



**xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ**  
*Many Ways of Working Together*  
**Project Report**

Qapsin kiᑭin ᑭaqaᑭxuniyam?  
*What Would a Healthy Community Look Like?*

Prepared by the xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ (Many Ways of Working Together) Research Team with oversight by the xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ Advisory Group

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\*The xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ methodology, including all processes related to data collection, analysis and presentation of findings, was developed by and belongs to the xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ Advisory Group, in keeping with OCAP principles

## Acknowledgements

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## Project Overview

The xəƣqanaƣ ʔitkiniƣ (Many Ways of Working Together) research project is a partnership between Ktunaxa Nation, Interior Health and the University of Victoria. It is overseen by Ktunaxa Elders and Knowledge Holders through the xəƣqanaƣ ʔitkiniƣ Advisory Group. This project has two interrelated goals:

1. To explore how Interior Health could learn from Ktunaxa understandings of wellness to provide health services in a respectful way that honours Ktunaxa culture, language and worldviews; and,
2. To create a Ktunaxa Community Model of Wellness that responds to the question, Qapsin kiʔin ʔakaƣxuniyam? (What would a healthy community look like?).

Developing this model represents an important first step for exploring the conflicts and convergences between Ktunaxa and Western knowledge systems in regards to promoting health equity.

This research project and partnership respond directly to several priorities related to community wellness identified by Ktunaxa Nation in the *Interior Regional Health and Wellness Plan* (2014). These priorities include: develop opportunities for healthy activities and social connections; organize family and community cultural activities, knowledge sharing and language learning; and expand and strengthen activities, relationships, linkages, and understanding with [health authorities]. This research is supported by Ktunaxa Nation Council and has received research ethics approval from the Ktunaxa Nation Council Research Ethics Committee, the Interior Health Research Ethics Board, and the University of Victoria Research Ethics Board.

## Our Approach

The *Ktunaxa Code of Ethics and Procedures for Conducting Research Concerning the Ktunaxa Nation* governs and dictates how the research partnership operates with regards to mutual accountability, interaction and communication. It also establishes the terms for ownership, control, access and possession of research data and results. Ktunaxa Nation Traditional Knowledge and Language (TKL) Sector own and control all data generated through this work and have oversight and final approval over whether and how information is used or shared. All participants, including their family members and subsequent generations, will be granted access indefinitely for as long as the data exists.

Our approach to developing a Ktunaxa Community Model of Wellness has been to work closely with the xəƣqanaƣ ʔitkiniƣ Advisory Group to facilitate community gatherings to hear Ktunaxa Nation Citizens' ideas in response to the question Qapsin kiʔin ʔakaƣxuniyam? (What would a healthy community look like?). In Fall 2018, we hosted two rounds of community gatherings in Yaƣan Nukiy, ʔA·kisq̄nuk, ʔA·kink̄umƣasnuq̄iʔit and ʔAq̄am (eight in total). All Ktunaxa Nation Citizens of all ages were invited to attend the community gatherings for a

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shared meal; however, only consenting adult participants were included in the data collected during the discussion. In total, 53 community members participated in these lively discussions.

### What We Heard and Big Takeaways

Based on participants' responses to the question, Qapsin kiʔin ʔakaƷxuniyam? (What would a healthy community look like?), the xəƷqanaƷ ʔitkiniƷ Advisory Group identified a number of common themes that represent shared priorities for Ktunaxa communities. In total, 22 overarching themes were identified with an additional 3 added by the xəƷqanaƷ ʔitkiniƷ Advisory Group (25 total). These themes are presented in the following pages, and are complemented by frequency counts (across communities and total references) as well as supporting quotes from participants and members of the xəƷqanaƷ ʔitkiniƷ Advisory Group. Some of the most significant themes include themes around connection: connection within families, connection between communities, connection across generations as well as connection through culture and language.

Our big take-away was that there is a need to address the cultural knowledge disconnect where information isn't flowing well between the most culturally knowledgeable community members (i.e. Elders and Knowledge Holders) and individuals from Ktunaxa Nation involved with administrative and governance discussions as well as external/non-Ktunaxa researchers, professionals and administrators that have very little access to cultural consultants' input. The same disconnect exists within and across Ktunaxa families, generations and communities, where communication pathways have been severed due to colonial forces. This is critical because a healthy community must be able to solve problems and access, preserve and share cultural knowledge across time and space.

