

Welcome from the First Nations Health Authority

Welcome to the International Journal of Indigenous Health (IJIH) and First Nations Health Authority's (FNHA) co-produced special thematic issue on Wellness-Based Indigenous Health Research and Promising Practices. The FNHA is pleased to participate in this collaborative opportunity to invite, publish and share community-based and academic research articles about First Nations and Indigenous community health and wellness.

The FNHA is part of a unique First Nations health governance structure in British Columbia. One which includes political and technical First Nations health leadership, collectively striving for better health and wellness outcomes for First Nations and Aboriginal peoples in the province¹. As an organization striving for excellence through our commitment to learn continuously, we value the power of evidence to support program and system improvements. Journals such as IJIH inform our transformative work.

This special edition of the IJIH centres on research and promising practices that embed culture into health practice, including traditional feasting, intergenerational relationships, and relationships with the land. As a health and wellness organization operating within a shared First Nations perspective on health and wellness², FNHA supports shifting the conversation to more strengths-based and holistic understandings of wellness. Health research and reporting from a conventional western perspective, has historically been disease-focused and deficit-based. FNHA has heard from communities about the need for research and services positioned in *wellness*, developed by First Nations, and reflecting strengths, cultures, and self-determined measurements. Wellness-based promising practices support this vision by giving First Nations control over decisions about what constitutes evidence of wellness. Such research aligns with a First Nations perspective on health and wellness² and our work to enhance cultural safety in the health system throughout the province.

Readers will also enjoy the community-based research projects showcased in this edition, which engage Indigenous communities through diverse methods including photovoice, digital storytelling, and sharing circles. The FNHA is committed to creating the space for First Nations and Indigenous communities to self-determine their path towards wellness, Nation rebuilding and revitalizing traditional ways of life. Guided by our Seven Directives³, Shared Values⁴ and Operating Principles⁵, the promotion of community-driven research, which respects Indigenous ownership and control over the entirety of the research process, is part of transforming research ethics, data governance, evaluation, and knowledge exchange, to be more responsive and accountable to First Nations peoples.

This partnership with IJIH has aimed to promote, encourage and support research grounded in wellness and Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing. Empowering community-based research grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, is driving the creation of a new culturally relevant body of evidence. This first-of-its-kind edition contributes to our knowledge of how a

¹ <http://www.fnha.ca/about/governance-and-accountability>

² <http://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/first-nations-perspective-on-wellness>

³ <http://www.fnha.ca/about/fnha-overview/directives>

⁴ <http://www.fnha.ca/about/fnha-overview/vision-mission-and-values>

⁵ <http://www.fnha.ca/about>

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holistic and strengths-based understanding of wellness can be realized in academic, community-based research, and Indigenous health practice settings.

We are honoured to work with the IJIH to share this knowledge with local, regional, national and international First Nations and Indigenous communities, as well as health service and academic audiences. This work advances the FNHA's shared vision of healthy, self-determining and vibrant BC First Nations children, families and communities⁴. We hope the great work found within this edition supports an evidence-base to inform policy and service improvements among First Nations and Indigenous health systems here in BC and around the world.

In Wellness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'jse', written in a cursive style.

Joe Gallagher
Chief Executive Officer
First Nations Health Authority