

# *spirit*

SHARING FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## THE HEALTH OF OUR LAND IS THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

Our Living Comes From  
Our Land

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Remembering, Recovering,  
Reconciling

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SPRING/SUMMER 2013  
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First Nations  
Health Council

## THE HEALTH OF OUR LAND IS THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

In our first issue of *Spirit* 'The Harvest' (Fall 2012) we touched on how a healthy environment is essential for healthy communities. In this issue we expand on this concept and ask BC First Nations: 'What is the connection between land (territory) and health?' For many the connection to land is a connection to spirit, culture, community, our Nation, and a special place within ourselves.

In *Ćærtups* (Carmella Alexis) story 'Our Living Comes from the Land' (Pg 6) she writes, "As a people our identity is intertwined with the land. To care for the land through ceremonies and traditional practices is to care for ourselves and our spirits." We rely on the land for our livelihood and survival – it offers us all we need and will continue to do so if it is kept healthy. There is much development taking place in what is now known as BC. Projects in all corners of the province like mining, forestry, oil and gas, and of course numerous pipelines have many angles of debate found in all communities.

As First Nations Health Council Interior representative Ko'waintco Michel says in 'Preparing for the Fast' (Pg 8), "It's realizing that if the land is not well then we are not well." While we live in an abundant land, in some circles there is a thought that 'there's not enough to go around', that we are living in 'tough economic times', or that somehow our children are born with a debt to be paid. None of this existed pre-contact – these concepts came from foreign lands with foreign rules, and outdated ways of operating.

Self-determination, personal empowerment, or 'self-mastery' as it is called is considered a social determinant of health. In a First Nations context self-determination is a multi-level concept, taking into account personal, familial, and Nation-wide rights and obligations. The ability to determine one's own destiny and life path has a direct connection to how well we are. Through traditional, customary and natural

law, First Nations have been stewards of the land for generations. The ability to determine one's relationship with the land, in accordance with these laws, maintains a balance between rights and responsibilities.

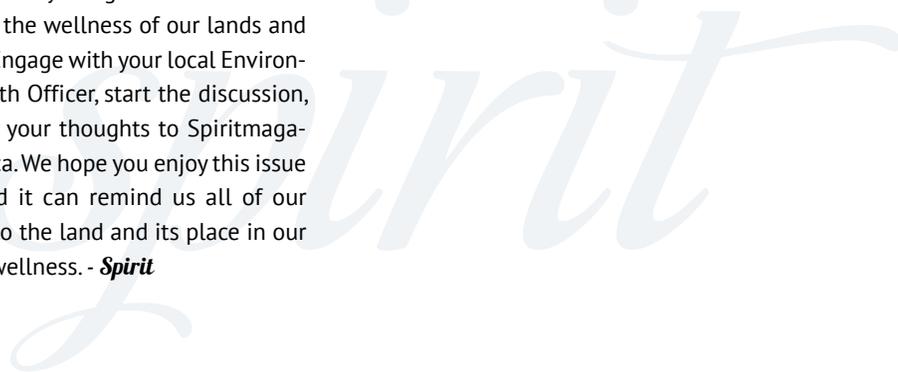
Economic development is also considered a social determinant of health, but it can turn into a social detriment quickly. Meaningful participation in economic development is essential for communities whose territory these projects take place in. But it can't just be about money, it must be about raising the standard of living and social determinants of health for the entire community to offer a healthier future for this and the next seven generations. Similarly we must know the difference between what we need and things we want. If we look to our land and territories – we will often find everything we need – mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically.

In 'Protecting the Sacred' (Pg 18) Chief Maureen Thomas reminds us that First Nations role as stewards is often tied to greater public interest, "We believe that a healthy Burrard Inlet is directly linked to the well-being of Vancouver and the millions of people that live around its shores."

As First Nations Health Council representative Gwen Phillips says (Pg 9), "Over the long term we will see more benefit with healthy land than we would with short term financial gain. Our lands, water and air can provide more than enough for us as it has for many generations and will for many more."

What does a healthy environment mean to you and your Nation? Connect with others in your community and get the conversation going about the wellness of our lands and our people. Engage with your local Environmental Health Officer, start the discussion, and send us your thoughts to [Spiritmagazine@fnha.ca](mailto:Spiritmagazine@fnha.ca). We hope you enjoy this issue of *Spirit* and it can remind us all of our connection to the land and its place in our health and wellness. - *Spirit*

There are many success stories of First Nations communities balancing economic and resource development in their territories, and offering employment and financial benefits locally. Economic security guided by carefully managed resources and wealth, shared throughout the entire community, can allow for other opportunities in elevating health through wellness for self-determining and vibrant BC First Nations children, families and communities.



## Have Your Say...

### WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LAND (TERRITORY) AND HEALTH?



“First Nation people have a symbiotic relationship with the land. Some refer to the relationship as stewards, but it is a much deeper connection. This explains why either as we age or left the area to pursue work or education that we have an unexplained longing to see and explore our traditional territories. When you return home the land sends you messages from others it supports like the rocks, trees, water and animals. The land has nurtured our people through this symbiotic relationship and it is our responsibility to pass on this knowledge to the next generations.”

**Paul Mercer, Tsuut'im Ty'aayt, Wilps Duuk from the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamixs**



“Put simply, the reserve system removed us from the land physically and residential schools removed us spiritually. Only through ceremony, language and land-based practices and defense; rebuilding a fractured relationship, addressing the root causes, will we as peoples find true wellness again. The health of the land and people, indeed the fate of the land and people, are one and the same.”

**Ryan Day, Secwepemc Nation**



“With connection to our lands, culture and history our People can survive anything. That connection provides the strongest foundation to who we are and where we come from - a foundation that helps us survive in the modern world. Without the connection to traditional lands/territory it is difficult to pass on traditional knowledge and culture to future generations because the hands on experience is missing. Our land is connected to overall health and wellbeing - our traditional medicines, foods and our teachings.”

**Gla tle gla tle tlo se la o gwa (Sally Williams), Gwawaenuk Tribe**



“The land is the physical place we live our lives in. It is a physical representation of how we see ourselves and what we value most. If we nourish it, it will nourish us. If we degrade it, it will reinforce that same value we place on ourselves. It is a reflection, a mirror of our own level of health and what we choose everyday as our priorities.”

**Coco Miller, Gitxsan/Tsimshian and a member of the Kitselas First Nation**



“Our land is a part of who we are, it is a part of our spirit and where we get our foods to nourish us, our history, our culture and identity, without it, we cannot exist.”

**Annita McPhee, Tahltan Nation**



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

#### SPIRIT MAGAZINE

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#### WE WANT TO PUBLISH YOUR CONTENT!

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## TECH Wellness | John Pantherbone

### Zombies Run!

Can't get motivated to exercise? Are most exercise apps boring or un-engaging to you? Why not add a little gaming to your workouts? And escape some zombies while you're at it.



Most exercise apps include some elements of gamification in them, but often they tend to have basic simplistic 'badge' reward systems. Some often are very generic (Yay - the 5k badge!). They can be motivating enough for some, especially with the social aspects of badges. For instance including your achievements on your Twitter or Facebook page, but others might not care or would lose track of them. Throw in a little role playing elements to your workout and you have yourself a whole new level of exercise motivation.

Zombies, Run! Is an Android/iOS running game that does just that. Combining exercise achievements with role playing elements into a post-apocalyptic zombie-scape that plays out through your earbuds. The stories/campaigns use voice acting and audio notifications to track your progress throughout a story. Start a new campaign and you'll begin your workout

with a voice telling you bits and pieces of a story/mission. Along the way you'll pick up items like health, food, and tools to help you in the story and motivate you to run more. Fall behind or lose the campaign and you'll be notified with a friendly 'Zombie has caught you'. I had some minor gripes with the app. For instance each mission has to be downloaded and if you have a limited or slow phone connection like me it can take a while. Also, there tends to be a few lulls with long periods of silence that confused me "Did the app just quit? Is there audio coming up?" More minor audio notifications like "keep running" or something would keep up the motivation and prevent confusion. Other than that my experience with the app has been great. If you can't get motivated with most exercise apps and are into gaming or just escaping zombies then check out this app. It's worth the price. **4/5.**

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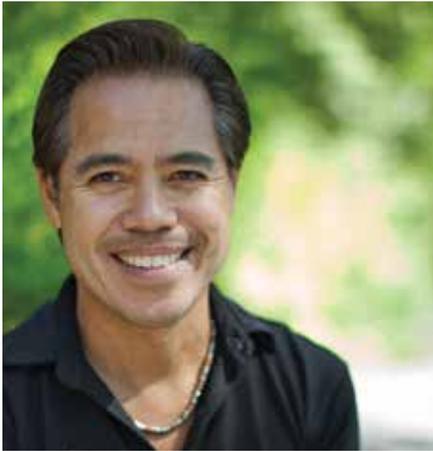


#### FNHA on Instagram

Congratulations to **PUGDADDY07** winner of the FNHA Instagram contest. Here's his winning shot.  
<http://instagram.com/p/ZdniAtNZMO/#>

#### CORRECTION:

In the Winter Issue of Spirit Judith Gohn was incorrectly identified as the Health Director for Cowichan Lake - she is the **Health Director for Ts'ewulthun Health of Cowichan Tribes** with a population over 4600. We apologize for this inaccuracy.



