



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

For Immediate Release

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## **Dynamic Conference Focuses on Journey Towards Integration and Healing for Mental Health and Addictions**

**LAICHWILTACH TERRITORY (Campbell River, BC)** – The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Kwakiutl District Council (KDC) have partnered to host an innovative mental health and wellness event to focus on healing through distinct First Nations and Aboriginal health perspectives. The “Together on Our Journey Towards Integration and Healing in Mental Health and Addictions: Conference 2015” took place October 19-20, 2015 on the traditional territory of the Wei Wai Kum First Nation in Campbell River, BC and brought together over 400 participants to learn and share their stories.

The dynamic conference provided a rare and invaluable opportunity for clients of the health care system to explore mental health and addictions options with those delivering services in their communities. These important conversations between professionals, Elders, youth and other community members are an important first step in grounding mental health care in cultural safety and humility.

For First Nations and Aboriginal peoples, cultural humility and cultural competence within the health system play an important part in safe and effective health services. A culturally safe health system is respectful and inclusive of all cultures and results in better care for everyone.

“The First Nations Health Authority is pleased to partner with Kwakiutl District Council on such an important topic,” said Brennan MacDonald, Vancouver Island FNHA Regional Director. “This conference provides an opportunity for our Island Nations to come together with mental health and addictions practitioners to discuss a path forward that upholds our unique First Nation perspectives on health and wellness.”

Highlights of the conference agenda included Chief Robert Joseph speaking on “Reconciliation as a Life Way”, presentations on wellness and care in a First Nations context from respected First Nations clinicians and mental health specialists, facilitated dialogue sessions and an Elder-Youth panel that provided opportunities for discussion and experiential learning.

“Our member Nations are looking forward to coming together for a conference that covers such an important topic for our people - healing in mental health and addictions,” said James D. Wilson, Kwakiutl District Council Chair. “We are particularly looking forward to hearing from experts in the field and to bring together community members, youth and Elders to engage in dialogue in these issues that directly affect them and their futures. Events such as this assist us in determining what the real needs are and provide a starting point for us to address adequate resourcing.”

Following the success of last year’s conference, “Walking Together Toward Integration in Mental Health Addictions”, this year’s event was designed to continue and expand upon efforts made to raise awareness of First Nations and Aboriginal cultural protocol and traditions as they relate to mental health and to broaden practitioners’ understandings of excellence in cross-cultural care.



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**A high resolution photo is available upon request.**

**About the First Nations Health Authority:**

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is the first province-wide health authority of its kind in Canada. In 2013, the FNHA assumed the programs, services, and responsibilities formerly handled by Health Canada's First Nations Inuit Health Branch – Pacific Region. The FNHA works to reform the way health care is delivered to First Nations in British Columbia (BC) through direct services and collaboration with provincial partners. The FNHA is governed by and serves BC First Nations individuals and communities. For more information on the FNHA visit: [www.fnha.ca/about](http://www.fnha.ca/about)

**About Kwakiutl District Council:**

The Kwakiutl District Council is a political organization representing nine of the fifteen bands of the Kwakwaka'wakw and provides prevention and health promotion services for six member Nations' residents on Northern Vancouver Island.

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