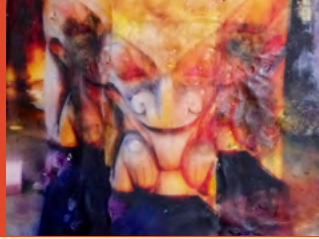




Healing and Rebuilding: Stories of Healing and Transformation in Aboriginal Communities



BRITISH
COLUMBIA



Message from the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Morris



A Vision for a Violence Free BC: Addressing Violence Against Women in British Columbia is a 10-year strategy towards a better, safer British Columbia. The strategy recognizes that some groups of women are at greater risk of violence than others and Aboriginal women fall into that category.

In this bulletin you will find information about the important projects funded from civil forfeiture proceeds to support healing and rebuilding after violence against Aboriginal women.

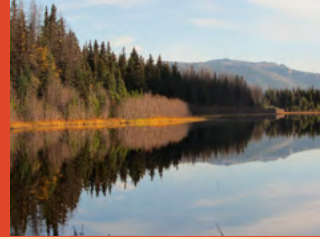
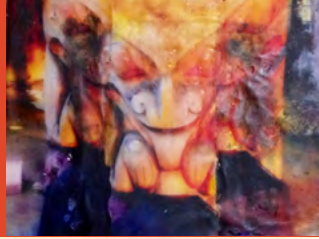
As identified in the strategy there are many factors, including the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, racism and poverty that contribute to the increased chance that Aboriginal women will experience violence. They are more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims of spousal violence and to experience severe and potentially life-threatening levels of violence. Aboriginal women are also identified as the most at risk of homicide and are a high ratio of missing persons cases.

In 2014-15, government identified the need for a separate grant funding stream, from civil forfeiture proceeds, that would support community based projects to help Aboriginal women, their families and communities heal from violence. Recommendations from the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2013) and the Highway of Tears Symposium (2006) noted the key components of moving forward together were healing, public awareness, and support for community initiatives on violence prevention.

The projects highlighted in this bulletin are examples of diverse, holistic, and culturally based approaches Aboriginal communities have adopted to come together to heal and rebuild from violence against Aboriginal women.

I hope you are inspired to consider ways your community may be involved in future projects.

Honourable Mike Morris
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General



Message from the Elders

“‘We are all Medicine. You are Medicine.’ These two short sentences have echoed in my being since I heard them at 18 years of age, 42 years ago from my granduncle. He said, ‘Medicine is for those of us who need to heal from what is making us ill.’ What I have learned over that 42 years is that medicine for the healing of individuals and communities comes in many forms, for example: plants, water, ceremonies, cultural activities, traditional sports, singing, dancing, camping, making traditional regalia, making rattles, drums and many, many more traditional activities. We human beings as medicine can help our families and communities by being most generous with our time, knowledge, humor and compassion. Strong medicine or good medicine comes from a place of education. Traditional education comes from our relatives who know language, culture, and ceremony, as well as from the public educational system. So, all my friends and relatives, please be strong medicine for us all.”

*xHopokeltun (shane pointe), proud member of the Pointe family and the Musqueam Indian Band
Shane’s motto is, “Total well being through total health!”*

“Women, like Mother Earth are life givers and nurturers of our children, families, communities and nations. By gathering our Indigenous women, we are stepping into our traditional values, ceremonies, teachings and cultures; embodying personal healing and connections to our ancestors, and to future generations to come. With the guidance of our elders, personal healing helps us to hold our connection to Mother Earth, the Creator and all our relations.”

*Bev Gillard, Cree Elder and Chairperson of the Elders Advisory Council,
Circle of Indigenous Nations Society in the West Kootenay and Boundary region*



Photo: Mountain and valley landscape (M. Buchholz)



Introduction

Just as a spindle whorl helps gather and collect fibres to make a single strand of wool, our plan and the process we went through to create it pulled together the fibres of our community and our lives into one thread - the things that make us who we are, our values and ideas, our resources, the challenges we face. This plan is about our community coming together as a strong united people. ([One Heart, One Mind – Community Planning and Visioning of the Musqueam People, A Comprehensive Sustainable Community Development Plan, Musqueam First Nation, June 2011](#))

The quote shares a deeply held belief of a core Indigenous value: the strength of holistic healing. This is the idea of building strength and helping Aboriginal women, their children, family members, elders and community members to heal together through an inter-connected journey.