# DOC' TALK

WITH DR. EVAN ADAMS

DEPUTY PROVINCIAL HEALTH OFFICER

## *IF MY WILD MEAT OR FISH LOOKS CONTAMINATED WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHEN DOES THIS FOOD BECOME UNSAFE TO EAT? WHAT IF WILD GAME IS OUR MAIN SOURCE OF FOOD?*

I'm assuming you mean 2 different kinds of contamination: an environmental contaminant, like a chemical or radiation, vs. your food has 'gone off' – a microbiological contamination. Chemical or radiation contamination may not look or taste contaminated but can cause harm over prolonged exposure. Pesticides, heavy metals, and post-Fukushima fall-out are examples. In these cases of known, local contamination, very often, there are clear guidelines around what are safe levels to eat. For this and/or if you suspect chemical contamination, you can ask the Environmental Health Officer in your regional health authority. If you are concerned about microbiological contamination (e.g. botulism from fermented or dried seafood, or from improperly-sealed canned goods) and some naturally-occurring toxins (e.g. 'red tide' shellfish toxin), do not ingest, and notify your Environmental Health Officer for investigation. All this being said, the nutritional health of Aboriginal communities is most positively affected when they have broad access to traditional foods such as fish, moose, and berries. Almost all country foods are safe, and a better alternative than the calorie-denseness low quality of many modern, obesogenic foods.

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## *EVEN IF I DON'T FEEL SICK – HOW OFTEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR FOR A CHECK-UP?*

Preventive medicine is a cornerstone to the practice of family medicine, but is often difficult to implement because of a lack of time and logistical difficulties. In 2010-11, an easy-to-use Preventive Care Checklist Form for family physicians to use during adult complete health check-ups was built. Check-ups vary by gender and age and health status. More importantly, you can discuss the plan for your particular check-up schedule with your family doctor. Visit: [www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca) – Resources; Preventative Care Checklist Forms.

## *WHAT IS FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME? HOW MUCH ALCOHOL DURING WHAT STAGES OF PREGNANCY RESULTS IN THIS?*

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a specific pattern of abnormalities seen in some children of women who drank heavily during pregnancy, and it is the only cause of mental retardation that is truly preventable. FAS is now recognized by many as the leading known cause of mental retardation in the United States. It is estimated that one in every 750 live births is a child with FAS.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) describes a range of effects that may include physical, mental, behavioural and learning disabilities with lifelong implications.

Since FAS was first described in 1973, it has become apparent that it is complex; affected people exhibit a wide range of expression, from severe growth restriction, intellectual disability, birth defects and characteristic dysmorphic facial features to normal growth, facial features and intellectual abilities, but with lifelong deficits in several domains of brain function.

Since we don't know how much a mother needs to drink in order to affect her child, the medical recommendation is that pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy abstain from drinking alcohol. If you're pregnant, and you're concerned about drinking alcohol, your doctor can help.



## *My Experience with First Nations Culture*

# AND HOW IT MADE ME WHOLE

PHILIP HOGAN

I don't recall the exact place or time but something I heard at the University of British Columbia (UBC) has always stuck with me. Sto:Lo Educator Jo-ann Archibald stated *"There is no dignity in an identity that ignores your history"*. This really resonated with me at the time and still does. The Land is a cornerstone of First Nations culture and identity. I know this on a deeply personal level and have spent many years thinking about it.

I am a member of the Heiltsuk Nation but did not always know it. I was adopted at ten days of age in 1967. Growing up my parents told me what they knew about my background – information provided as part of the adoption process. I knew I was an "Indian" of mixed ancestry and was given a few non-identifying details. I was fortunate to be raised by good people, I have met many First Nations people that were adopted or fostered who weren't. Even so, I always felt confused and vaguely out of place. While my home life was good the same can't be said of my life outside of home.

I experienced frequent violence from peers and older youth. One early memory I have from Kindergarten, I was forced to fight another child on top of a shed roof at the local school by local teenagers. Violence continued throughout elementary school and into junior high school, waning somewhat after I went to senior high school. Being adopted gets inside your head, especially at a young age and when your circumstances aren't good. I remember after one fight in elementary school sitting on one of the big green mailboxes on the end of my road wishing I was anywhere else.

Ever since I can remember I have felt like something was missing – like there was a 'big hole' in me. At times I felt like I had no place in the world and left as soon as I finished high school. I went to Vancouver and began my studies at UBC where I met some very compassionate First Nations people who were open to providing me answers to my questions and helped me learn about the history and cultures on the coast. Over a period of several years I made connections and learned about First Nations history and culture. I got more accurate and meaningful information from these students than I did from any of my coursework.

After four years of battling the federal government, and with a quasi-legal process lined up, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada granted me *"Indian Status"* and as important, confirmed which Nation I belong to. I learned at age 21 that I am Heiltsuk, from Bella Bella, but still had never been there and only knew a few Heiltsuk students at UBC.

Some very kind Heiltsuk people took me under their wing and brought me to some community events in Vancouver (local Sports Day, a Dance and several meetings) where I first heard my language spoken and began to get a sense of the people. Several of these people became very important to me later in my life. I met my brother David Gladstone, who was also at UBC. It was really quite an awkward situation at first for both of us. David ended up inviting me to visit Bella Bella when I graduated in 1992. I arrived in Bella Bella at night by Ferry from Prince Rupert intending to stay a week and wound up staying for ten years.

Going to Bella Bella for the first time was perhaps the most powerful and overwhelming experience I have ever had. From the outset people were exceptionally kind and welcoming. One of the most powerful experiences I had was when my brother David took me to a feast at the community hall and introduced me to some 400 people in attendance. We stood up in front of the community and he talked about who I am and that I am returning home. He then took me to introduce me to the Hemas (Hereditary Chiefs) who were in attendance. To this day I can only remember the event hazily as I was completely overwhelmed by the warmth of the Chiefs and of the community present.

In the ten years I spent living in Bella Bella I became very involved in the community, the culture and got to learn about our connection to our Territory. I was very fortunate with many of the Elder Ladies taking an interest in me, teaching me and on three occasions adopting me in the Potlatch system. My brother David was one of my main teachers – sharing knowledge of art, culture, history and our traditional system. I also learned from many of the Elders and other knowledgeable people in the community.

I was also very fortunate to be able to spend significant time on the land, often with experts in traditional knowledge. I have gained a sense of our traditional law – known as Gvi'ilas and the cultural and spiritual connection we have with each other and the Land. The sense of place, reinforced by people, by community makes for strength for the Heiltsuk both as a Nation and for individuals, like me.



**W**e Syilx (Okanagan) people are connected to the land through our language, our culture and our traditions. It is through our ancestors' relationships with the land that we have learned to live and practice culture and tradition. Our connections to land and place are formed through life long relationships that we form as babies and maintain through life. As a people our identity is intertwined with the land. The first Syilx people to live in the Okanagan were called the *stəlsqilx*<sup>w</sup>, also known as the people who were 'torn from the earth'. The first people learned to live in this place through their dreams of the *tmix*<sup>w</sup>, all living things on the land. The natural laws of the *tmix*<sup>w</sup>, all living things, have been passed generation to generation through language, ceremony, and tradition. It is through these natural laws that we learned to live in balance with the world around us.

The natural laws are remembered through ceremony and also through oral tradition called *Captik*<sup>w</sup>*ł*. *Captik*<sup>w</sup>*ł* are Syilx stories of our responsibilities to the land and to each other. As people of the Okanagan our strongest connections to the land are through our dreams and the language in which we describe those dreams. The traditional language spoken in the Okanagan is *Nsyilxcən* or 'Colville-Okanagan', an Interior Salish Language. The numbers of speakers are slowly increasing under the guidance of fluent speakers and organizations such as the Enowkin Centre, the Paul Creek Language Association, Salish School of Spokane, and the Inchelium Language and Culture Association.

