

Community Love Part One: Bringing the Čapac to Life

Sarah Wright Cardinal

School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Tracy Charlie

Project Co-Lead and Community Partner, Pacheedaht Nation, Canada

Trena Black

School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Micah McCarty

Nuu-chah-nulth Master Artist and Carver, Makah Nation, United States

Keywords: • Indigenous Resurgence • Land and Spirit-Based Practices • Indigenous Health
• Community Wellness • Indigenous Youth Mental Health

Abstract

Self-determination and cultural continuity are key determinants of Indigenous health. This two year university-First Nation partnership examined the revitalization of ceremonial teachings and cultural practices as an effort to minimize hardships for the young men in the community and to provide a means for them to regain confidence, transferable skills, and a deepened understanding of their roles and responsibilities as Nuu-chah-nulth men. We take the position that youth are healing from colonial disruptions to Indigenous identities that have presented in the form of intergenerational trauma; therefore, their healing is a matter of the whole community healing together. Reclaiming the art and ancestral teachings of carving a cedar dugout canoe, revitalizing language by creating bilingual community resources, and revitalizing cultural practices with the support of relative Nations and matriarchal wisdom enlivened the village during the global pandemic. In this two-part article, we will describe a ceremonial, land-based education and wellness project and its ceremonial and arts-based approach, focusing on stories of cultural resurgence in Part One and, in Part Two, the youth wellness framework that emerged, along with insights on self-determination and community wellness. This expression of community love is represented in a youth wellness framework to encourage wholistic perspectives on Indigenous mental health and to inform mental health educators, practitioners, and policymakers working with Indigenous communities.

Indigenization Statement

Dr. Sarah Wright Cardinal is Bush Cree and resides on her ancestral Treaty 8 homeland. She is an invited guest to Pacheedaht First Nation and has been co-leading community wellness projects with the Nation since 2019. Tracy Charlie is a member of Pacheedaht First Nation, a

community leader and co-lead of our partnership. Trena Black is a member of T'Sou-ke Nation with ancestral ties to Pacheedaht and an invited PhD student on this project. Micah McCarty is a member of Makah Tribe and master carver invited to mentor his Pacheedaht relatives.

Introduction

Paa?čiid?atx (Pacheedaht) are whaling people. Our ancient village is situated along the k'wisuuqkaq (ocean) on the shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, surrounded by mountains and rainforest. The nearby town of Port Renfrew is on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. We have two sister nations, Ditidaht, which is further inland on the island, and Makah, which is located k'wisuuqkaq (straight across the sea), and can be seen from our beach. We share histories, cultures, teachings, songs, languages, and much more with our sisters and the land. Dii?diitidq is our ancestral language, a language of the land, water, and mountains and all life that dwells within.

In the Diitiid?aa?tx language, Pacheedaht means “sea-foam-on-rocks,” a natural identity of our home at the shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and we are the People of the Seafoam. The Diitiid?aa?tx language is embedded in all aspects of our lives. By practicing it, we foster cultural continuity for future generations.

Transmission of language and culture involves intergenerational roles and responsibilities. Resurgence projects based on transmitting traditional knowledge from older generations to younger generations through positive experiences ensures cultural continuity and generate individual and collective wellness. In 2021, a Pacheedaht resurgence project was born in the form of bringing a čapac (canoe) to life. The intergenerational community čapac project generated physical and spiritual wellbeing through carving a 33-foot red cedar dugout canoe. Relatives from our sister tribes worked with us throughout the project, infusing our čapac with the medicine of good feelings and knowledge in this life changing experience.

The intimate bond between Pacheedaht and the Strait of Juan de Fuca has sustained our way of life since time immemorial. Čapac are a vital aspect of this relationship and central to our traditional ways of being, knowing, and doing. Our sophisticated, tradition-based culture has many spiritual beliefs and practices associated with the čapac and every step in bringing her to life. These teachings were practiced in the creation of the čapac to fill her with protective love energy. When a xubsapt (cedar) is chosen to kʷiikʷistupsaʔp (transform) their life to a new life, it is much like a caterpillar becoming a ʔaaʔawaad (butterfly). Empowered by a frequency of wellbeing, participants embodied their wellness through releasing creativity and love into the čupuc.