The Healing and Rebuilding grant funding stream supports projects with holistic approaches in Aboriginal communities to assist victims and communities to heal and rebuild from the impacts of violence against Aboriginal women. Holistic approaches, refers to projects that address not only healing for the individual woman, but also healing for the family and broader community. The projects focus on the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of healing and rebuilding within an impacted community, and include other culturally identified practices that contribute to restoring health. This bulletin highlights some of the lasting and positive impacts on the lives of those who participated in these projects.

There are nine projects profiled in this bulletin, which include activities ranging from working with Aboriginal victims of violence, to learning First Nations traditional cultural and healing practices, assisting resi-

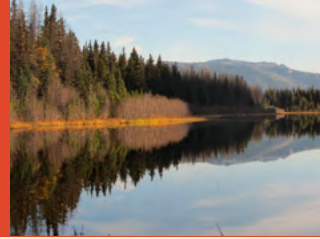
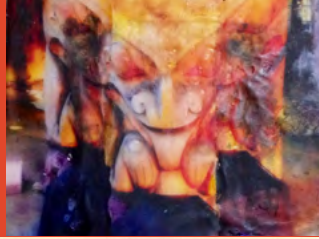
dential school survivors, supporting families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, providing programming for youth, and others.

These projects promote cultural resiliency for Indigenous women and their families by supporting them to rebuild strong personal identities and community connections through traditional cultural practices. Examples of these activities include talking circles, smudging ceremonies, creating clan and house regalia through craft circle practice, and the use of traditional dancing, drumming, and songs. Forums, gatherings, and counselling supports have also contributed to improved mental and psychological health for the project participants.

May the stories in this bulletin inspire the reader to learn more about the activities of First Nations communities and the vital efforts that are taking place to help them heal and rebuild.

“This innovative funding stream provides targeted funding for community-based projects that support Aboriginal women, their families and communities to heal. The stories that are being created and practices that have been shared through these projects illustrate cultural and community resiliency against some of the most difficult situations, and serves as an inspiration to all of us.”

— Phinder Dulai, Program Manager, grant team lead



“So many of these projects embody the power of healing and transformation for our First Nations people. It has been a privilege for me to be part of this process.”

— Freda Ens, Aboriginal Court Support Caseworker, grant team member

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Crime Remediation Grants

The Civil Forfeiture Office (CFO) continues to undermine the profit motive behind criminal activity by taking away the tools and proceeds of crime and putting them back into projects that support community crime prevention and safety. Since the CFO was established in 2006, forfeitures have totaled more than \$63 million and the office has returned \$27 million to crime prevention and community safety programs, including \$1.5 million in victims' compensation.

The Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Crime Remediation Grants provide one-time funding to crime prevention projects that align with funding streams chosen on an annual basis. In 2015-16, grants from civil forfeiture proceeds supported projects in several different funding streams including youth anti-gang and crime prevention, restorative justice, and initiatives related to B.C.'s *Vision for a Violence-Free BC* strategy, including grants to support healing and rebuilding after violence against Aboriginal women.

Organizations are welcome to apply for a specific grant stream (or streams) during the annual call for grant applications, which usually happens in the fall. For more information, please visit our [grants webpage](#).

Grant Funding Stream: Healing and Rebuilding After Violence Against Aboriginal Women

In 2015-16, 23 projects in the Healing and Rebuilding after Violence Against Aboriginal Women grant funding stream were supported for a total of \$448,039 from around the province. For all grant funding streams in 2015-16:

- 53 projects had a general focus on supporting Aboriginal communities (totaling \$1,390,966)
- 32 of the 53 projects focused specifically on Aboriginal women and girls (totaling \$865,159)

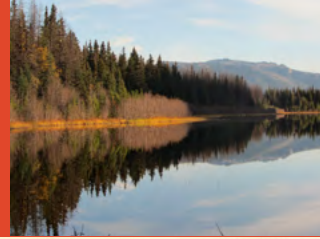
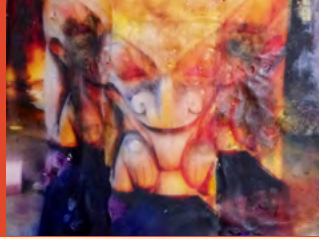
In 2014-15, grant funding of \$436,580 was provided to 25 projects in the Healing and Rebuilding after Violence against Aboriginal Women grant funding stream. For all grant funding streams in 2014-15:

- 58 projects focused on supporting Aboriginal communities (totaling \$1,049,448)
- 43 of the 58 projects focused on Aboriginal women and girls (totaling \$824,711)

A full list of grants recipients is available on our [grants webpage](#).

