

# NORTH

NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY NEWS | MARCH 2022

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HEARTS & SMARTS



**NORTHERN REGION**  
First Nations Health Authority

## STORIES FROM THE LAND

# GITWANGAK CHILDREN LEARN AND CONNECT TO THE LAND IN OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE

**GITWANGAK CHILDREN ARE ENJOYING A DIFFERENT KIND OF DAY CARE** thanks to a new outdoor play space that brings them all together to experience their culture, traditions and language in a healing environment.

The FNHA-funded space was inaugurated during the worst of the pandemic late last year on National Truth and Reconciliation Day and those present wore orange shirts in honour of the lost children and survivors of Indian Residential Schools.

The site was ideal for a safe outdoor ceremony in an area that now also serves as a hub for traditional gatherings and healing circles.

The children can also enjoy a fenced area with Clan Houses for them as well as a Smoke House, a washing station and washrooms.

The buildings are covered in art work and quotes like this one:

*They tried to bury us  
They didn't know we were seeds*

"We have this space to focus on healthy ways of being who we are, and this will continue to enhance the important work we do," said Liz Williams, HeadStart manager.



Official ribbon cutting of the outdoor play space for all kids

Another quote from Simoogit Lelt (the late Fred Johnson) was prominent at the ceremony and encapsulated the spirit behind the community's desire to create this land-based healing space:

*Children are the flowers of the village,  
We believe that if we respect, nurture and care for our children,  
They will grow into bright, beautiful flowers*



Many of the buildings have quotes on them

Download a digital copy of NORTH:  
<https://fnha.bmeurl.co/DA40D77>

## SHARING STRENGTHS

# THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCIENCE: FNHA'S STAFF WITH HEART

**GOING INTO COMMUNITIES TO DO WATER SAMPLING** or building inspections seems straightforward: collect samples, follow guidelines, write reports. These are some of the foundational environmental public health services currently performed by nine FNHA staff in the North. Seven have been at the FNHA for more than five years and some since before 2013. They know their communities.

But there's more to their work than checklists.

When Erin Nielsen, an environmental health officer (EHO), told Clara Jack from Nakazdli that her hands were bothering her, Clara sent medicinal salves and as a thank you Erin gave her fireweed jelly. During COVID Phyllis Seymour, community water monitor for Lheidli T'enneh, recommended a private ultrasound company to Cori Johnson, environmental health technician (EHT), so her husband could see their baby, something he couldn't do at the hospital. "She has so many grandkids, she knew exactly where I should go," says Cori.

Getting checklists ticked is only part of the job.

The COVID and toxic drug pandemics have devastated many families. EHOs and the EHT often arrive in a community when there's been a death. Water monitors have to show up to work no matter what is happening

and sometimes the losses are overwhelming. "One of our guys (water monitor) lost ten people in six months. We walk in on their grief."

Knowing this, EHOs and the EHT can take the time and space to listen. It's a simple comfort in rough times. Their attitude is 'how can we help?' rather than enforcing rules.

While at college Erin, a settler, learned the real details of First Nations history. "I was a proud Canadian before this. I asked myself: how can we do better?" When recruiters from the FNHA came to BCIT in 2013 she knew she wanted to work here.

Cori, who is Gitksan, feels more connected to her culture through her work. "We respect traditional ways of processing food or collecting water. We tread lightly and look at how to do these safely. Sometimes industry has had an effect on the land and the water is unsafe. Pathogens have changed over time and even giardia is different, so we explain this and offer alternatives that are culturally appropriate."

"I love working with and for First Nations, and I love the



Working with community members on a water system in Sik-e-dakh

environment and seeing how we're connected," says Cori who has visited all 55 northern Nations.

So when you think of the FNHA's environmental workers, remember, they are here for you as more than scientists.

# HAVE WE GOT A JOB FOR YOU!



When communities feel overwhelmed, you can help set up supports

✓ **POSITION:** Crisis Response Coordinator  
 ✓ **LOCATION:** Prince George BC  
 For those who are natural helpers, compassionate and can work calmly in stressful situations  
 ✓

**IS YOUR NATURAL TENDENCY TO HELP WHEN YOU KNOW PEOPLE ARE STRUGGLING?** Whether a crisis is related to the environment like forest fires or floods, health emergencies such as the toxic drug crisis and COVID, or traumatic losses in a community, you are the person who can respond quickly and with heart. A crisis response coordinator is guided by the requests of the community and their manager. They coordinate human resources including traditional wellness workers, grief and loss counselors, Indigenous Focusing Oriented Therapy (IFOT) or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) teams and others. At times you could be visiting a community; other times you might provide cultural support at an evacuation centre. If you have a relevant diploma relating to First Nations, mental health and wellness or social work, please [check out this position](#).

## FNHA JOB OPENINGS IN THE NORTH (click for more info)

[Advisor, Crisis/Emergency](#)

[Advisor, Urban/Away from Home](#)

[Assistant, Primary Care Response](#)

[Community Engagement](#)

[Coordinators:](#)

- [Burns Lake](#)
- [Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en](#)
- [Prince George](#)

[Crisis Response Coordinator](#)

[Environmental Health Officers](#)

[Indigenous Educator, Harm](#)

[Reduction](#)

[Regional Financial Consultant](#)

[Regional HR Generalist](#)

[Licensed Practical Nurse](#)

[Program Coordinator, Traditional Wellness](#)

[Project Management Lead, eHealth](#)

[Regional Mental Health & Wellness](#)

[Liaison](#)

[Senior Business Analyst, eHealth](#)

[Senior Specialist, Mental Health and Substance Use](#)