This is the introduction of the K-12 cultural curriculum unit *Bringing the Čapac to Life*, an outcome of “Reclaiming Nuu-chah-nulth Teachings to Empower and Strengthen the Roles and Responsibilities of Pacheedaht Young Men” (Reclaiming Nuu-chah-nulth teachings), a two-year project to address mental health protective factors for youth in a rural and remote Indigenous community. The community school offers kindergarten to grade five; to further their education, students have a two-hour commute each way by bus. The nation is working towards an education transfer agreement to deliver grades 6-12. At this time, a small group of students are participating in a blended online and land-based high school program in community. Like many rural and remote Indigenous communities, youth are at a disadvantage for education and economic opportunities. Of importance to Pacheedaht First Nation is delivering land- and water-based cultural education and wellness activities in community as a protective factor that can address youth mental health needs.

In this two-part article, we describe a ceremonial, land-based education and wellness university-First Nation partnership and its ceremonial and arts-based approach, focusing on the

stories of cultural resurgence in Part 1 and, in Part 2, the youth wellness framework that emerged, along with insights on self-determination and community wellness. This two-part article will contribute to Indigenous articulations and practices of community love.

Reclaiming Nuuchahnulth Teachings

Pacheedaht First Nation is working hard to revive the Ditidaht language and Nuuchahnulth culture and provide opportunities for youth. In 2019, the University of Victoria collaborated with Pacheedaht First Nation to support preparations for Tribal Journeys, an annual West Coast First Nations canoe journey and potlatch ceremony. Five short cultural education workshops were held in community and youth stories of preparing for Tribal Journeys were documented. At the same time, the Ditidaht language program delivered a three-month introductory language class in the community, followed by Culture Night, a ceremonial drum and dance practice, in preparation for the potlatch ceremony on Tribal Journeys. Ditidaht First Nation Elders, knowledge keepers, and fluent speakers travelled to community to lead the language class and Culture Night. Building on the success of these efforts, we developed a Nation-to-university partnership model to provide land-based community ceremonial, educational, and wellness programming that supports healthy Pacheedaht youth identity development.

The purpose of this project was to study and better understand land-based activities as a conduit to restore young men's roles and responsibilities in Pacheedaht and to develop a youth wellness framework for this rural and remote Indigenous community. Our participants ($N = 6$) were young men ages 16-30 who have been impacted by intergenerational trauma and related experiences, such as mental health and addictions challenges, witnessing and experiencing violence, grief and loss, involvement with the Ministry of Children and Families, insecure

housing, and poverty. There were three objectives in our partnership: 1) reclaim the art and ancestral teachings of carving a cedar dugout canoe led by a Nuu-chah-nulth Master carver; 2) revitalize the language by creating bilingual Nuu-chah-nulth community curriculum resources; and 3) revitalize the culture by having Ditidaht knowledge keepers mentor Pacheedaht's Culture Nights. This partnership engaged community ceremonial knowledge and practice, language, culture, and transferable skill building to address the healthy identity development needs of male youth living in an isolated reserve community. Pacheedaht is creating a safe environment for cultural programming and developing an ongoing program for the intergenerational transmission of ancestral knowledge.

Reclaiming Nuu-chah-nulth teachings was launched in a community ceremony with a blessing of the relative cedar. Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonial knowledge keepers came to community, practiced social distancing outdoors, and reclaimed July 1st with Orange Shirts to lead a log blessing with their Pacheedaht relatives. Each milestone of the project involved community ceremony: the log blessing; the first adzhe (hand tool) cut; the canoe's blessing and first bath (before being painted); and the naming ceremony. For four months, a Nuu-chah-nulth Master Carver guided two youth apprentices and helpers to carve a 33-foot cedar dugout *čapac* (canoe), the first seaworthy canoe created in many years. The carving site became the hub of the community: Elders and old-timers shared stories, men shared power tools, children and younger youth took turns with hand tools, and women brought homemade meals, creating a safe and nurturing environment. Hereditary and Elected Leadership, visitors, and community members came frequently to watch the progress, visit, and lend a hand. The carving site was a safe outdoor space that enlivened the community during the global pandemic while the youth apprentices learned to be helpers of their nation and to bring their ancestor to life. Wraparound

community wellness activities included a guest speaker series of Nuu-chah-nulth role models sharing their journeys to well-being; community Culture Nights to awaken the songs and dances; working with fluent speakers and knowledge keepers to develop a school curriculum unit *Bringing the čapac to life*; and a three day on-the-land youth camp with ceremony, language, harvesting, and canoe family teachings. During this research, it became evident that we were working to heal the impacts of colonialism through cultural continuity, a social determinant of Indigenous health (Loppie & Wien, 2009), and that we were creating a pathway to community wellness. The four ceremonial milestones involved in bringing the čapac to life are shown in Figures 1-4.