“As an Aboriginal Youth Intern, being on the panel of the Healing and Rebuilding stream was empowering and informative. I was able to work with a team that showed genuine concern for indigenous communities and allowed my full input throughout the process.”

— Michelle Buchholz, Aboriginal Youth Intern, grant team member



“Together” Project

Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society

The “Together” Project was a 16 week women’s healing project held by the Stop the Violence Counselling Program of the Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society (FNAFS) in Fort Nelson, B.C. Stop the Violence Counselor Shelly Heimbechner ran the women’s healing group.

This project targeted young Aboriginal mothers who had experienced some form of abuse, or who knew someone who had experienced abuse in the community. The women met once a week for three hours each session. The group began by sharing a light nutritious snack and participated in a “check-in” session where they were asked to share an experience or other feelings. Each weekly session engaged the young Aboriginal mothers in a new topic for discussion. The sessions included topics ranging from domestic violence, learning about the wheel of control, managing healthy and unhealthy relationships, stress, self-care, addictions, trauma, recovery, and practical things such as household budgeting.

Information was also provided about services available in Fort Nelson. Participants were invited to register for individual counselling provided by the Stop the Violence Counselling Program at FNAFS. Children of some participants were referred to the Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling Program when needed.

The women who participated in the “Together” Project expressed a high level of interest in the topics and participated fully in the discussions. The final evaluation of the project revealed a strong interest by the women to participate in another “Together” Project in the future.



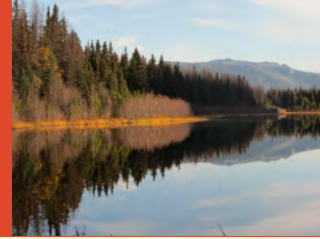
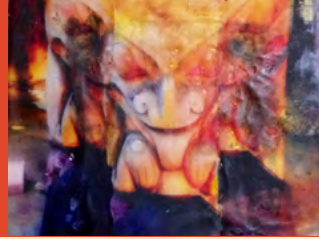
Photo: Footprints from “Together” Project (Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society)

“The Foot Prints you leave behind will influence others. There is no person who at some time, somehow, somewhere does not lead to another.... Make your mark!”

— Project participant

“ The group was excellent, made us feel important!”

— Project participant



RISE: Women's Trauma Healing Circle Project

Metis Community Services Society of BC, Okanagan Valley

The Metis Community Services Society of BC received a grant to run the RISE: Women's Trauma Healing Circle Project for women who have suffered violence in their relationships in the Okanagan Valley. RISE stands for Releasing, Integrating, Soaring and Equality. The project involved 24 women who had suffered violence in relationships and had been waiting for a space to heal. The two RISE groups held in the community as part of the project afforded the opportunity for these women to experience traditional healing, cultural connection, healthy community contacts, honoring of wounds, and the belief that it is possible to heal from the violence they suffered.

"The 24 extremely brave and wounded souls who participated in this program laughed and cried together, as well as feasted and celebrated together. The holistic approach to mind, body, heart, and soul, within a safe, cultural, and therapeutic space, working with self-first, then family, then community, then country has and will continue to affect vast amounts of peoples through ancestral and community webs."

— Project Coordinator



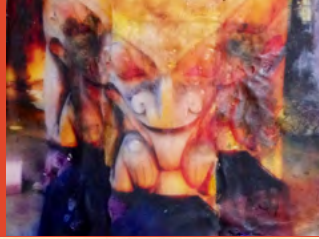
Photo: (left to right) Liza Steele (Aboriginal Trauma Therapist) and Jacqueline Tousignant (Co-facilitator of the RISE group) with a vision board (Metis Community Services Society of BC)

"These women learned new tools, awareness of self and others, an expansion of choices and options, new perceptions and beliefs, a renewed connection to self, other, community, nation, and universe, and peace and healing within some of their deepest wounded parts due to violence in loving relationships."

— Project Coordinator

"This group has changed my life. Before I had no idea who I truly was or what I was capable of."

— Project participant



Community Healing Project

The community and participating residents in this project have not been identified by name at their request.