[Specialist, Primary Care Clinical Education and Training](#)

[Training & Education Support](#)

### COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSES

[Gitanyow & Gitwangak](#)

[Fort St. John](#)

[Gitga'at](#)

[Kwadacha Fort Ware](#)

[Kitkatla](#)

[Kwadacha](#)

[Lax Kw'alaams](#)

[Telegraph Creek](#)

[Tsay Keh Dene](#)

[Resource Team across BC](#)

### NURSES IN CHARGE

[Telegraph Creek](#)

[Kwadacha](#)

Check out all our jobs at [fnha.ca/careers](https://fnha.ca/careers)

# BONFIRE CHAT

WITH JULIE MORRISON VP REGIONAL OPERATIONS



**THE JUNIOR ALL-NATIVE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT IN KELOWNA AND THE ABORIGINAL YOUTH HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP IN PRINCE GEORGE** signal a welcome return from the pandemic for our youngsters.

The FNHA sponsors these tournaments and we attend when we can because we recognize the importance of exercise for both physical and mental wellbeing. I also know there are many lessons that cannot be taught in a classroom but only outside working and playing together.

The young players striving for championships with their teams are part of a brighter future for us. Let's cheer for them as loudly as the crowds did.

Everything we do now should be about making their future as good as it can be.

The best way to pass on these teachings is to treat our youngsters with respect while also holding them accountable for their decisions with kindness and support.

This will help the new generations become strong and capable adults, ready to take on the challenges our communities will continue to face. These challenges will be local, and as the war in Europe is teaching us, global as well.

Our ancestors worked together to survive hardship and calamities too numerous to count. But every setback was also a seed planted in a previous time that becomes food, shelter or medicine when we needed it.

The ancestors built a foundation for us, a foundation of

**"...YOUNG PLAYERS STRIVING FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS WITH THEIR TEAMS ARE PART OF A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR US."**

Let's nurture, encourage and protect them while letting them learn their own lessons because we will not be here forever. The most important inheritance for them, however, will be teachings of our ancestors.

One of the most vital of these is respect, something many of us learn in a gym, an ice-rink or out on a soccer field. The more fortunate among us also learn respect while out hunting or gathering traditional foods.

respect for ourselves, for our parents, for our community, for the land and for the animals.

In an uncertain world, it is up to us to strengthen and build on this foundation for the good of future generations.

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to sign up for our eZine

# FYI

## THE ALL NATIVE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT IS BACK!

After a two year break, basketball teams and fans will be in Prince Rupert April 3-9, ready to compete, cheer, gather and have some fun!

If things get too rowdy courtside, take a relaxing break with a traditional healer or sign up for some Indigenous crafts. We'll be located upstairs in the Jim Ciccone building. Sign up is requested for most services upstairs happening Monday to Friday.

Near the main entrance in the Raven Room you can relax, have a snack and get some health screenings done or learn about rapid at-home COVID testing.

Our very own Coco Miller will have a booth to tell you all about careers with the FNHA, and for athletes, we have physiotherapists to ease your aches and pains.

Come check out these free services and say hi!



## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR YOU

### Indigenous Peoples Day of Wellness Grants

This year's theme is *Celebrating Generations: Honouring our ancestors, Elders, youth and our future generations through culture, language and traditions*. These wellness events are intended to celebrate culture, resilience and community wellness.

Groups: \$3,500 and schools: \$2,000. For more information INCLUDING criteria and how to apply please go to this link:

<https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/the-2022-indigenous-peoples-day-of-wellness-grants-are-now-open>

### On the cover

Earlier in March, Richard Inkster who is Tsimshian and a member of the Raven Clan, was out dipnetting for ooligan on the Skeena near Kwinitsa. The photo was taken by his daughter, Julianna Roberts.



*Have a great picture for our cover or a story idea? Send to [SubscribeNorth@fnha.ca](mailto:SubscribeNorth@fnha.ca)*

## STAFF CHANGES

- Some of our staff have taken on new roles. **Keith Henry** is no longer acting! He's the manager for funding initiatives and project development. And, after two years of running a warehouse out of the office, **Brittany Mikolayczyk** is now officially the coordinator, shipping and receiving logistics.
- **Erin Nielsen** will be exploring special projects within the environmental team.
- Our new communications generalist is **Carol Whetter**. Her colleague, **John Moody**, will be returning to FNHA central.
- **Alyssa Lepka** has taken on coordinating primary care. We welcome **Loretta Williams** as CEC for the Interior.
- Leaving the FNHA are longtime CEC **Alisa Froh**, admin assistant **Lori Devereux**, EHO **Seyoum Gebeyehu**, and (temporarily until July) **Henry Morgan**.

# THROUGH NORTHERN EYES

## TRADITIONAL FOODS



NEXT MONTH: Do you have a t-shirt with an Indigenous slogan?  
Send us your photo to [SubscribeNorth@fnha.ca](mailto:SubscribeNorth@fnha.ca)

# IMPORTANT CONTACT INFO

**FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day**  
1-855-344-3800

**First Nations Health Benefits**  
1-855-550-5454

**National Indian Residential  
School Survivors Society**  
1-800-721-0066

**Kids Help Phone**  
1-800-668-6868  
**Text "connect" to: 686868**

**KUU-US Crisis Response**  
1-800-588-8717

**Mental Health  
(no area code needed)**  
310-6789

**Health Link BC**  
811

**BC Suicide Line**  
1-800-784-2433  
<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/>

**Northern BC Crisis Line**  
1-888-562-1214

**Northern BC YOUTH  
Crisis Line**  
1-888-564-8336  
**Text: 250-564-8336**