Language communities in the Okanagan use immersion programs to bring together fluent and advanced speakers in cultural activities.

These gatherings help to advance group knowledge on protocols and relationship building in an immersion setting. Amongst Syilx communities our relationships with the land are as important as the relationships that we have with each other.

To care for the land through ceremonies and traditional practices is to care for ourselves and our spirits. Health and wellness amongst our people starts with healthy lands and the connections we maintain with place. Learning to develop healthy relationships with the land starts with practicing cultural traditions from praying on the land to gathering traditional foods. Being on the land and speaking our language helps to maintain our traditional ways of life. For some this traditional way of life has never changed and for others changing landscapes have also changed lifestyles.

The transformation of traditional lifestyles may have changed communities but it has not changed what we call ourselves. We say, *k<sup>w</sup>u\_sqilx<sup>w</sup>*, *k<sup>w</sup>u\_syilx*. We are the people, we are Okanagan. This collective identity as a people speaks to our responsibilities to our first mother, the land. To call ourselves Syilx we have a responsibility to follow our culture and traditions in a way that respects the health and wellness of the land and everything living on it. The word Syilx is a command to the people - to follow the natural laws, to practice traditions, and to speak our language. Syilx ways of knowing and being are embedded in language and its knowledge of the land. While living off the land may be a way of life for some Syilx families, for others it is something that is learned later in life. Syilx families continually gather in different ways throughout changing seasons to share culture and knowledge. The continual cycle of gathering



l?\_scx<sup>w</sup>əlx<sup>w</sup>altət i?\_kl i?\_tmx<sup>w</sup>ula?x<sup>w</sup>tət

# OUR LIVING COMES FROM OUR LAND

Ćərtups (CARMELLA ALEXIS)

and sharing traditional knowledge amongst families has carried our language and culture forward to this time.

During this time of year families gather to prepare cedar roots for baskets. Cedar root baskets are one type of traditional baskets that Syilx people use and were once an integral part of life for Syilx families. Cedar root baskets, called yámǎ<sup>w</sup>a?, represent life and were one of the gifts given to us by the animal people to help us survive in this place. Cedar root baskets were originally used for food storage and cooking; they were also used during food harvesting and travel. Today they carry our traditional foods during our ceremonial feasts as a reminder of everything that the land has given us.

To ensure that this type of traditional knowledge remains within our community there are groups of Syilx families that have

been gathering to participate in knowledge exchanges. Over two weekends in May basket weavers and new learners gathered at the Incheilium Language and Culture Association's Nsyilxcən immersion house located in Incheilium, WA. to participate in gathering roots and bark, preparing materials, and basket making. The sharing of cedar basket making technique and design is helping to revitalize the practice in the Okanagan amongst younger weavers. The importance of cedar root baskets within modern Syilx communities remains that of functionality and also that of self-discipline. Cedar root basket making is an intensive process that requires the development of a very specific set of skills that improve with use. Most importantly, being out on the land and speaking our language is introducing a new generation of Syilx children to old ways of knowing and being that will live on through their children.

Amongst Syilx communities our relationships with the land are as important as the relationships that we have with each other. To care for the land through ceremonies and traditional practices is to care for ourselves and our spirits. Health and wellness amongst our people starts with healthy lands and the connections we maintain with place.

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Ćərtups (Carmella Alexis) is a member of the Okanagan Indian Band and graduate student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Her area of study encompasses Nsyilxcən (Okanagan-Colville) language, Okanagan health, Indigenous health, Canadian health policy and practice, palliative care and cultural safety in healthcare institutions.

## PREPARING FOR THE FAST

KO'WAINTCO MICHEL



It's realizing that if the land is not well then we are not well. It's really important to be out there and to be reminded that mother earth is the one that nurtures us, provides the medicine plants and trees, the two-legged, four-legged, the ones that fly, the ones that crawl, and the ones that swim in the waters, all those things you start to think about.

For me, going on a fast is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual, and it's something I've been doing throughout my life. I've gone out every year for about the last six years, and for the last four years I've been fasting two times a year. Going out to fast for me is to commit to the land and to take some time out from the busy schedule of life. I get some time to reflect internally, to look inside myself to reflect about life, and to look at the things I may be neglecting mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. It gives you the time to take care of yourself and at the same time a cleansing is happening with your body, you're giving your body a break from constantly digesting food. Our eating habits are really hard on our internal organs so you often never get a chance to give your body a rest.

You must prepare before the fast - starting the detoxification early. If you drink coffee you have to cut out coffee for at least four days prior to fasting or if you can, a week beforehand. If you don't cut out caffeine and sugary toxic stuff, you get headaches and you suffer, but I've never suffered on my fasts because I've always prepared beforehand. I start preparing about week before going out to fast, by cutting out sugars and fatty foods. It has always been good for me. The third day is probably the toughest - I feel the hunger but for a couple of days I drink rose tea made of the rose bush. The first time I ever fasted I was 24. I was with my parents, in the winter time for a period of five days - going in the sweat lodge two times a day for four days. Four rounds in the morning and four rounds in the afternoon and jumping in the creek in the cold water. I was just given water.

We live in this hectic, crazy life, working in the office and keeping busy with our minds on everything else, but never stopping to think about our thoughts and what we can do to meditate. So when you're out on a fast you're also in meditation because you're not hearing all this chatter of the outside world. You just hear the chatter of your thoughts and your feelings and you get to really think about and become more aware of what you want. For me, taking the time to look inside and pay attention to your emotions and your mental wellbeing, and being out there in prayer, helps to keep your body rested to recuperate and get well. It gives you time to receive visions of what it is you need to do with your life - to receive messages from the ancestors.

When you're out on the land you get to see the things we take for granted - to look at the earth, and the land, and the trees, and the water, and to be mindful of all the elements and to be grateful for the earth and the land. It's realizing that if the land is not well then we are not well. It's really important to be out there and to be reminded that mother earth is the one that nurtures us, provides the medicine plants and trees, the two-legged, four-legged, the ones that fly, the ones that crawl, and the ones that swim in the waters, all those things you start to think about.

Without all of these things we wouldn't be able to eat and the animals wouldn't be able to eat. When you're out on the land you think about these things, that we're all very connected and that being out there gives you time to be grateful but also to look inside and see the things you want to do to change yourself for the better.

## THE LAND IS OUR GYMNASIUM

GWEN PHILLIPS



Many of us have been made to feel that we can only be active within the confines of the four walls of a gymnasium, fitness room, swimming pool, hockey rink, or basketball court. When we look outside onto the lands that we call home, we open the doors to our gymnasium. Many of us don't have money to spend to build new state-of-the-art physical activity buildings but we can encourage our communities to be healthy.

One time I was working with a First Nations community in building a Healthy Community Action Plan. The participants wanted to start by talking about what the issues and challenges facing their community were and three of the big issues that they wanted to address were: cultural erosion, physical and social inactivity of their youth and early-onset diabetes. We started to discuss how to build logic model strategies and moved on to address these issues. I had the participants break into groups and draft strategies while I wandered amongst them, encouraging them to 'think outside the box'.

After about 15 minutes, I asked their reporter to share what they had come up with. Three of the four groups came up with the same solution; they needed to build a recreation complex with a swimming pool, basketball court, and weight-room/fitness facility, etc. The fourth group suggested that they should get a few horses again and some canoes and a truck and a couple of mini-vans to get the kids to and from the lake, the mountains, the berry-picking sites, the pow-wows, maybe get a couple sewing machines to make regalia, a smoker to prepare meat, and the list went on. This group's reporter said that they too, started by thinking they needed a gym, and then quickly realized that they lived in the bush, had power interruptions continually, and basically, that they couldn't afford a gym. They realized that the gym was the box that I had talked about thinking outside of. 'Try differently, not harder' and work with what you've got, were the key messages.

On our path to well-being, First Nations should consider returning to our traditional ways of living as much as possible, to re-establish ourselves as strong, healthy, vibrant, and thriving communities. In looking at opportunities for our families and children to return to our traditions, one major piece of our wellness lies in our connection to the land. A connection to the land is connection to spirit. We have grown to know and cherish the special places with which we connect to – the land, the water, the air, and a connection to the animals we share the land with.

We often hear and know that our children, adults and Elders all should lead physically active lives to have good health. Many of us have been made to feel that we can only be active within the confines of the four walls of a gymnasium, fitness room, swimming pool, hockey rink, or basketball court. When we look outside onto the lands that we call home, we open the doors to our gymnasium. Many of us don't have money to spend to build new state-of-the-art physical activity buildings but we can encourage our communities to be healthy.

