

xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ (Many Ways of Working Together): Project Summary

ABOUT: The xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ research project is a partnership between Ktunaxa Nation, Interior Health and the University of Victoria. It is overseen by Ktunaxa Elders and Knowledge Holders in the xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ Advisory Group.

THIS PROJECT HAS TWO LINKED GOALS:

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

ETHICS: This research project 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. The xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ methodology, including all processes related to data collection, analysis and presentation of findings, was developed by and belongs to the xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ Advisory Group. Ktunaxa Nation Traditional Knowledge and Language (TKL) Sector own and control all data generated through this work. All participants, including their family members and subsequent generations, will be granted access indefinitely for as long as the data exists.

QAPSIN KIʔIN ʔAKAþXUNIYAM?: In Fall 2018, we hosted eight community gatherings in ʔAqam, ʔA-kisqnuq, ʔA-kinkumþasnuqþiʔit and Yaqaan Nukiy. In total, 53 community members attended for a shared meal and facilitated discussion around 'What would a healthy community look like?'

WHAT WE HEARD: We identified a number of common themes that represented shared priorities for Ktunaxa communities. These themes are presented with explanatory quotes from participants and members of the xəqanaþ ʔitkiniþ Advisory Group.

We heard a lot about 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 communication pathways have been severed due to colonial forces. This disconnect exists within and across Ktunaxa families, generations and communities. It also disrupts the flow of information between the most culturally knowledgeable community members and Ktunaxa/ non-Ktunaxa professionals that make important decisions in Ktunaxa communities.

NEXT STEPS: We recently applied for a 5-year grant to continue to grow this work, which we will have news on by mid-July 2019. We look forward to continuing to work with Ktunaxa citizens to redefine health and health services to support wellbeing in Ktunaxa communities!

RESEARCH TEAM: Please direct questions to Dr. Horsethief and Dr. Shahram. For a copy of the full report, contact Ms. Kent



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Key Theme	Sample Quote
Self-Determination	"We have to create healthy community for ourselves"
Children & Youth	"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"
Respect	"A healthy community is open to anybody and everybody. And being able to speak to each other, not behind people's backs"
Connection & Belonging	"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"
History & Ancestors	"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"
Purpose & Hope	"If you don't have hope or you don't know how to envision, you have a hard time feeling healthy"
Culture	"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"
Pride	"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"
Identity	"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)"
Food Sovereignty	"Berry picking—not just about the berries; also sharing and relationships"
Elders	"If I had a wish, I'd wish that all the Elders were back, and it would be a happy community again"
Family	"To have healthy communities we need healthy families and to have healthy families we need healthy individuals"
Spirituality & Ceremony	"A healthy community knows when ceremony is needed and when prayers are needed, and the prayers are honoured and answered"
Language	"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"
Forgiveness & Healing Connections	"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"
Genealogies & Familial Connections	"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"
Cultural Roles & Behaviours	"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"