A forum took place in the North Central region to map those issues most pressing in participants' lives relating to healing and rebuilding from violence. Workshops were opened to the whole community and both local RCMP victim services and the Legal Services Society were on hand to support the education.

In August 2015, women and their families participated in a five-day camping retreat at a traditional campground on an island in the traditional territories of this community. The retreat included supervised activities for children, morning workshops for adults, after-lunch play and visiting time, late afternoon workshops, and evening Talking Circles. Individual and group healing was available throughout the retreat.

The project brought community members together to identify shared values, to learn and practice ways of listening without judgment, and to encourage one other. There was a focus on traditional crafts while practicing positive communication skills.

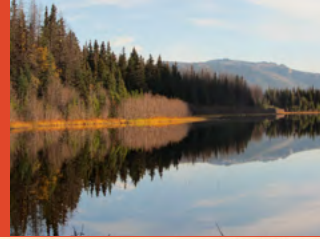
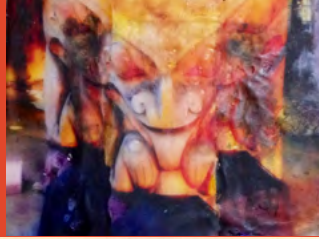


"Toomsk (respect) is one of our biggest words. This project gave me a different (new) perspective."

— Project participant

"The workshops and forums brought lots of good information and practice at new skills."

— Project participant



Journey of the Life Giver

Eye? Sqa'lewen: The Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections, Camosun College, Victoria

Journey of the Life Giver is a collaborative art project that was created by nine Indigenous women whose lives were impacted by violence, but who then found and lived great resilience. The group art installation speaks to the women's collective experience of healing and recovery and is considered to be a song of healing. Each column of the art installation is the work of an individual Indigenous woman and each row tells a collective story. The pieces, read from bottom to top, tell stories of early days, resilience, healing, and freedom.

The bottom row represents the women's whole beings as they were created at birth. The second row tells the story of their strengths and resilience that got them through difficult times. The third row describes their healing paths. The fourth row is about reclaiming of self and wholeness.

The installation now resides at Bridges for Women, a community agency that supports and provides employment training to women impacted by violence or abuse in Victoria, B.C. Bridges for Women supports its clients to reclaim their lives and build economic stability.

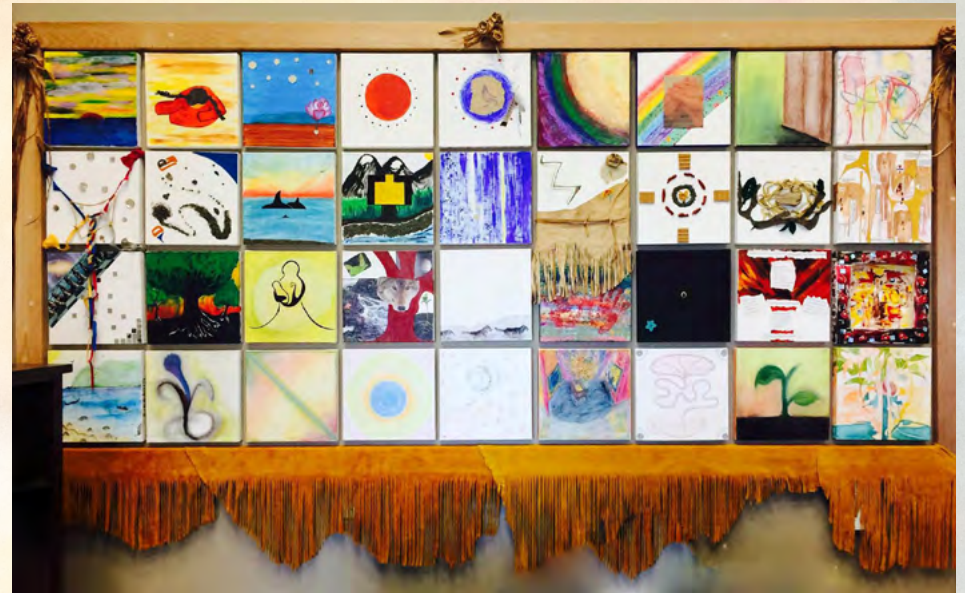
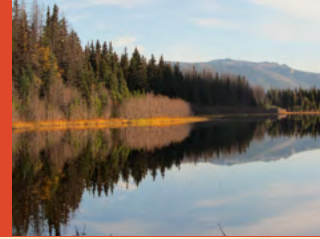
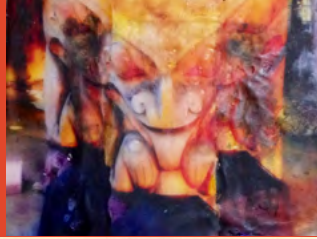