We are at a critical moment in time where we must ensure the health of the land with the pressures of industrial and resource development close to many communities. First Nations must have a say in the development taking place in their territory and take the necessary steps to safeguard our rivers, streams, lakes, land and air. Over the long term we will see more benefit with healthy land than we would with short term financial gain. Our lands, water and air can provide more than enough for us as it has for many generations and will for many more, if we have the vision to see and the courage to act.



# BE GREEN

*to save our environment and our health!*

DR. GEORGIA KYBA, NATUROPATH ADVISOR

**B**eing connected to the land is about understanding where we come from and the rich abundance the land offers. This relationship is based on the need of reciprocal respect. The land will provide for us and in turn we have to care for the land. Caring for the land is more than just ensuring we have clean water, soil and air. It is ensuring we have a healthy food supply throughout the whole food chain. And ensuring we are doing our part on a daily basis to keep our land, our bodies and our families and communities healthy and free of toxins.

Toxins and chemicals can sneak into the land and food chain very easily. Toxins and chemicals have an impact on the water, soil and air and in turn have an effect on our health. Toxins and chemicals are also ingested or absorbed directly into our bodies by the products we use on ourselves and in our household.

Being green is not just about saving our earth it is about saving our health. We are exposed to hazardous chemicals on a daily basis from our household cleaning products, beauty products, finishes put on household items and chemicals used in making fabrics. Many of these toxins do not have to be listed on the supplies we buy or warned about health or environmental hazards they may cause. Even small amounts of these hazardous materials can accumulate and reach dangerous levels in the body, air, soil and water.

We are exposed to these toxins and chemicals through our food, water, air, household cleaning products, body products & perfumes, and any product that may touch our body or be used in the house. Toxic overload in the body can lead to common symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, or allergies, or to more severe conditions such as asthma, miscarriages, infertility, developmental and behavioral issues, neurological disorders, and various cancers. Accidental contact with some toxins can lead to burns or poisonings.

Some harmful chemicals that can be found in common household products (shampoo, makeup, gum, etc.) should be avoided because of their affect on the body and/or the environment.

## WHAT HARMFUL CHEMICALS SHOULD WE AVOID AND WHY?

### BHA AND BHT

Used mainly in moisturizers and makeup as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disruptors (effects hormones in the body) and may cause cancer. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.

### DEA RELATED INGREDIENTS

Used in creamy and foaming products, such as moisturizers and shampoos. Can react to form nitrosamines, which may cause cancer. Harmful to fish and other wildlife. Look also for related chemicals MEA and TEA.

### FORMALDEHYDE-RELEASING PRESERVATIVES

Look for DMDM hydantoin, diazolidinyl urea, imidazolidinyl urea, methenamine and quarternium-15. Used in a variety of cosmetics. Slowly releases small amounts of formaldehyde, which causes cancer.

### PARABENS

Used in a variety of cosmetics as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disruptors and may interfere with male reproductive functions.

### PARFUM (FRAGRANCE)

Any mixture of fragrance ingredients used in a variety of cosmetics – even in some products marketed as “unscented.” Some fragrance ingredients can trigger allergies and asthma. Some are linked to cancer and neurotoxicity. Some are harmful to fish and other wildlife.

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO LESSEN OUR EXPOSURE TO TOXINS?

- Read labels and make healthy, green, sustainable choices with your purchases;
- Make your own household products (see sidebar);
- Recycle (& Compost!), Reuse, Reduce, Rethink;
- Educate yourself on local initiatives in your communities to have a healthy sustainable environment.

# Make Natural Cleaning Products at Home

## ALL PURPOSE SPRAY

For tubs, tiles, counters, microwaves, floors, etc.

- 1 gallon hot water
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup liquid castile soap
- 1 Tbsp borax
- 10 drops essential oil (optional)

Combine all ingredients. Pour into spray bottle.

## GLASS AND MIRROR CLEANER

Wipe with newspaper to avoid streaks

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
  - 1/2 cup water
- Pour into spray bottle.

**Tip** Before switching to this green cleaner, clean up the waxy residue traditional brands leave behind with a 5% rubbing alcohol-to water-solution.

## MOLD AND MILDEW SPRAY

Combine in a labeled spray bottle

- 2 cups water
- 2 tsp of Tea Tree Oil

Spray on Shower, shower curtains and shower doors to remove mold and mildew. Spray, let sit 30 minutes, re-spray and scrub. Rinse.

- all recipes adapted from the **Queen of Clean** website

Clean your house with natural and eco-friendly green products! They can be made from common household products, be non-toxic, biodegradable, affordable and clean just as well as store bought cleaners. Use vinegar, baking soda, borax, lemon juice and castile soap to disinfect, cut grease, lift dirt, deodorize and whiten. Using the right combination of these products will produce the desired cleaning effect!

If making your own products is not feasible, there are many products that are considered green and are less toxic. Some green household options: *CLR Calcium, lime, Rust Cleaner, Seventh Generation Natural tub and tile cleaner, Nature Clean Oxy Stain Remover, Simple Green Naturals Class and surface Care.*

When buying household products, read labels as many products falsely advertise natural or green. Home cleaning products should at least include:

- A third-party certified eco-label, e.g. EcoLogo, Leaping Bunny, Green Seal and/or EcoCert
- Official biodegradability designation, e.g. biodegradable test OECD 301 D or E
- A complete and specific ingredient list with full disclosure of chemical names, including what's in "parfum" or "fragrance"

## WHAT ABOUT FOOD?

Foods can be more toxic than nutritious. We need to be concerned about foods that have pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones, or genetic modifications. These additives and changes are harmful to the body and to the land. Exposure to these can accumulate and cause infertility, behavioral issues, asthma, allergies and cancers. However there is a lot we can do to ensure our food is healthy for the environment and us:

- Shop local, organic and seasonal to decrease the exposure to pesticides and genetically modified foods.
- Choose traditional foods and wild meats for healthy choices.
- Choose whole foods over packaged foods to decrease the exposure to pesticides.
- Grow your own foods for a healthy choice.
- Read labels on all foods

Living in a toxic world means we all have to 'Be Green' and do our part to protect the land, food, ourselves and our families and communities. It is our responsibility to ensure a healthy sustainable environment for others, the land and ourselves. Making healthy choices does not have to be difficult or expensive. It is about taking the time to educate ourselves and make small changes where we can. It is for our land and it is for our health. Be Green!

# POWER OF COMMUNITY

## ONA AND ONEMATCH WORKING TOGETHER TO SAVE LIVES

VANESSA MITCHELL, ONA HUB COORDINATOR

**O**ur communities are not only our neighbours, co-workers and friends - they are also our partners, traditions and give us the ability to unite when it matters most. The strength of a community is tested during a time of need by what its members do to help one of their own. When it comes to the need of Aboriginal stem cell patients the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) and OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network have joined forces to ensure more Aboriginal donors are able to help their communities lead happy and healthy lives.

“Our Nation’s member communities’ health staff has collaborated in our efforts to raise public awareness amongst our First Nations about the work of Canadian Blood Services and OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network,” says Pauline Terbasket, ONA Executive Director.

It is not only because of the ONA’s mandate to plan, collaborate, and meet their Nations’ health priorities, that Pauline became aware of the work OneMatch is doing for Aboriginal patients – she also has a very personal reason to be involved. Her brother’s need of a stem cell donor made her acutely aware of how underrepresented Aboriginal people are on Canada’s stem cell Network.

“I would not have known of One Match if my brother was not in need of a stem cell donor,” says Pauline. She adds, “Now, stem cell advocacy is a big priority for the ONA and partnerships between our organizations will naturally benefit both our work and all Aboriginal patients in need.”

Finding a match for Aboriginal patients is challenging, as less than 1% of all donors on the OneMatch Network are Aboriginal, and the most successful match is between a patient and donor of the similar ancestry. Our Aboriginal people are unique to North America, so finding that match anywhere else in the world is not an option, which is why more Canadian First Nations people are needed to register as stem cell donors.

Since learning about her brother’s need, and meeting with OneMatch representatives at the First Nations Health Council’s Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey conference, Pauline and the ONA have invited OneMatch to participate in the Wellness Gathering. There, OneMatch worked side by side with local nurses and ONA Wellness Committee members to raise awareness about stem cell donation, as well as register new potential donors.



*Penticton Indian Band Chief Jonathan Kruger has been one of the first Chiefs in BC to register as a stem cell donor.*

The recent ONA Wellness Gathering also marked a milestone in the partnership between ONA and OneMatch, when Chief Jonathan Kruger swabbed his cheek and became a potential stem cell donor. Chief Kruger is one of the first Chiefs in BC to register as a stem cell donor, showing his support and providing an example for others in his community to register and help all Aboriginal patients in need.

