella. Ayla's blog can be viewed at:

www.aylainwonderland.blogspot.com

HIV/AIDS: Ayla's thoughts BC vs. Uganda

- Sharing needles is not a big concern in Uganda when it comes to HIV infection because Intravenous (IV) drug use is much lower. For BC First Nations, particularly in urban areas, IV drug use accounts for a high percentage of HIV infections.
- Mother-child HIV transmission during pregnancy, birth and breast feeding is a huge problem in Uganda. Significant steps have been made in BC to the point that with proper care HIV positive mothers won't pass the virus on to their babies.
- People living with HIV in Uganda are seen as vulnerable and in need of assistance to overcome their situation. In Canada, there tends to be a view that 'they did it to themselves and should deal with it themselves' according to Brown.
- In both rural Ugandan communities and First Nations there are many misconceptions about how HIV is transmitted. Some people are still afraid that you can catch HIV from daily activities like sharing utensils, cigarettes, playing sports or swimming with someone who is HIV positive.
- In Uganda there is a lack of adherence to anti-retrovirus (ARV) initiatives due to shortages and limited access to the drugs, as well as problems affording them. In First Nations communities the biggest challenge is that many are not in stable enough situations to commit to taking ARV every day.

Kelly: Wellness Starts With Us

Continued from Pg: 22

The caregivers told me that I had very high blood pressure. They told me to see a physician immediately. They counselled me about my diet and encouraged me to increase my physical activity.

Confronted with a powerful but simple truth that my good health was no longer good I know that I must make changes to my lifestyle. In accepting my responsibility for my own wellness, I am asking for help from my family physician, my dear mate, my children, and my co-workers. I marvel at the kindness and generosity of these folks and appreciate the role that they have in my family and work life. I am making progress in lowering my blood pressure and weight loss. I am seeing a physician and getting help and guidance on my journey to wellness.

Two years ago, on my fiftieth birthday, I decided that I want to live for another fifty years. Achieving a long life will require me to change my diet, increase my physical activity, and lower my blood sugar and blood pressure. I am a father and a grandfather. I want to be healthy when my grandchildren begin their families. I want to enjoy great grandchildren. Let us come together to work hard and to plan to create a healthier place for our children and grandchildren.

“Let us learn how to take care of ourselves so that we may teach our children to take care of their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being,” *Grand Chief Doug Kelly*



Grand Chief Doug Kelly at the Tripartite Signing ceremony.

Photo Courtesy: FNHA

Let us learn how to take care of ourselves so that we may teach our children to take care of their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. Let this journey to wellness begin with our personal journey. Let us learn how to work hard and plan, eat well, be physically active, and to take care of one another.

In our work, the First Nations Health Council and the First Nations Health Authority are acting on the words and teachings of Chief Wayne Christian. To improve the health status of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples in BC, we are working hard and we are planning. We are working with our partners, Health Canada, the BC Ministry of Health Services, and the Regional Health Authorities to improve services and work towards the creation of a wellness model of health.

Chief Christian's entire speech and others from the Tripartite Framework signing can be found online at: www.fnha.ca

Berries, Bison, and Branches: Returning to Traditional Aboriginal Sustenance

A Thesis Excerpt by Patricia Ann Howard
Looking at the connection between food and health for First Nations and Aboriginal people, Patricia Ann Howard wrote her University of Northern BC First Nations Studies Master's thesis on the subject of how identity, and overall health and well-being can be improved through the restoration of traditional nutrition. By interviewing Elders and health professionals, and combining family experiences and first hand stories, her thesis offers insight on how the connection and access to healthy traditional foods impacts health for First Nations and Aboriginal people.

Health of the land and health of the community are thought to be synonymous as they are developed through relationships to the physical environment and the cultural, spiritual, economic, political and social roots they provide. Aboriginal people traditionally followed a holistic lifestyle, one that considered all aspects of an individual's health including the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, rather than looking at individual aspects of it. Currently, in many areas, food is now considered only for its taste with high salt, high sugar, high fats, and also for convenience, where cheap and fast now dominate.

Since food and eating also have social, cultural and symbolic functions; food and feeding can signify a sense of belonging, caring and community which are also important identity markers.

