



Ahousaht Uuštukyuu

Nation Based Traditional  
Wellness



*Chah Chum Hii Yup Tii Mis*

Ahousaht  
Nation

*Uuštukyuu are people who have special skills obtained through uusumch, training, and fasting, and are guided by other Uuštukyuu ancestors and connection with Naas the creator.*

## Our Work

The remote geographic location of the Ahousaht village has limited its access to mainstream health services, and remoteness has subsequently protected our cultural ways. Ahousaht traditional practitioners have been providing healing services since time immemorial and have been working in two worlds since colonial contact. This work has not often been spoken of, to honor the sacredness, and in order to protect the people under colonial rule.

As science is starting to prove that which ancient wisdom has always known, and Canada recognizes the need for reconciliation, barriers for practicing traditional medical services within mainstream health care are shifting. Over 5 years ago, our community's Cultural Advisor brought 8 Ahousaht Uuštukyuu (Healers) practitioners together for a meeting. They identified 12 other people who were known to work with the medicines. This was the start the Ahousaht Uuštukyuu (AU) group, our community of practice. As the group of 20 started to meet regularly, they decided to include ~~Kwilebax~~ practitioners of cultural healing that do

not work with herbs) in the meetings as well. As the group evolved, increased discussions happened about how to integrate methods and treat mental health issues with Haahuupa, ceremony, and walking with clients through trauma, grief and anger in a traditional way.

Over the years, our practitioners have:

- Collaborated with physicians and psychiatrists to host cultural detox programs.
- Worked with hospitalized clients through traditional medicines and ceremonial healing.
- Travelled to work with members living away from home in Tofino, Port Alberni, Gold River, Campbell River, Nanaimo, Victoria and Vancouver, and as far as Alberta and Washington state.
- Established individualized and family land-based recovery and healing programs.
- Led the nations spiritual and ceremonial business, under direction from ~~Haw'li~~.
- Provided regular healing services including community and individual cleansings, brushings, and ceremonies.
- Collaborated with multiple partners including NTC, FNHA, Tsowtun Lelum, and other nations to address emerging crises with integrated cultural healing responses.
- Presented to various organizations and government agencies about our methods.
- Treated Shock Trauma (sexual, physical assaults, accidents) through brushings and burnings.

## Developing a framework, creating awareness, giving words to the meaning of Uuštukyuu



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| Opening Practices | practitioner acceptance process/qualification, training, service standards                      |
|                   | scope of practice, specialized areas, accountability, insurance, disciplinary process           |
|                   | regulating services and cultural process, for activities, medical board                         |
|                   | protection of traditional territory, protection of medicines, water for water, burning protocol |

Currently, Ahousaht Uuštukyuu are working to create awareness about, understanding of, and greater accessibility to Uuštukyuu healing services.

Toward this purpose, we are developing our own traditional wellness framework, articulating the principles and values that shape practitioner's ~~practice~~. We also wish to formally acknowledge our group members by establishing operational procedures and policies that promote access to health services and ceremony accepted by traditional healing law.

We are developing a document that creates awareness and understanding by giving words to the meaning of Uuštukyuu. It also gives words to the guiding principles and processes that shape this transformative work, as the journey continues to recognize and use Uuštukyuu as primary healing practitioners and the first point of contact for nation members on their own healing paths

## Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (Health):

- #22 We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian Health care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.



- #23 We call upon all levels of government to
  - i. increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health care field.

ii. Ensure retention of Aboriginal health care providers in Aboriginal communities.

iii. Provide cultural competency training for all health care professionals.

### Ahousaht Uuštukyu Vision:

Naas leads us to a strong, healthy and vibrant community in one canoe, paddling in unison with respect and integrity for generations to come; Uuupitstah with usakmiss, ya'ahkmiss, bahuuochu miss- Heshook-ish Tsawalk.

### Mission:

To work with spirit, using our knowledge and sharing healing practices. To foster a healing relationship with community and realize Heshook-ish Tsawalk as we walk the path towards having a healthy and vibrant Ahousaht. To legitimize Uustukyu methods as treatment on par with Canadian medical services.