OneMatch is looking forward to continuing to work side by side with First Nations nurses in bringing information on how each community can help save lives of their own through registering as stem cell donors. The leadership and guidance of the ONA and band leaders is instrumental in educating our BC First Nations about their power to help patients in need in ways that respect and honour each Nation’s culture and traditions.

“Developing a working relationship with OneMatch has been an educational and rewarding experience. It has created an opportunity to educate, become informed and raise awareness of the importance of becoming a stem cell donor as not only a First Nation citizen of our Tribe, but a human being,” notes Pauline. “We are pleased to lead this process in BC by ensuring ONA, our communities and OneMatch work together to help Aboriginal patients get the care they need.”

Working together on helping Aboriginal stem cell patients reach better health outcomes, begins with understanding. The partnership between ONA and our member Communities with OneMatch will save lives.



## COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS IN LITTLE SHUSWAP LAKE

**H**ealth Director Laura Jameson from the Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band has been working for over 12 years in the community and seen many positive changes in looking at holistic and social determinants approaches to health in ensuring community wellness.

In a small community of about 250 'on-reserve' 12 km from the Village of Chase, the Skwlax Wellness Centre incorporates health and social development, and most recently employment services to work for their community members. Along with providing services, a focus on building community capacity and strengthening local ties is important for the rural Nation.

"One community based program that we're very excited about is our community capacity development project. We wanted to bring the community members together and talk about ways in which they can help each other - a lot of the focus can be only on services and 'what do we have and what don't we have' and the fact is that a lot of the crisis type issues come up when services are closed. So how do we support the community members to get the skills and confidence to help each other at the times when there's no services around," said Jameson, who grew up in Salmon Arm.

"We're trying to get back to the way the community used to operate before there were services. From what I've learned, people were self-reliant and supported one another really well. Over the years the focus has shifted to services rather than community mutual support. So we're trying to structure those meetings to really get the dialogue going between people and to talk about what can you do as a neighbour. It's a really important direction - we don't need to build bigger and bigger services here - we want to be building and supporting skill development among the community members."

In strengthening community bonds Jameson and Skwlax Wellness Centre staff are also coordinating services to address any gaps while looking at holistic health especially Social Determinants like employment, and local economics.

"I think there's a fair bit of evidence that says that people who are employed and have a certain income are healthier and that poverty is quite a significant contributor to poor health. Some people have barriers to employment that need health and social services

before they can get a job or potentially help them keep a job. So if somebody is employed but is struggling with an addiction then potentially we can link in and support them to try to help them keep the job that they get," said Jameson.

"We work closely with the Social Worker and Employment Counsellor, who is a local band member. The Employment Counsellor offers skills assessment, job search and also contacts potential employers to broker positions for community members. It's a big plus having that service here."

In integrating services the Skwlax Wellness Centre offers a wide range of programs including maternal child health, baby and family circles, youth and family worker, immunization, community health nursing, home care program, addictions services, children's oral health initiative, and a contracted dentist and dental hygienist. The community is also part of the Secwepemc Injury Surveillance Project. The Wellness Centre works hard to bring in visiting professionals to enhance the access to services. A psychologist, nutritionist, respiratory therapist and nurse practitioner all have regular sessions in the centre.

"Generally dental is viewed as separate from health and yet it's very significant to wellbeing - particularly getting attention to cavities and having a basic level of dental care, so that's been exciting to say to our members 'we have a dentist here you can see and you don't have to deal with extra billing'. We had to become a dental clinic which was a pretty interesting learning curve," she said. "A lot of our positions are not full-time so we have people wearing more than one hat. We are trying to use that to our advantage as far as integrating our services. There's advantages to having just one person playing those roles."

Jameson said the best part of her job is being able to see positive change on the ground and to be in the community long enough to see people start to adopt healthier lifestyles. There are many positives to be celebrated in Little Shuswap Lake but Jameson also notes that jurisdictional overlaps and gaps still need to be improved to resource community development projects.



## *Local Residential School Legacy*

# INTERIOR NATIONS REMEMBER, RECOVER

TREVOR KEHOE

**A**s part of the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School commemoration project, First Nations communities throughout the Williams Lake area gathered together to Remember, Recover, and Reconcile with a number of events that took place between April and May this Spring.

Some of the events included two monument unveilings in the area, public showing of youth and student videos telling their own stories of how the residential schools affect them, and a commemoration conference and town hall on reconciliation in collaboration with the Truth and Reconciliation public testimony gathering in Williams Lake on their cross-country trip with Chief Justice Murray Sinclair.

Spearheaded by Esk'etemc Chief Fred Robbins and others from an inclusive local planning committee that included other First Nations Chiefs, Councillors, and Tribal Councils, local municipal and regional leaders, members of the RCMP, School District 27 and others – the

goal was to bring together the First Nation and non-First Nation local communities to raise awareness on the history of residential schools and St. Joseph's in particular, and move forward on the healing journey with many supports available onsite.

Hundreds of First Nations and non-First Nations showed up throughout the month during the commemoration events that brought together both communities to acknowledge the past and look forward to solutions on the healing journey.

"As Justice Sinclair said, residential schools didn't just happen to the Aboriginal population – it happened to all Canadians and we all have a responsibility. We're all at different places in our healing journey," said Esk'etemc Chief Fred Robbins.

"The legacy of the residential school experience is intergenerational, and we see its effects in youth suicide, substance abuse and violence



Hundreds of First Nations and non-First Nations people gathered in Williams Lake for the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School commemoration project that included a number of events and monument unveilings including one at the site of the St. Joseph's Mission.

The Commission continues to travel throughout BC and across the country in preparation for their National Events with one in Vancouver Sept. 18-21. Many are already looking ahead to when the Truth and Reconciliation Committee is officially finished and the next steps for communities across the country to move forward.

## AND RECONCILE

– it's not something that happened a long time ago. Healing as we understand is an incredible personal journey."

Local First Nations representation included members from Tslluk'wminstem and Ltwilc ell Xyemstwécw (Secwepemc), Jinataghelnih, Sa?anataghdielh, and jilh Chenaxedaghedelh (Tsilhqot'in) and Whunats'ulnih, Soona'uts'utneh, and Soo hubulhninaowts'unt'ai (Southern Dakelh/Carrier).

The St. Joseph's Mission (Cariboo) Residential School operated in the Williams Lake Indian Band territory just outside the municipal limits from July 1891 to June

1981 with students drawn primarily from the 15 First Nations in the Cariboo Region. Many former students were on hand for the monument unveilings at the former school site itself, and in the town of Williams Lake at Boitanio Park. Members of the RCMP, St. Joseph's School Survivors representatives, Indian Residential School Survivors Society, Truth and Reconciliation Committee and more marked the emotional events as a chance to acknowledge all that took place at this school and the entire shameful residential school history within many First Nations and Aboriginal territories.

"The history of residential schools speaks to the institutionalized racism of this country.

A great deal of hope is springing from the hope of our young people," said Chief Fred Robbins. "We all take a measure of responsibility for what happened and what we do in the future. It's about our children – reconciliation is not an event, it's a process."





# STOYOMA DENTAL OPENS DOORS

TREVOR KEHOE

*The Stoyoma Dental team prepare to serve their first client – Coldwater Indian Band Chief Harold Aljam*

First Nations in Scw'exmx Territory near Merritt are enjoying dental services closer to home with opening of their Stoyoma Dental Clinic in May. The community-driven initiative opens the door to thousands of nearby Nation members with no upfront or backend billing, enhanced childhood dental services, and fair and quality services in a welcoming environment.

Prior to Stoyoma, dentists in the Merritt area were accepting no new patients forcing local First Nations to be transported to either Kamloops or Seabird Island. Aside from transportation costs, First Nations patients were faced with dental service challenges similar to many other communities with upfront billing and service providers who sometimes lack a basic understanding of First Nations culture and history.

Access to dental services was called one of the 'biggest concerns' for health services in the area and the new dental clinic when operating at full capacity will generate surplus funding allowing for enhanced dental services and other health initiatives like mental wellness programming.

"The dental clinic was a dream of Coldwater Indian Band Grand Chief Gordon Antoine who was instrumental in forming Scw'exmx Health Services, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and was responsible for sparking a lot of the economic development in the area," said Jim Adams, Executive Director of Scw'exmx Health. "I think the

best way for this model to work is in an urban setting – if you're going to get into it you should know how to run a business – know the finances, find good people, and establish a culture of excellence."

Adams said there was significant research before finalizing a solid business plan for the clinic and committing to the initiative. In the future he plans on rolling this information up into a discussion document for other communities who want to create similar services locally.