Currently, in many areas, food is now considered only for its taste with high salt, high sugar, high fats, and also for convenience, where cheap and fast now dominate.

Earl Henderson stated, "Maybe we should start drying our meat instead of buying all this stuff that is preserved. Instead of buying canned foods, maybe we should start canning our own foods. My mom used to can lots of food and I remember in 1959 when the first days of Safeway came into Portage, we were going around looking at all these different cans of foods, and my mom looked at it and said, 'don't buy that stuff, it'll kill you'. My mom never had an education, but she knew. This is why she canned, she made her own meat, growing up we had our own garden, we grew our own food. My uncle, they had pigs that were raised organically, my dad and my uncles would always go and buy some pigs and they would share the meat. We would then butcher the pigs and chickens, they

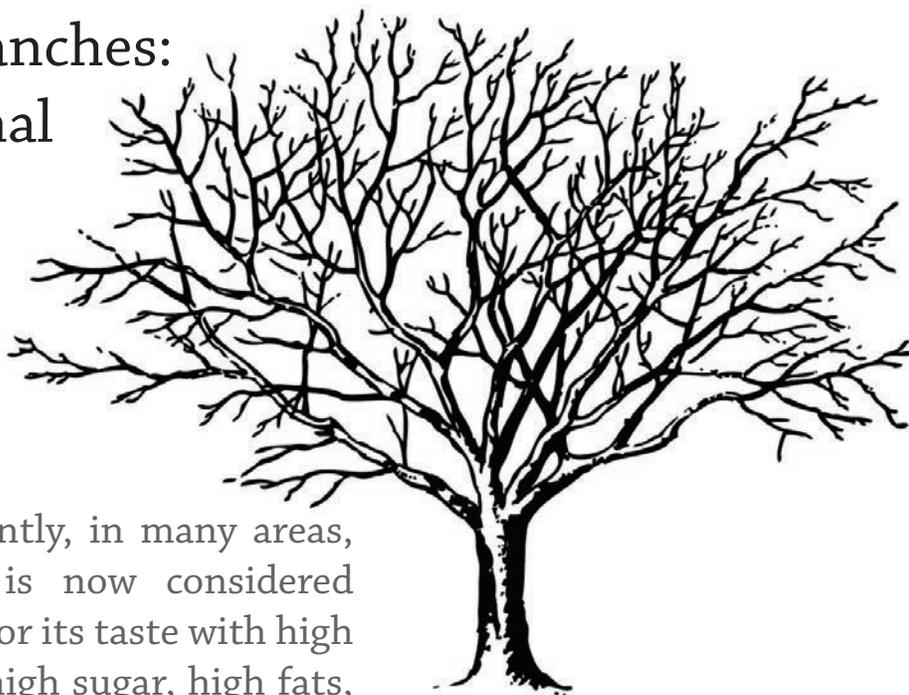
were all free range, cattle were all raised organically so that there weren't any preservatives. So we always ate healthy."

In order to restore health, the concept of returning to traditional, wholesome sustenance is further shared by Lyle Lloyd, "We had our own cow, chicken, grew our own vegetables. There were no chemicals, it was good wholesome food." He believes the reason for all the sickness today is because of what is now in the foodstuffs. "The food is unhealthy; we need to go back to raising our own food so we know what goes into it."

These traditional foods were rich in essential vitamins and minerals, as well as a good source of protein. Hunting, gathering and fishing, in addition to supplying nutritious food also provided a way to create social and cultural links, establish community, and transmit Aboriginal identity to younger generations.

Recognizing that we all have a role to play in our health is imperative, according to Earl Henderson, "Our lifestyle nowadays is killing us. Aboriginal people, because our systems aren't used to the European lifestyle, its hitting us harder, we need to take a look at that and try to find the balance on how we can kind of come back to our more traditional way of life." Taking an active role in what we ingest is critical.

Part of the problem surrounding the nutrition transition has to do with the lack of physical activity. Earl Henderson stated: "Nowadays we don't work hard, we sit around and waste, our bodies aren't designed to sit around being couch potatoes. They are designed to work, this is why, for most Aboriginal groups, were hunters and gatherers. And most of those people



Elder and Regional Director of Aboriginal Health with Northern Health Agnes Snow gets up close in the garden.