Photo: Journey of the Life Giver art installation (Eye? Sqa'lewen: The Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections)

"From beginning to end, the art project allowed me an avenue of self-reflection. It helped me to measure my healing through time and it verified my ability to move through trauma to a place of hope, not just for myself but for those who might be inspired by the piece."

— Project participant



Aboriginal Women's Right to be Safe Gathering

Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia, North Vancouver

In 2014-15, the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia brought together 40 Aboriginal women of all ages for an event that provided a safe environment in which to embrace Aboriginal cultural teachings of individual responsibility and the value of caring for each other. The purpose of the event was to identify solutions for children, young women, working women, and elders to reclaim their right to be safe, and to reduce the vulnerability of Aboriginal women to violence.

Participants met in a woman-only, safe space to explore topics such as trauma informed care, existing discrimination and inequities, and how to cope effectively with those realities. Aboriginal women, who have shown resiliency and strength in building a violence-free life or exiting one, inspired participants with their stories. Participants also identified how Aboriginal peoples can be affected differently by the legacies of colonization, residential schools, child welfare, addictions, and abuse, and may be at different places on their individual healing journey.

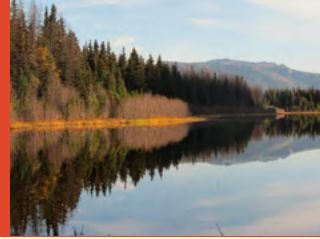
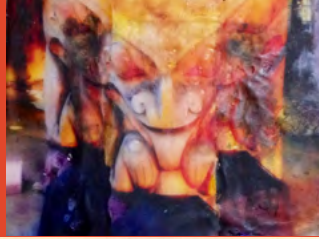
During the workshop, participants improved their communication and problem-solving skills, networked with each other, and enhanced their sense of cultural identity and belonging in the community. Many participants expressed deep gratitude for the encouragement to continue on their journey of healing and rebuilding.



NATIVE COURTWORKER
AND COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

"The gathering brought back a sense of belonging to a community that truly cares about my experience as an Aboriginal woman who knows the effects of violence. I feel more confident that there is a path forward that will help me regain my right to be safe."

— Project participant



Healing Our Hearts: Aboriginal Men's Healing Conference

Circle of Indigenous Nations Society, Castlegar

Building on a previous project for Aboriginal women and youth from 2013, Healing our Hearts Aboriginal Men's Healing Conference brought together 26 men and Aboriginal elders from West Kootenay and Boundary region for a two-day conference. During the conference, the men engaged in discussion and self-reflection about violence against women, explored issues of male and cultural identity, and shared experiences of trauma, violence, isolation, and exploitation. The conference provided opportunities for participants to learn First Nations traditional healing practices in the aftermath of violence and violence in relationships and to experience healing through traditional ceremonies and drumming. The conference was a collaboration between the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society, Men Speak Out Program, Nelson Community Services, and local Aboriginal elders.

"It opened up a new door for me to understand we are not alone and we can learn from each other and we can get strength from each other. We shouldn't judge others because we don't know what has happened to each person. If we don't judge, we can encourage and help each other out. We need kindness and encouragement and understanding and that was available."

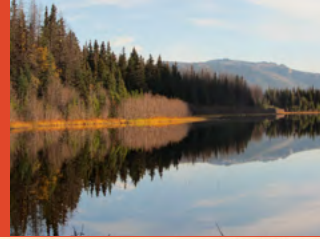
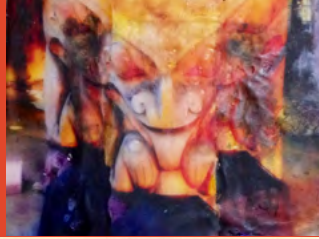
— Project participant



Photo: Grandmother Drum from Selkirk College alongside COINS travelling altar (Circle of Indigenous Nations Society)

"I am 58 years old and a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. The men's retreat on violence held in Castlegar was very powerful and helpful in my life. I was able to speak and share on the violence in my past life, done to myself and that I have done to others. I've found in my own healing, that men have a hard time talking about their issues. This is why support groups of men coming together are important. They help us to heal and to want to help others heal."