Figure 1

Log Blessing Ceremony



Note. University of Victoria helpers and community partner preparing for the log blessing ceremony.

Figure 2

First Adzhe Strike Ceremony



Note. Eldest carver of the village preparing to cut the first adzhe strike in the canoe.

Figure 3

Canoe Blessing Ceremony and First Bath



Note. Master carver, apprentices, and children give the canoe her first bath at the blessing ceremony.

Figure 4

Canoe Naming Ceremony



Note. The community gathering around diłk^waƷqł xaadaʔk at the naming ceremony.

Literature Review Community Wellness: Healing from Colonial Disruptions to Healthy Indigenous Identity

“I have come about my work from the perspective that we’re all healing from colonial disruptions to our Indigenous identities.” (CBC All Points West, 2021, para. 13)

de Leeuw, Lindsay, and Greenwood (2015) note that Indigenous peoples experiencing health disparities around the world have consistently identified colonialism as “perhaps the most important determinant of their (ill) health” (p. xxii). In Canada, Indigenous kinship and governance systems have been devastatingly impacted by colonial policies enforcing the anthropogenic nuclear family system, assimilation, genocide, and Indigenous child removal (de Finney et al., 2019; de Leeuw et al., 2015). These truths have resulted in federal government settlement agreements for Indigenous child removal systems that span the entire history of Canada: The Indian Residential Schools (1872-1997), the Sixties Scoop (1951-1991), and

current child welfare, often referred to as the Millennium Scoop (1991-ongoing). Long-term impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities are reflected in low rates of high school completion, high rates of suicide among children and youth, addictions among youth, behaviours used to cope with trauma, and an overall loss of healthy Indigenous identity. Resurgence projects rooted in sharing traditional knowledge and learning from the land offer cultural continuity for youth well-being and act as a protective factor in preventing Indigenous youth suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). McAdam (2015) reminds us that prior to colonization, Indigenous Nations had complete and complex systems of governance whereby the physical and spiritual world were interconnected. She and other Indigenous scholars invite us to spend time with Elders and knowledge holders of our own nations to learn the sacred spiritual laws that are shared orally and through ceremonies. To reclaim healthy Indigenous identities that enliven wholistic aspects of self within kinship, it is critical that we have opportunities to engage the teachings of our respective nations held within our natural laws, family systems, and the land (Corntassel, 2012; Wright Cardinal, 2017).

Within the Canadian context, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations and communities are navigating and rebuilding due to the impacts of over 150 years of Canadian state-legislated racism and oppression. Rebuilding calls on matriarchal wisdoms of care. Esteemed Cree scholar Madeline Dion Stout (2012) asserts that Indigenous wellness will only be realized when the paradigm of *atikowisi miýw-āyāwin* (ascribed health and wellness) shifts to *kaskitamasowin miýw-āyāwin* (achieved health and wellness). This involves coordinated efforts, pooled resources, and epistemologies of attachment (viewing all things as connected), and kinship (understanding everyone as related). She invites us to work with those who are “involved in and responsible for their own health, social well-being, and health care” (Stout, 2021, p. 14) to

reconnect with our ancestral knowledges in community and put those teachings into action in our shared spaces. As Inuit scholar Shirley Tagalik (2015) further explains, connectedness, reciprocity, and relationality are part of the holistic and intuitive “big picture perspective” of Indigenous knowledge systems (p. 25). From an *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit worldview), Tagalik (2015) describes the interconnection of holistic thinking, harmony, and balance as the “ultimate determinant of health” (p. 31) and an “indicator for collective and personal well-being” (p. 27). Métis scholar Cindy Gaudet (2016) also discusses “our responsibility for the well-being of the whole” (p. 55) in *keeoukaywin* (the visiting way), a community approach to research.