### Next Steps

This research was supported by a one-year Catalyst Grant, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)- Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (May 2018-2019), with initial support from Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the BC SUPPORT Unit. In April 2019, we received a smaller grant from the Vancouver Foundation to help us host the ceremonial recognition and share our research findings with appropriate partners. We have also submitted an application for a 5-year CIHR Project Grant to continue and grow this work, which we will have news on by mid-July 2019.

The long-term goal of this research partnership is re-orientation of health systems towards health equity, starting with Interior Health Authority, through transforming how the health system engages with and serves Indigenous communities. By identifying and addressing conflicts between Western discourses related to health and culturally-informed understandings of wellness, we will reimagine health systems' roles and responsibilities (e.g. health policies, programs, service delivery) to be culturally-relevant, community-driven and in alignment with Indigenous worldviews.



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## Ktunaxa Community Model of Wellness Themes with Quotes

### Self-Determination

#### Across Communities (4) Total References (10)

- △ Participant 33: We have to create healthy community for ourselves
- △ Participant 24: We have our work ahead of ourselves too... It's not all up to you, it's up to us
- △ Participant 1: We need not just doctors, we need medicine men/ women, midwives, and our own school system... Stop depending on external people. Need to start doing things on our own instead of relying on other people
- △ Participant 8: Young people want nationhood; that's healthy for me
- △ Participant 1: A healthy community is decolonized
- △ Participant 10: We should have the ability to direct our own health; our members don't want to see a doctor, they want to see a naturopath
- △ Participant 18: We have a voice, we know what we need, we're willing to do the work, we don't just want- want- want, but we need the help, we need the stuff that you guys are doing...
- △ Participant 7: When I go to the doctor's now, they give me the decision-making power; the doctor's ask me questions in a way that I could make the decisions, and that was very encouraging for me... I have to tell you once more, is that I had the ability to make decisions; to me, it was like a partnership. It was my health, my body, my life

### Children & Youth

#### Across Communities (4) Total References (8)

- △ Participant 15: To have a healthy community we need to look after these [kids] and get them their spirit back... Helping the younger ones become who they're supposed to become
- △ Participant 7: Where are our young people? What is it that we are not doing for our young people? Why are they leaving us? I miss them
- △ Participant 26: It's frustrating to me, this is the second time that I'm the only man here. We don't have any of our young generation or any of our men here to come be a part of this healing. A lot of our traditional ways involved everyone. Healing is a major responsibility for our younger generation
- △ Participant 29: Telling young people that they are worthy
- △ Participant 37: Acknowledge the young people with knowledge and skill transfers before it's too late [before knowledge holders are gone]

### Acceptance & Respect

#### Across Communities (4) Total References (7)

- △ Participant 22: At the end of the day, we love each other and treat each other with respect as family, and treat all people with respect... Doesn't matter that someone hasn't been living in the community, they're still Ktunaxa

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- △ Participant 9: What stands out to me is acceptance... We all come from different backgrounds; they just do this different... How strong how powerful that [acceptance] could be. I am hopeful
- △ Participant 14: A healthy community is open to anybody and everybody. And being able to speak to each other, not behind people's backs
- △ Participant 16: What's happening right now is a healthy community. Being able to talk and listen, no judging going on... Too many of us have been judged or judge

### Connection & Belonging

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (13)

- △ Participant 2: Most important part of a healthy person is to be connected to different people... Connectivity amongst members of the community; that's where I'm trying to start from; foundation for a healthy community... Healthy community is getting together
- △ Participant 8: Having a place to belong is really important for Indian people. When you have a place of really truly belonging somewhere...
- △ Participant 21: Support networks; having that support there; I think that's what a healthy community looks like
- △ Participant 5: Miss having community gatherings where we all come together and cook food, hear the old people laughing and joking... doesn't have to be for a meeting... That's what I miss as a healthy community
- △ Participant 6: Going to put out my orange flag and stick it out so visitors know I am home and they can come if they want something
- △ Participant 2: Orange flag was an idea I had... Significance of the orange flag at the driveway is to show that the person is open to visitors no matter who

### History/ Future & Ancestors

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (6)

- △ Participant 22: What makes us strong, what has come through our roots... our word for ancestors means roots, and our strength comes from our ancestors. Our ancestors hold us together
- △ Participant 16: A healthy community remembers
- △ Participant 22: 100 years from now, 1000 years from now, those generations are going to be talking about us as ancestors
- △ Participant 1: It's important for us to talk about our genealogy as much as possible; know our relations and to say it
- △ Participant 23: It's important to know who you're related to

### Lateral Violence & Bullying

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (6)

- △ Participant 26: When we were kids we were taught not to talk to other kids because of what families they came from. Taught not to trust neighbours because of their lineage. Now we grow up and Elders are wondering where is the community?