— Project participant



Families Stand as One

'Namgis First Nation, Alert Bay

Families Stand as One was a three day community wellness gathering that embraced the Aboriginal spirit of family, healing, culture and fun that was held in the traditional Bighouse of the 'Namgis First Nation. Over 100 elders, grandparents, parents, and children connected to their Aboriginal culture and community at the gathering.

One key element of the gathering was the focus on sharing and teaching Aboriginal wisdom through traditional hands-on experience. Keynote speaker, Kathi Camilleri started participants off with a talk on "It Takes A Village To Raise A Child", which embraces first nations teaching through storytelling and open dialogue. Other healing circles were held separately for the elders, men, and women where their voices added to the gathering.

Cultural hands-on teachings were shared with community members. Participants prepared sockeye salmon barbeque sticks, made fried bread, wove red cedar bark bracelets, and learned about traditional medicines from the area. They also engaged with the cultural healings of cedar brushings, the smoke ceremony, and the young men's cleansing ceremony. A highlight of this gathering was the traditional dance performance done by Tsasala, who are mostly children from the Alert Bay community. Their medicine completed the circle.

"First time I slept without pain in a long time."

— Project participant



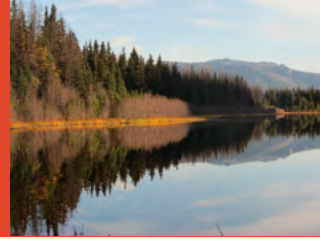
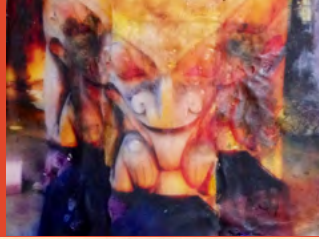
Photo: Renate Stefan at the salmon smoking area ('Namgis First Nation)

"It was a very special experience for me and again I wanted to say thank you for generously welcoming us into the circle and thank you for the effort, energy, and care that went into putting on such a powerful event."

— Project participant

"This is the best day I have had in a long time."

— Project participant



Ongoing Healing for Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Northeast B.C. Project

Fort St. John Sisters In Spirit, Fort St John

A Cultural Healing Camp was hosted in 2014 at Charlie Lake Cave Site, owned by Treaty 8 First Nations Doig River, West Moberly and Prophet River. Charlie Lake Cave Site is a place of great cultural significance and history and is named after local dreamer Charlie Yahey.

During the Cultural Healing Camp, local practitioners, elders, medicine people, and families of missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) came together to begin a journey of healing. The camp took place over six days with 41 individuals participating. The program centered on the traditional teachings of the Medicine Wheel, which encompasses four aspects of health including spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health. According to traditional indigenous knowledge, in order to live in peace and harmony, we must continually strive for balance in these four aspects.

To continue to foster their healing journey through traditional practices, participants continue to attend monthly healing and talking circles to support their path to wellness. Ongoing activities include beading and sewing circles, traditional arts and crafts, counselling and talking circles, moccasin making, and hide preparation.

Family members of MMIW continue to seek health and wellness through ongoing counseling, holistic healing opportunities, and physical recreation. The project supports these activities by easing the financial burden on those seeking support and encouraging healthy life choices and stress management.



Photo: Donnie MacDonald, northern traditional dancer from Onion Lake (Fort St. John Sisters in Spirit)

“We cannot thank you enough for all the work, time and love everyone has put into this. It is greatly appreciated from our family to yours. Love and thanks.”

— Jo, Pam, D’Andre and Paige Gunning, project participants



Swan Bay Rediscovery Youth Cultural Camp Program

Swan Bay Rediscovery Society, Skidegate

The Swan Bay Rediscovery Camp Program taught Skidegate youth the Haida traditional principle of *yah'guudang*, respect for all things: the land and sea, self, family, and community. *Yah'guudang* is about knowing one's place in the web of life, and through these cultural activities, youth contributed to the health, healing, and rebuilding of their community.

