

**For Release
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Ktunaxa Nation Council Health Research Project Receives \$950,000 Grant

A research collaboration between the Ktunaxa Nation Council, Interior Health, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria has received a \$950,000 project grant from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

“The ‘xaçqana# ʔitkini#’ project, or ‘Many Ways of Doing the Same Thing’ is an ongoing collaborative research project that aims to improve the relationship between health care systems and Indigenous people,” said Research Co-Lead Dr. Christopher Horsethief. “We want to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and represented in the health care system in a respectful way and in turn, health care systems will benefit from Indigenous knowledge and expertise.”

The project is overseen by Ktunaxa Elders and Knowledge Holders from across Ktunaxa communities in close collaboration with the Ktunaxa Nation Council’s Traditional Knowledge and Language Sector and Social Investment Sector. Under the leadership of Elders and Knowledge Holders, xaçqana# ʔitkini# has developed a community-driven and culturally-informed approach to co-learning and co-creation of knowledge. This includes numerous Ktunaxa community gatherings and land-based activities exploring the Ktunaxa phrase: Qapsin kiʔin ʔaka#xuniyam? (What would a health community look like?). Community investment is a unique feature of xaçqana# ʔitkini# through the commissioning of Ktunaxa artists to capture the themes of community sessions and mentoring and funding of Ktunaxa students as research assistants.

“So many times, the health system says they want to work with us, but really, they’re just coming to tell us how things are going to be,” said Elder Advisor and Hereditary Chief Sophie Pierre. “We aren’t meaningfully part of the decisions or the process, we are just seen as a tick box. I knew this project was different- the importance of community was there from the beginning. When I saw that we were going to be leading the way forward, with our language and our culture, I knew that our participation was real. And that’s been a huge part of the buy-in and success of this project”

“Testing the xaçqana# ʔitkini# approach was the first step along the pathway toward a long-term working relationship between Ktunaxa Nation and the Interior Health Authority,” continued Horsethief. “The goal of the next step is to build on the work we’ve done so far to apply xaçqana# ʔitkini# to solve the problem of disconnection to help improve the way Interior Health delivers healthcare in Ktunaxa territories. Colonization is the process of disconnecting people and forceful removal, so how do we re-connect people again?”

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