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- △ Participant 28: ...people have to change their attitudes towards each other... That's one of the biggest things in this community that's unhealthy
- △ Participant 32: It's [bullying] is in our community; it's bad. I don't feel welcome here anymore
- △ Participant 26: It's hard to have conversations like this when there's still trauma perpetuated in the community. Our people are perpetuating it... Our people aren't showing each other compassion
- △ Participant 8: The government has successfully created divisions. We don't know what we're fighting for and that's not healthy

### Purpose & Hope

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (5)

- △ Participant 20: When people believe in something, they will do things—I believe in my people
- △ Participant 8: Believe in something... Whatever lifts up your heart
- △ Participant 8: There's always a hope; I have to hang onto hope; it helps me when I'm angry frustrated— have to get that positive energy back/ re-energize
- △ Participant 26: It's impossible to dream when you're really just surviving
- △ Participant 3: If you don't have hope or you don't know how to envision, you have a hard time feeling healthy

### Isolation

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (4)

- △ Participant 17: We built walls around us; Keep Out signs; private property... Wasn't like this back then; you go for a visit and they cook for you, they don't ask how long; you were welcome everywhere. Ktunaxa people didn't know what a fence was
- △ Participant 31: There is a disconnection and an age gap... Figure out ways to connect better with the youth so we don't end up losing them
- △ Participant 36: Creating environments that reduce isolation

### Culture

#### Across Communities (3) Total References (4)

- △ Participant 26: Be part of culture, be an advocate for culture, be an advocate for tradition
- △ Participant 20: There's a certain time of year when I do think we have a healthy community: Winter. When we're all visiting and we're doing our work. I really look forward to that... It's ours. It's Ktunaxa. We define it, the structure of it, how it happens. We all contribute to it. There's very clear boundaries, but they're different, they're Ktunaxa boundaries: who sings and when, how you carry yourself, what you bring, everyone has a role, everyone is participating, even the people that aren't there are still participating... And there's an understanding of that
- △ Participant 3: Culture is the ability to protect identity across time and space

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## Pride

### Across Communities (3) Total References (4)

- △ Participant 12: A healthy community learns how to celebrate successes, in each other and be proud of what the community accomplishes together... Each individual to be honoured and held up for the things that each individual has to bring
- △ Participant 34: Being proud people is one of the things we lack and we gotta bring that back into our communities to be proud of who we are
- △ Participant 19: You can really tell the Ktunaxa by our dress—the whitest buckskin, the best beading; we should still have skilled people out there that know how to tan hides and bead, and not be ashamed to make them
- △ Participant 4: Individuals being more outspoken, not being ashamed/ scared. Being ashamed is one of the biggest things our people struggle with; need to start realizing that they are beautiful. Our people are very smart; some of our young people are quick, but others I would like to see be more proud/ outspoken/ assertive

## Identity

### Across Communities (2) Total References (6)

- △ Participant 17: Back in the day, you were Ktunaxa first—didn't matter what community you were from; we all spoke the same language (some a little differently, but it didn't matter)
- △ Participant 8: We each have our separate little camps, but we are Ktunaxa... Getting away from that constant division and bringing more sharing of things
- △ Participant 17: Trying to get back who we were
- △ Participant 18: We were horse people. If we can get back to the spirit of the horse, it would help
- △ Participant 17: I've thought about what does healthy mean a lot, and I remember thinking "did I ever see "healthy" in my community?" I remember a time where we all spoke the language but residential schools took that away. I wonder if I ever saw healthy...I've seen lots of alcohol. But I remember when our food and produce was local and the stores sold what was grown here and that part I can see as physically healthful but then I see the breakdown of other types of health like the deterioration of the other things that people would call healthy, like the alcohol and all that was starting to show up then...getting to a serious place where I don't remember too many people being sober. So I'm having a hard time identifying healthy Ktunaxa people/ healthy Ktunaxa living. Growing up, I was having a hard time connecting to spiritual living... I was not taught the real serious part of our spirituality. I heard about it, but I never saw it.... We are struggling with identity; we lost all that, and that's what we gotta get back.