As part of the Swan Bay Rediscovery Camp, youth engaged in a variety of activities including day camps, a remote Wilderness Cultural Camp, Haida Design, and Bentwood Box projects. Youth participated in pro-social activities that included Haida traditional values and principles at the core. Youth increased their knowledge and skills to gain self-esteem, self-confidence, and tools to assist with making positive decisions that lead to good citizenship. The activities inspired youth to stay in school and to strive for excellence in all areas of life. For example, bringing the weaving into the classroom increased youth engagement and participation. Elders, community members, youth mentors, and youth were involved together in this project. The key values of respect for self, community, land and sea, knowledge of elders, and acceptance of others were stressed during the activities.

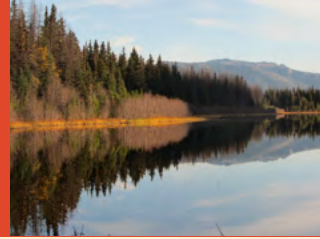
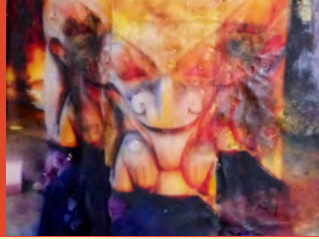
In addition to these activities, the Council of the Haida Nation contributed stewardship personnel to accompany youth on a field trip to the Yakoun Watershed, where they learned about the Haida/Provincial Legal Orders that govern use of the land. The project also included a "Coming Together Again" feast where summer accomplishments were celebrated.



Photo: Youth drumming (Swan Bay Rediscovery Society)

"As a participant, going to Swan Bay was a huge part of my growing up. We would learn things like traditional fishing and cedar bark weaving, be told our stories and histories of the area and Haida people and hunt, fish, or gather much of our own food for the week. It was definitely one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, working with many children and peers from my community and beyond and watching them grow over their time there.

— Niisii Guujaw, project participant



Conclusion

The Healing and Rebuilding after Violence against Aboriginal Women grant funding stream has supported Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia to incorporate traditional cultural practices and knowledge as a path to healing the spirit, mind, body, and soul. What these stories impart to us is the potential for the future; a future where many partners come together to support the healing of Indigenous women, including governments, First Nations, families and communities.

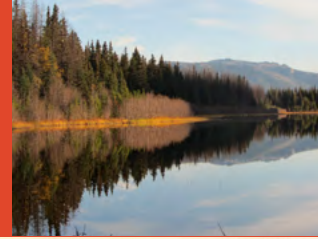
These stories offer a perspective on community-based healing for Aboriginal women in British Columbia. Aboriginal women and community members have identified their own culturally based practices that work for their particular community. There is great diversity among First Nations and each community approaches healing and rebuilding in a unique way.

As witnesses to this deep cultural rejuvenation, these stories provide a window into the full potential of how governments and communities working together can facilitate reconciliation and cultural restoration. These stories exemplify a small part of what is taking place in the villages, on the sacred grounds, and in traditional territories of First Nations peoples. These projects are a glimpse into a future where all communities thrive.

We invite you to work together with us to continue this healing journey. The Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch is honoured to be able to support these important local community initiatives and to witness the powerful transformation that is underway with First Nations.



Photo: 'Ksan Village (M. Buchholz)



Acknowledgements

The Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch would like to thank all the participants and organizations that delivered projects through the Healing and Rebuilding After Violence Against Women grant funding stream of the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Crime Remediation Grants Program.

The Branch would also like to thank Michelle Buchholz (Aboriginal Youth Intern) of Wet'suwet'en First Nation for the photos and artwork. Michelle provided the images to show examples of the strength, beauty, and resiliency in First Nations communities.

The Branch would like to acknowledge the work of the CFO Bulletin Project Team in developing and designing this publication: Phinder Dulai, Program Manager, Victim Services; Steve Lauer, Stakeholder Relations Coordinator; Michelle Bucholtz, Aboriginal Youth Intern and Special Projects Coordinator and Rosalind Currie, Director.

Contact Us

Thank you to all the community groups, First Nations, and Aboriginal communities that applied for project grants this year. We anticipate issuing further calls for grant applications in the fall of 2016 for the fiscal year 2016-17.

All grant opportunities are posted on our [grants webpage](#). If you are interested in registering for an email notification when grants are available, please send your contact details to crimeprevention@gov.bc.ca.



Photo: Spawning salmon (M. Buchholz)

All general inquiries about the Civil Forfeiture Office should be directed to:

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