Strength-based Indigenous wellness projects led by ceremonial teachings improve all aspects of wellness (Gallagher, 2019). Nuu-Chah-Nulth Elder Cliff Atleo Sr. describes his experiences of self-determination when his village cared for *ha’hoolthlii* (each other and the environment), recognizing that everything is connected and deserves *?isaakcamis* (respect) (Gallagher, 2019). The work of Stelkia et al. (2021) addressing Fraser Salish health and wellness focuses on the value of embracing an approach to Indigenous health that upholds the strengths of Indigenous Nations and refuses deficit-based perspectives. They urge us to remember that self-determination grows from stewardship of land. The authors acknowledge spiritual land/water connection, ancestral knowledge, and positive cultural identity as paramount themes for wellbeing. Connection to land and water matters regardless of where we reside; for example, Hatala et al. (2019) conducted a study of urban Indigenous youth experiencing ancestral land disconnection and identified nature and land connection as a foundational determinant of Indigenous health. Meaningful land-based activities can foster cultural resurgence, self-determination, feelings of belonging, and wellness (Hatala et al., 2019). Garrouette (2003) invites

us to focus on the spiritual dimension of Indigenous identity, which she refers to as the original instructions of respective nations, also referred to in the literature and in community as natural laws. We learn these natural laws by visiting with Elders and knowledge keepers, by participating in ceremonies, and within community. Salloum and Warburton's (2019) community-based health interventions with Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia emphasize the importance of spiritual wellbeing. They share how spiritual health grows through community belonging and freedom through release of control to a higher power. Circles, ceremonies, brushing off and smudging, storytelling, and art are all pathways to spiritual health. Research literature increasingly illustrates what Indigenous communities already know: that the interconnectedness of self-determination, spirit, land and water, cultural continuity, and sovereignty are critical determinants of Indigenous wellness. Indeed, self-determination is identified as the foundational determinant of Indigenous health in Canada, acting as the umbrella over all other determinants (Loppie & Wien, 2013). Indian Act initiatives such as the Indian Residential School system and the Potlatch Ban severed processes of generational knowledge transmission for Indigenous communities; revitalizing spiritual and cultural teachings through land- and water-based ceremonies and practices therefore serves as a form of cultural continuity, a major determinant of and protective factor for Indigenous health and wellbeing (Loppie & Wien, 2009, 2013).

Methodology

This study received ethics approval from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (Ethics Protocol No. 21-0063).

Indigenous Storied and Arts-Informed Research

Indigenous storied research methodologies were used to gather stories of the youth participants, helpers, and knowledge keepers. Stories are understood as ways of transmitting knowledge since time immemorial. Storied methods have been championed by Indigenous scholars across the globe, including Smith (1999), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009), Absolon (2011), Chilisa (2012), and Thomas (2015). As Kovach (2009) explains, there is an “inseparable relationship between story and knowing, and the interrelationship between narrative and research within Indigenous frameworks” (p. 94). Indigenous authors such as Gaudet (2016), de Finney (2017), and Stelkia et al. (2021) identify stories as core to Indigenous learning processes and use story as methodology to share inspiring self-determination and wellness stories of Indigenous youth and their resurgence and reconnection to land. The ways in which stories are used and understood in Indigenous research are specific to Indigenous knowledge systems (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2015) and the purpose of sharing is to contribute to a community identified goal (Smith, 1999).

There are two types of stories: traditional stories and life-experience stories. Traditional stories hold the laws and teachings of a Nation, whereas life-experience stories explain the web of connections that people have with those around them, the land, and the environment (Archibald, 2008; Chilisa, 2012). Space is created for Indigenous people to have conversations to “share our stories in our own way and create discourses based on our Indigenous knowledge systems” (Archibald, 2008, p. 19). The life-experience story method was suitable to document the stories of youth participants and helpers. In this project, we asked young men to share their stories of learning from land-based activities and how this learning will inform their roles and responsibilities in community. We also gathered life-experience stories of mentorship and

traditional stories of creation, governance, and community values from our esteemed knowledge keepers. To gather stories, we held circles at each milestone of the project and invited one-on-one conversations at the end of the project. To make meaning, the transcripts were reviewed in circle by the university helpers, Master Carver, apprentices, and community partner. Together we identified key themes to answer our research questions and shape our findings. We also included an arts-based approach to this project whereby the creation of art with ceremonial purpose produced and embodied traditional stories to inform community wellness. This will be discussed further in Community Love Part 2: a Pacheedaht Youth Wellness Framework.