## Food & Food Sovereignty

### Across Communities (2) Total References (6)

- △ Participant 13: The food we ate a long time ago was healthy; but it's starting to disappear (e.g. moose, elk, ᑭa·kwum)
- △ Participant 42: Berry picking—not just about the berries; also sharing and relationships

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- △ Participant 42: Hunting/ fishing (e.g. sharing wind-dried salmon or meat; using food to show you care or want to teach something; going duck hunting then making soup)
- △ Participant 23: We used to come together as a family during hunting season [duck season]... I don't see that anymore... When we had our Christmas dinner here, there were a lot of people that came...
- △ Participant 30: Sometimes me and [daughter] will be cooking dinner and we'll walk up to the gym and see what vegetables are in the community garden

### Medicine

#### Across Communities (2) Total References (4)

- △ Participant 28: When I was growing up, if something happened/ when someone was sick in the community, all the women would come together and go to that house and stay there—some overnight to make sure that person was alright; go out into the forest getting their own medicine
- △ Participant 10: We should have the ability to direct our own health; our members don't want to see a doctor, they want to see a naturopath
- △ Participant 5: I'd rather see people in our communities, any communities, living off natural healing than drugs
- △ Participant 8: Caution people on our traditional use of medicines—not have that on the research. That is created for us. Creator gave that to us Ktunaxa

### Clean Water

#### Across Communities (2) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 18: Where we are we have really good water; and we teach our grandkids... I'm really honoured that I can give people really good water... that to me is healthy
- △ Participant 19: What makes a healthy community? Good drinking water; enough food; educated people (doctors, lawyers, accountants, linguists so our language isn't lost); knowing our language and speaking it; decent employment in offices and self-employment

### Elders

#### Across Communities (2) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 25: If I had a wish, I'd wish that all the Elders were back, and it would be a happy community again
- △ Participant 24: We need to start talking about health with our younger people, and also our older people because they're so busy and forget about themselves
- △ Participant 9: Children/ young ones, the old times... can't just focus on one or the other; everyone in between. That's what's going to keep the balance

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## Family

### Across Communities (2) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 22: As a grandmother, I totally agree that to have healthy communities we need healthy families and to have healthy families we need healthy individuals
- △ Participant 22: We all have our families/ communities as our grounding. Maybe not as great in numbers as other First Nations communities, but I don't see us lacking in our ability to provide for our families/ communities
- △ Participant 29: For me, health is about family

## Impacts of Residential Schools

### Across Communities (2) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 17: [St. Eugene's] did its work—broke down the family systems
- △ Participant 26: A lot of that equates to intergenerational trauma; compassion was beaten out of us... A few generations later and trying to rebuild from that
- △ Participant 17: I've thought about what does healthy mean a lot, and I remember thinking "did I ever see "healthy" in my community?" I remember a time where we all spoke the language but residential schools took that away...

## Spirituality & Ceremony

### Across Communities (2) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 12: A healthy community knows when ceremony is needed and when prayers are needed, and the prayers are honoured and answered...
- △ Participant 8: sweat lodge— I find tremendous strength in that... it gets me grounded so I can continue on
- △ Participant 17: ... Growing up, I was having a hard time connecting to spiritual living... I was not taught the real serious part of our spirituality. I heard about it, but I never saw it.... We are struggling with identity; we lost all that, and that's what we gotta get back.