Upfront billing for First Nations can make access to dental services a challenge for some, impossible for others, and is caused in part by complicated reimbursement procedures by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program as a 'third party' insurer. Dentists are discouraged to take on First Nations clients by limited, delayed, or incomplete reimbursements, and often burdening administrative requirements. As dental services in Canada are mostly privately operated – from a financial perspective this creates barriers for First Nations in accessing services they need. Stoyoma's approach of digital x-rays and paperless billing software is helping to reduce this bottleneck and increase payment turnarounds.

Transportation for community members to the clinic, raising awareness of the services available, and educating communities on the benefits of oral health are all a focus for the clinic now that it's up and running.

Scw'exmx Health is organizing bus services for the community while also raising awareness of how 'no-shows' effect the clinic's operations.

"Clients need to understand when they choose to not show up they are preventing other clients from accessing this time slot and the clinic goes without a revenue stream while continuing to carry the costs associated with the time," said Adams. "It's a real cutting edge clinic but people have to show up and use the services."

Along with all First Nations who access services through NIHB - Scw'exmx community members are still navigating the additional costs in BC not covered by the First Nations Inuit Health dental fee structure. Ultimately, the clinic's goal is to offset such unfunded costs as anesthetics for children extractions and medically needed braces. In addition to the purchased equipment a 360 Panoramic X-Ray Machine, the only one in Merritt, was donated by Dr. Mark Honce from Kelowna.

The addition of Stoyoma to the Merritt area will significantly increase the uptake of dental services for First Nations communities as a priority. The clinic is also offering additional available seats to non-First Nations residents when available, contributing to raising the quality of life for the entire local area, another example of BC First Nations communities driving positive change towards a wellness health system.



# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

**T**he current Environmental Public Health Program in First Nations communities works to identify and prevent environmental public health risks that impact the health of First Nations and makes recommendations to reduce these risks. As we know, a healthy environment includes safe water and food supplies, access to properly designed, constructed and maintained housing and community facilities, as well as suitable treatment and disposal of wastewater and solid waste. To maintain a healthy environment, it is also necessary to plan for and respond to emergencies, and work to prevent and control any and all communicable diseases. All these activities fall under the role of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).

EHOs work with their communities to carry out public health and safety inspections, and to provide advice, guidance, training and education, and recommendations to the community leadership to help manage public health risks related to the environment. They gather data required to analyze what steps can be taken to ensure good health. In BC, EHOs are employed by Health Canada, First Nation Inuit Health Branch and all EHOs working in First Nations communities must have a Certificate in Public Health Inspection designation. Routine activities are provided through community work plans that are agreed upon by EHOs and local First Nation administration.

“EHOs identify potential public health risks in First Nations communities and provide recommendations on how to correct them,” said Peter Mazey, Acting Regional Manager of FNHI’s EHO Programming. “We are positioned in centres throughout the province - close to the communities the EHOs work with. Several of our EHO staff have served the same community for many years.”

Upon transfer later this year, the EHOs will be employed by, and programs operated by the FNHA. For more information on who EHOs are and what they do, and to access a number of great resources and find out how you can contact your EHO, check out the First Nations Inuit Health, Environmental Public Health Page through: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

## Current Environmental Public Health Programs:

- Drinking Water
- Food Safety
- Healthy Housing
- Wastewater
- Solid Waste Disposal
- Facilities Inspections
- Communicable Disease Control
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Environmental Contaminants, Research and Risk Assessment



# PROTECTING THE SACRED

SARAH THOMAS TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION

**K**inder Morgan Canada, the third largest energy based company in North America, has proposed construction of a second 540,000 barrel-per-day pipeline from Alberta to the Westridge Marine Terminal located within Port Metro Vancouver in Burnaby, BC. This pipeline would include 973 km of new steel and raise the Trans Mountain's capacity to 890,000 barrels-per-day from 300,000, and result in increased tanker traffic, from approximately 5 to 35 per month, or more than 400 per year.

The Kinder Morgan Westridge Marine Terminal is located in the traditional territory of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. The reserve boundaries of Tsleil-Waututh IR#3 extend out into the Burrard Inlet. The community resides directly across the Burrard Inlet from the terminal. The community and its leaders are greatly concerned about the impacts this project would have on the people, wildlife and environment if it were approved.

"This is the heart of who we are, Tsleil-Waututh means 'People of the Inlet'. We have a stewardship policy, and there is a legal obligation by the government to implement consultation regarding our Aboriginal rights to the territory," said Maureen Thomas, Chief of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. "We believe that a healthy Burrard Inlet is directly linked to the well-being of Vancouver and the millions of people that live around its shores."

Late in the summer of 2012, Tsleil-Waututh signed the Save the Fraser Declaration - an Indigenous law ban on tar sands pipelines through First Nation traditional territories. It also bans tar sands oil tankers in the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon on the north and south coasts of BC. More than 160 First Nations have signed the declaration in opposition to tar sands and pipelines.

For Tsleil-Waututh, the vision of large-scale transportation of diluted bitumen is a risk too great to accept. Since the Trans Mountain Pipeline was constructed in 1951, there have been 78 spills. The largest of these spills have taken place since Kinder Morgan took over the line in 2005. In July, 2007 an oil spill happened right at the Westridge Terminal where approximately 234,000 litres of oil spilled out of the existing Trans Mountain Pipeline into the community of Burnaby. The crude oil flowed through neighbourhood storm sewers and ditches before entering and contaminating Burrard Inlet.

Members of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation stepped up to assist with the cleanup of this oil spill and experienced the negative impacts oil has on the water, land and wildlife in Burrard Inlet. Another oil spill has the potential to destroy the local marine environment. Already much of the marine life such as the clams and oysters are not



*Members of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation have been working on a number of initiatives to strengthen protection of their traditional territories including driving forward signing of the International Treaty to Protect the Sacred.*

harvestable due to the high levels of toxins in the water. Vancouver's harbour could become a dead zone and destroy BC's thriving region known for our natural beauty and quality of life. An oil spill in Burrard Inlet or along any part of our coast would kill species, destroy breeding habitats, and would be a persistent source of toxins that cause diseases for many animal species including our wild salmon, which has been a main food source for Coast Salish people.

Tsleil-Waututh is optimistic that when the BC government applies its five criteria to Kinder Morgan's proposal that they will find it fails to meet the government's standards and will not approve the proposal. The Nation is expecting government to government consultation on this project. "We are not opposed to doing business," says Chief Thomas. "We are committed to projects that are in line with the community and environment, and this is what we hope the provincial and federal governments will

take into account when reviewing Kinder Morgan's plans."

There are many groups who have already fought to protect communities from toxins, all this will be put at risk if we don't take action now. The Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver City Council, Burnaby City Council and residents of Burnaby, North Vancouver and West Vancouver have already taken action to create public awareness on the major risks this will have on metro Vancouver. Community forums and events are happening across the Lower Mainland where people are gathering to share their concerns and to find out how they can help. To find out about upcoming events Tsleil-Waututh Nation are involved in or how you can take action please visit [www.twnation.ca](http://www.twnation.ca) or follow us on twitter @tsleilwaututh

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**B**ayliff is a nurse within traditional Tsilhqot'in territory serving the three communities of Tl'esqox (Toosey), Yunesit'in (Stone), and Tl'etinqox (Anaham). All three Nations each have a population under 1,000 with Tl'esqox and Yunesit'in at 100 and 250 living 'on-reserve', and Tl'etinqox between 700-800. With two full-time and one part-time nurse's in the area, Bayliff noted the nurse practitioner (NP) position has been a huge addition for communities with Doctor visits to Yunesit'in and Tl'etinqox only twice a month.

Starting off this day in Tl'esqox, Bayliff says a focus on preventative medicine and offering necessary services closer to home in each community are both a challenge and opportunity.

"The three challenges would be trying to shift peoples focus away from treatment and acute care to more of a preventative and health promotion outlook. A lack of resources – we would like more Doctor (MD) and NP visits, but there is lack of funding and (encouraging) actual MD's and NP's available out there to come here," said Bayliff. "Also keeping nursing staff for extended periods, they come for a year or two then move on. We need to try and retain them longer."

With community members traveling to Williams Lake for their Primary Care needs, bringing in innovative services like Telehealth and eHealth can offer a range of services that communities would otherwise have to journey outside of the community for. Having health professionals from the community working for their own Nation allows for long-term relationships, bonds of trust, and community connections between the health service provider and Nation members.