Photo: Trevor Kehoe



Returning to traditional ways of living and eating have many positive benefits physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Photo: Jessica Poirier

lived well into their 100's and over. You know, because every day they would spend that three hours and go out hunting and they would get enough food for maybe a day or two depending on the family or the size of the tribe. But they were always moving, always active and everything they ate was fresh during the summer and everything else for the winter was dried or preserved, naturally preserved. None of this here force dried or stuff put into there that you can't even pronounce."

Similarly, the importance of getting out onto the land is shared by Agnes Snow, "I can remember being fortunate to grow up in a time where our Elders went out and got food and there was still time for food gathering and all this stuff was a family affair, a time of sharing and a time of caring about one another. Not only is this a time to develop stronger relationships, but the teachings that are shared and the insight that is imparted cannot be overlooked. The food obtained while on the land is a bonus as one cannot discount the great teachings that come with the time spent with Elders, aunties, uncles, mothers, fathers and the Creator."

"The food obtained while on the land is a bonus as one cannot discount the great teachings that come with the time spent with Elders, aunties, uncles, mothers, fathers and the Creator," *Elder Agnes Snow*

When an Elder goes out onto the land and shares fishing, trapping and hunting traditions with the younger generation, there is a knowledge transfer that takes place as stories are shared, there is cohesiveness and a connection that does not occur if you just go and get your food from a local grocer. By having access to the land, the food is connecting communities, strengthening cultures, families and keeping people healthy.

Through the introduction of Western ways and sources of eating (typically a processed, high fat food diet) traditional Aboriginal cultural practices, related to the procurement of food, are being lost and physical health has been compromised. By understanding the relationship between dietary changes and the current health issues that plague Aboriginal communities, there is an opportunity to assist the population to become healthy once again. Furthermore, by better understanding this correlation, the health and well-being of Aboriginal communities can be better supported. I am convinced that returning to traditional Aboriginal sustenance, through traditional food practices and procurement, are factors that will aid in the restoration of the health and well-being of individuals and communities. I also believe that this return will ultimately add to the reclamation of Aboriginal identity.

Contact Patricia Howard at:
Patricia.Howard@Northernhealth.ca

Salal Berries: Harvesting Tips and Jam Recipe

By Philip Hogan

Salal (*Gaultheria Shallon*) is a common plant in much of the Pacific Northwest and has been used by many BC First Nations communities for generations. It is an evergreen, perennial shrub with leathery leaves, and dark blue berries. The berries contain many seeds and grow on stems that can be readily picked when ripe. Salal berries tend to be soft and attempting to pick the berries separately often results in a handful of skin and partial berries, leaving the berry core remaining on the stem.

A wise tip for harvesting these berries was shared by Wuikinuxv Elder Evelyn Windsor: freeze the berries and stems on a cookie sheet or other flat pan – the berries can be easily removed from the stems and sorted. With this simple advice it is possible to harvest Salal berries efficiently and save for later use.



Photo Courtesy: Nancy Turner

Frozen berries can be used for jam, eaten with other berries, or added to baked goods like muffins, pancakes and scones. Windsor also shared that the Elders would chew the leaves when they had sores in their mouths. The leaves were not eaten, and they work to get rid of the sores quickly. Salal has also been used as an anti-inflammatory and anti-cramping herb.

Salal Berry Jam

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ quarts stemmed Salal berries
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 7 ½ cups white granulated sugar
- 1 pouch of Certo liquid Pectin

Directions:

1. Crush 1 ½ quarts of stemmed Salal Berries (a potato masher works for crushing). Add ½ cup water and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes. Sieve half of the pulp to remove seeds, if desired.
2. In a large saucepan, stir together 4 cups of prepared fruit, ¼ cup lemon juice and 7 ½ cups granulated (white) sugar.
3. Bring to a boil over high heat for one minute.
4. Remove from heat and stir in one pouch of Certo liquid Pectin. Stir and skim for 5 minutes to prevent floating fruit.
5. Pour into warm sterilized jars to ¼ inch from the rim. Safely can as soon as possible.

This recipe yields 4 pints of jam.

Elders Wisdom



Photo: Trevor Kehoe

“Our Elders tell us soon we won’t be able to buy food from the stores so we need to get back to the land.”

Vera Poole, Tsay Keh Dene First Nation