## Access to Cultural Resources

### Across Communities (2) Total References (2)

- △ Participant 3: It's about getting those tools back. For so long, they were taken away from us
- △ Participant 11: Started a drumming group and teaching the kids songs. Now going to have dance lessons (traditional dance, fancy dance, the jingle). Cultural language teacher also teaching the children the language

## Language

### Across Communities (1) Total References (3)

- △ Participant 13: You listen, and we'll tell you our stories. We'll use our language. It's good to hear that, it makes you feel better

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- △ Participant 17: Back in the day, you were Ktunaxa first—didn't matter what community you were from; we all spoke the same language (some a little differently, but it didn't matter)
- △ Participant 19: What makes a healthy community? Good drinking water; enough food; educated people (doctors, lawyers, accountants, linguists so our language isn't lost); knowing our language and speaking it; decent employment in offices and self-employment

### Truth and Reconciliation

#### Across Communities (1) Total References (2)

- △ Participant 10: Suyapis [white people] don't get what's going on— some just don't know/ don't care... Need intergenerational trauma training—wall that can come down... Help put them in our moccasins... That will help with trust
- △ Participant 10: The doctors need to know about the colonial history and intergenerational trauma; recognize this as a start

### Loss of Culture/ Language

#### Across Communities (1) Total References (2)

- △ Participant 17: I've thought about what does healthy mean a lot, and I remember thinking "did I ever see "healthy" in my community?" I remember a time where we all spoke the language but residential schools took that away... Growing up, I was having a hard time connecting to spiritual living... I was not taught the real serious part of our spirituality. I heard about it, but I never saw it.... We are struggling with identity; we lost all that, and that's what we gotta get back
- △ Participant 19: We're very reluctant people to show non-Natives our medicinal plants for fear of it being taken away again

### Additional Themes and Quotes Added by the xaxqanaᑭ ᑭitkiniᑭ Advisory Group

### Forgiveness & Healing Connections

- △ Participant 2: I think we need to focus on the role of forgiveness on moving on. Especially when we have grievances with other people it's not possible to move forward without addressing forgiveness. Sometimes we carry patterns on subconsciously, and we don't even remember why we might be upset. The process of forgiving might cause us to remember, but we have to remember before we can move forward
- △ Participant 2: Forgiving things that happen as a result of alcohol use in communities and healing from that. Moving forward from that and healing those connections with people
- △ Participant 38: These uncomfortable themes are tied in with TRC and decolonizing and healing ourselves. When we're healthy, when we've achieved that level of health, we'll be able to call out those things and address them assertively

### Genealogies & Familial Connections

- △ Participant 39: Issues arise with family inter-marrying due to lack of information regarding kinship
- △ Participant 40: I think it's important to understand how we are all connected. I don't think we have a good understanding of that these days. When I was young, I was shown who my cousins were, and I was told up to your third cousin you don't go there. You can't be in a relationship with that person
- △ Participant 39: When we were young and we were playing, our parents would watch us, and if we were playing with cousins they would make sure they would refer to us as cousins. They would go out of their way to make sure that we knew who our cousins were, by referring to us as cousins. We were always taught you couldn't be in a relationship with your cousin... When we would be in social settings the older ladies would be really clear about referring to people as being cousins or not being cousins. This was a way to keep our bloodline clean
- △ Participant 39: In community, and as a rule, culturally, family relations are understood at regular community gatherings when children are young... Gatherings help families know who belongs to what family and make those connections
- △ Participant 22: Today all of the grandmothers know what's going on, and no one says anything when their grandkids are in relationships with their cousins. We know it's wrong yet nobody comes forward... I think it's the role of the grandparents... How do we help identify the knowledge that people got that were raised from their grandparents, and help transfer it to people who were not raised by their grandparents? We need to do it in a way that's gentle, loving and supportive, and we need to do it at the community level

### Cultural Roles & Behaviours

- △ Participant 41: [Talking about genealogies and familial connections] can also be extended to those jobs we have in our community. Some of us that are in cultural roles are given the responsibility to talk about these kinds of things, but then other people may make decisions that I don't know about, or have conversations with other people. And that's fine, but it can lead to misunderstandings. That can make it really difficult for me to do my job
- △ Participant 41: Certain roles in community are not being respected. People who may not have the cultural authority may take on roles inappropriately. It's disrespectful to those who have been entrusted with these roles
- △ Participant 2: Each community member has an internalized set of rules that they follow that gives them a sense of acceptable behavior— including healthy behavior. It may be the case today that not everybody is aware of the kinds of behaviors that should be on their lists. Moving forward, we should focus on developing this list, identifying important common traits, and developing strategies to deliver them to young women and men
- △ Participant 3: ... If we're growing up not familiar with these responsibilities we may not create a functional community. That has an impact on community health as well