Originally from Nova Scotia, Bayliff pursued nursing and moved out to BC after needing a change of pace and seeing opportunity as a rural nurse for Health Canada. In the early afternoon Bayliff commutes over to Tl'etinqox for a quick check in and to finish some paperwork. She says some of her favourite things about her position are number one - the people, their sense of humour and how they can all come together in times of need, and for good times and celebration. The comradery at work with her various teams together having plenty of fun is another bonus, along with the beautiful scenery in the area that surrounds her and the communities.

Some of her favourite things about her position are number one - the people, their sense of humour and how they can all come together in times of need, and for good times and celebration. The comradery at work with her various teams together having plenty of fun is another bonus, along with the beautiful scenery in the area that surrounds her and the communities.

# DAY-IN-THE LIFE OF A REMOTE NURSE

TREVOR KEHOE

*Spirit Magazine caught up with Community Health Nurse Corinne Bayliff to see what an average day looks like for her working with three Interior First Nation communities and to see what life is like for a remote health professional in BC.*

Almost every day is a little bit different than the last for Bayliff, she could start and finish in any three of the communities and in some cases visit all three to offer various services. Health and other infrastructure within each community each has its own set of benefits and challenges, for example Tl'etinqox and Yunesit'in both have relatively new health centres, while Tl'esqox operate their health services out of a small portion of their band office.

The new Tl'etinqox health centre is a place of pride for the community and offers a number of services including counselling, maternal child health group meals and discussions, well women's group, communicable disease control programming, part-time homecare nurses, doctors available onsite and the new addition of

a dentist five days a month who has been booked straight until late summer.

Bayliff finishes her day off at the new health centre in Yunesit'in that has become a hub for community information and knowledge sharing with many services now available onsite that eliminate the need for community members to leave the Nation often. The centre opened in November and the use of health services locally has significantly increased since then. After 27 years in the area as a remote nurse, Bayliff still loves her work and seeing the positive changes taking place on-the-ground.

"My role in providing improved health care to First Nations people gives me great satisfaction."

*Far Left: Nurse Corinne Bayliff in the new Tl'etinqox health clinic. Top Left: Yunesit'in Health Centre. Bottom Left: Tl'etinqox Health Centre*

*The Iskotew Lodge, Ottawa*

# OPENING HEARTS TO A HEALING JOURNEY

JAN ICE

**M**y heart and the hearts of many others were opened to an extraordinarily beautiful shared healing journey at Ottawa's Iskotew Lodge during the noon hour Teachings offered in the first two weeks of March. Located at Health Canada's headquarters in Ottawa in the basement of the Brooke Claxton Building at 70 Columbine Dr. in Tunney's Pasture, during those two weeks the Lodge was graced with the presence of traditional healer Grandmother Mali-hat-kwa (Mali) of Mission, BC (St'at'imc Nation on her mother's side and the Secwepemc Nation on her father's side) and her helper Michael Harris of the Gitksan Nation. The demand for the healing services offered by Grandmother Mali and Michael was exceptional - the waiting list for personal consultations was complemented by an avid audience for every noon hour Teaching offered.

I invited my friend Eleanor to join me. She welcomed my invitation and decided to bring along her 17-year old son, Matthew, who has been struggling with undiagnosed health issues. Grandmother Mali remarked that someone had brought owl medicine to the Lodge that day. That evening, Matthew told his Mom he wasn't planning to participate in the next day's noon-hour teaching, however, later that night, he heard an owl hooting outside his window and soon after

he texted his Mom to confirm he would be going to the Lodge with her again the next day, after all. There is no doubt in my mind that powerful healing had begun, and I was honoured and privileged to be a part of that journey.

It is a journey that released a tremendous amount of good energy that I was eager to share with other colleagues, encouraging them to take time from the toils of work to open the door to an uplifting spiritual experience. Joining in prayer and ceremony we found peace, joy and friendship as we listened to Teachings about respect and honour, and learned how to open our hearts to Spirit. Grandmother Mali-hat-kwa's Eagle Song released a flood of tears within me, as my Spirit soared on the back of the Eagle of which she sang and the joy overwhelmed me.

Several of us also witnessed Eleanor's son, Matthew, agree to accept an invitation to explore the path of a sundancer. This occurred during a noon hour Teaching attended by four sundancers, including Grandmother Mali. Following Matthew's acceptance, all in attendance stood in a circle as the sundancers, led by Roy Barnes, sang a sundance healing song and the energy in the Lodge reaffirmed the selection.

“Grandmother Mali-hat-kwa's resounding words, “Everything is possible in the spirit world” continued to echo in my heart long after I left the Lodge that afternoon. Later in the day, and throughout the week, my colleagues and I quietly reflected on the wonder and beauty we had experienced. Each of us, in our way, knowing deep within that we had been transformed in a good way by the experience.



*Grandmother Mali-Hat-Kwa (left) and Patricia Wilson (right) were two of more than 1,000 individuals who greeted a group of young people from the James Bay Cree community of Whapmagoostui, Que., who arrived at Parliament Hill in Ottawa, on March 25, ending a 1,600-kilometre trek – The Journey of Nishiyuu” (which means ‘The Journey of the People’ in Cree) aimed to bring attention to Aboriginal issues.*

While some may assume attending the noon hour Teachings is always solemn and sombre, I can assure them, it is far more real than that and the joy and laughter we share is palatable. A smile creases my face every time I reflect on Michael shouting “Gitxsan in the House” at the top of his lungs to bring a spirit of childlike innocence in play to the fore. It is indeed a wonderful way to ensure balance and harmony in the midst of our hard work at healing our hearts to become whole.

## ABOUT THE LODGE

Opened in April 2002, Iskotew (“the fire within”) is an Aboriginal teaching and healing centre that regularly provides teachings, Elder consultations, story-telling and craft circles to bring cultural awareness to employees - especially the ones who provide health services to Aboriginal peoples. It also provides a supportive space to help employees deal with workplace challenges. People of all faiths are welcome.

The Lodge hosts Elders from across the country for one to two week visits in addition to having two Resident Elders. In addition, the facility offers opportunities for Health Canada employees to enhance their understanding of First Nations and Inuit culture by serving as a resource centre with a range of books and DVDs available on loan. The Lodge is also home to the Peace Flame Drum Circle – a gathering of equality and peace, which is open to everyone: male, female, First Nations, Aboriginal and not, one and two-spirited.

## Jillian's Diary - A Journey to Save a Life

I had never been to Vancouver Island so when the opportunity arose I jumped at the chance.

The highlight wasn't the old growth forest in Port Alberni or the snow-capped mountains towering over the idyllic fishing village speckled with signs boasting of fresh crabs; it wasn't the mojito gelato I enjoyed in Comox (delicious) or the Ferry ride through the fog and a myriad of peaceful islands (beautiful). No, the highlight was a four-year-old little boy, named Gabe.

Gabe was diagnosed with leukemia in February 2010 and although in remission, his type of leukemia has a high rate of reoccurrence. His doctors say if it comes back – his only hope will be a stem cell transplant. Gabe has no idea he's sick. To him, the needles in his arms and spine (for blood samples and chemo treatments) are all just a part of growing up. Gabe also has no idea that because he's Aboriginal, his chances of finding a match are extremely slim.

A patient's best chance of finding a stem cell match is within their own ancestry, but the pool of potential Aboriginal donors on the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network is less than 1 per cent. Aboriginal patients have a unique genetic make-up and for the most part, it is only found in individuals in North America. Whereas non-Aboriginal patients may be able to find a donor internationally – this isn't an option for Aboriginal patients.

As one of the Patient & Transplant Liaison Specialists for OneMatch, I meet a lot of patients and their families but it's often the kids who steal my heart. It's because of patients like Gabe that Canadian Blood Services is building a national public cord blood bank that will give more chances of finding that one match.

I am encouraged that more and more Aboriginal leaders are listening. Honorary co-chair of the For All Canadians financial gifts campaign, Dr. Evan Adams explains, "For communities such as the Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, matches cannot be found within international registries. We need a Canadian solution."

Part of the solution is a diverse public cord blood bank but right now there is a persistent fact that needs immediate attention. OneMatch is currently searching for donors for 14 Aboriginal patients in need of a stem cell transplant. Young men between 17 and 35 years old are most needed as donors, since their stem cells can provide the best results for patients.

Like the snow-capped mountains that persevere through constantly changing surroundings, our patients thrive on the hope of their community embracing their power to help save lives. Together, we can move mountains; we can save lives of Aboriginal patients today and in the future.

If Gabe needs a match you could save his life. Online registration is easy and open right now! To find out more, please visit [www.onematch.ca](http://www.onematch.ca). This year, OneMatch is honoured to be attending First Nations Health Authority's National Aboriginal Day celebrations in Vancouver. We hope you will join us in helping to save lives in your communities.

*The OneMatch Stem Cell & Marrow Network is a partner of the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (A.N.A.C.). OneMatch and the First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia work together on this important health issue facing Canada's Aboriginal people. For more information, please visit [onematch.ca](http://onematch.ca) or [campaignforcanadians.ca](http://campaignforcanadians.ca).*



Gabe and Mom

## 75% OF PEOPLE WHO NEED A STEM CELL TRANSPLANT CAN'T FIND A MATCH IN THEIR OWN FAMILY.



That's why there's OneMatch, Canada's Stem Cell and Marrow Network. Right now, there is a special need for **males who are aged 17 to 35**, in good health and willing to donate to any patient in need.

Join today: [www.onematch.ca](http://www.onematch.ca)

one  match  
stem cell and marrow network

  
Canadian Blood Services  
it's in you to give

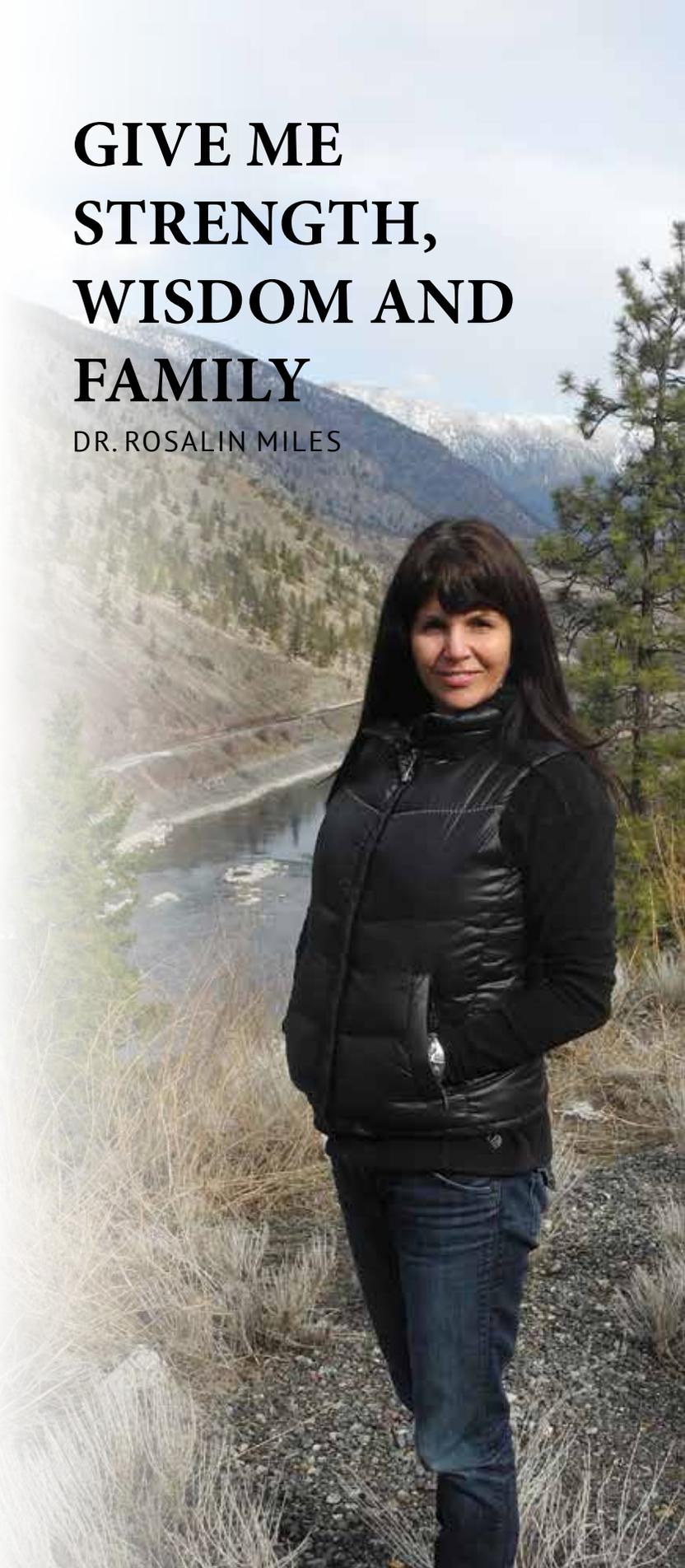
I was raised on the land close to where the two rivers run together. Where the fish arrived in the hot summer and provided us with food for our spirit and body. The summer morning would bring the scent of the pine forest and I yearned to be under the tree's branches. Walking step by step through the forest to the river I am reminded and thankful for my physical endurance, my fortitude, and my wellness. To be physically active is such a gift, especially seeing the burdens others have faced in my community by diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and arthritis. I am also reminded that if I keep moving, keep being active, the action itself will help me with meditative thinking and problem solving, and as a leader in my family I need to be healthy and well. The repetitive low impact movement of walking allows me to focus on my thoughts. I think and reflect with each step, stand tall and focus ahead. Walking up a hill my lungs expand and are filled with pine scented fresh air. My heart beats, my blood flows and my body is rejuvenated. I breathe in through my nose and out through my mouth, breath in life and breathe out my stale air and let go of all my burdens. I know that I am not alone and I am surrounded by my relatives, generations before and the generations after. I start to repeat in my head "I need to be strong; I need to be strong." I stand tall again and move forward with purpose. The community needs me to be strong, but I also need to be wise. I walk to the river and I reflect on traditional teachings and I practice our ways of thanking the earth, water, and sky. I walk back and gather firewood for the winter.

I am greeted at home by my granddaughter Nicki, she skips over and starts to lecture me on the scientific benefits of going to the gym, and that it reduces stress, anxiety, cholesterol and blood pressure, prevents chronic diseases, and helps you sleep (all without taking a breath). I asked her doesn't she think walking in the forest everyday does the same? She said sure, but you have to walk for at least 30 minutes a day in the forest to equal 30 minutes on the elliptical trainer. I ask her, "Doesn't walking to the river and back take me an hour?" She nods, shrugs, and pulls out a fitness magazine to show me a new piece of equipment that they have at the gym. I asked her why she doesn't walk down to the river. Nicki seemed embarrassed and looked down to the ground and said she was scared of the black bears, and one time she saw an ugly wild dog on the railway track. I told her you just need to walk in threes, take friends, and make sure you keep a stick with you. Nicki rolls her eyes and says 'well you don't get cell service down there and my new cool running shoes would get dirty'. I looked at her, made a big sigh, moved my lips, and said maybe you could walk down with me once a week. Her eyes opened big and said that would be nice but I would have to wear my old shoes.

The next day I was excited to walk down to the river and share with her my stories when I was her age, but really she talked for most of the time. I smiled from the inside. More than strength, more than wisdom, I have family.

# GIVE ME STRENGTH, WISDOM AND FAMILY

DR. ROSALIN MILES



# Spirit

## ELDERS' WISDOM



“Healthiness is connection to the land (bathing in rivers, connection to plants and animals); they are all part of heath. Listening to nature and what she is telling us contributes to our well-being. Because we’re not doing that, many are suffering through various ailments. We need to reconnect to the land to move back toward health and well-being.”

**Klii-wii-taa (Barney Williams) – Tla-o-qui-aht**



“In the Okanagan Creation stories, the connection between the land and the people began when the Creator “tore” us from the earth and made the original people. Today we are a people torn from our culture, our language, and our knowledge. When we begin a spiritual journey back to ourselves as a people, to our culture, our language, and our sacred knowledge, we can begin to heal. We can also resume our spiritual relationship with the land, and all living things by re-awakening the sacred places within our territories. The earth, as our mother, has become lonesome for us. Re-awakening those sacred places through spiritual practices will heal the earth, our mother.”

**Eric Mitchell – Swknaqinx/St’at’imc (Okanagan/Lillooet)**



“When we speak of the ‘land’ we are making reference to everything that is connected to the land. Mother earth, water, animals, birds, trees and all other forms of life. I believe that everyone looks at land and water as resources and too often as commodities. Our people view land and water as sacred elements, a spiritual source of life, for they sustain life, human, animals and plants. Land and water not only provide means of transportation, they are vehicles for cleansing, initiation, gaining wisdom and a source of inspiration and enchantment. They are symbols of life, sustenance, abundance, fertility, movement, generosity, permanence and strength. We do not own the land. However we are of the land and so our experience of life is determined by our relationship to the land. When we get disconnected from the land, and no longer look after our stewardship responsibilities, the health of the land suffers and we also experience disease and our health as a people also suffers.”

**Paul Willie – Wuikinuxv**