Arts-Informed Approach

Nuu-chah-nulth cultural and ceremonial arts expressions in this project included carving a cedar dugout canoe; awakening ancestral songs and dances; harvesting; preparing community traditional feasts; creating drum designs to represent Pacheedaht youth wellness; and developing community wellness resources. These expressions of sovereignty and wellness within the settler state (de Finney, 2017) are the intellectual property of the nation, Elders, knowledge keepers, and youth participants; as such, each creation stays within the community. With permission and where appropriate, we documented these expressions in photos and video for the purpose of knowledge creation and exchange. In order to create and receive in a good way, protocols of being in relationship and honouring community authority were adhered to.

Research Team

The university helpers included the researcher; one Pacheedaht member, who was an undergraduate student completing her fourth-year practicum and led the role model program; one PhD Research Assistant with Pacheedaht lineage, who co-led the curriculum development;

and one Social Sciences undergraduate Research Assistant, a community member in Pacheedaht, who did much of the videography. Being introduced by someone trusted and introducing oneself with self-location are important in Indigenous protocols; this is a relational approach to research and helps people understand how the research team is connected and accountable to the community as well as which nations the research team members belong to. The university-based Bush Cree researcher relied on the good relationship that had been developed with the Nation through collaboration on a previous project, as well as on a shared perspective regarding the importance of this work in contributing to Indigenous community wellness. The research team nurtured respectful relationships by travelling to Pacheedaht each week for the duration of the project. The researcher and two student research team members stayed in community during the summer of canoe carving. The third student research team member lived in community. The researcher has crafted an approach to community-led research Being a Helper where Invited (Wright Cardinal, 2021), informed by *oskâpêwis* (Cree ceremonial helper) teachings in which the university partner takes direction from the community on project priorities, protocol, and ceremonial and cultural content. The researcher worked with the students to ensure that stories were gathered in a good way, project logistics ran smoothly, and matriarchal teachings on service and care of community were upheld. Further, we sought the guidance of Elders and our community partner to help with circle work and to ensure we were respectful of the protocols of the territory.

Project Governance

The Reclaiming Nuuchahnulth teachings core crew included the Nuuchahnulth Master Carver, two youth apprentices, an Elder-in-training, a Pacheedaht staff member, an elected councilor, and university helpers (the researcher and three student trainees) who met

regularly in circle to start each day in a good way, check-in, plan, and gather milestone stories. As the project gained momentum, two additional carvers and two youth joined the crew. We also relied on the guidance of Ditidaht and Pacheedaht knowledge keepers, and two university Elders in Residence with family ties to Pacheedaht. We would visit with Elders and Knowledge Keepers in their homes, and they would come to the canoe carving site and advise us. We focused on young men's wellness as a conduit to family safety and community wellness. We held circles at each milestone of the project to gain insights from knowledge keepers, helpers, and youth on the connections between land-based learning in community and youth mental health. The Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community partner guided the selection of photos, videos, and content of the Bringing the čapac to life curriculum and short documentary.

This project sought to answer three questions: How does participating in land-based activities support healthy Indigenous identity formation for youth?; What insights on Indigenous youth identity and community wellness do the youth stories offer?; and What insights on Indigenous youth identity and community wellness do the mentor stories offer? Gathering stories of revitalizing language and culture and reclaiming healthy Indigenous identities contributes to an emerging theoretical framework of decolonial community love inspired by the writings of Indigenous scholars such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2008, 2013) and broader Indigenous resurgence scholarship co-led by Indigenous nations.

Figure 5

Sharing the Knowledge: Apprentice Teaching his Young Cousins how to use a Hand Tool to Hollow out the Canoe.



Stories of Bringing the Čapac to Life

How does Participating in Land-Based Activities Support Healthy Indigenous Identity Formation for Youth?

The carving site was a place of good feelings, where we practiced love and compassion and supported those who were suffering or grieving as needed. When someone was having a bad day, they were encouraged to take a walk or go for a ride, speak with a trusted person, and come back when ready. Our carving site was free of aggression, drugs, and alcohol. We took a harm reduction approach, and everyone who had not partaken that day was welcome. One of the youth apprentices shares how he was role modelling for his young son, who would observe Dad getting up each day to go to the carving site: “OK son, it’s time for dad to go to work.” We were reminded by old-timers that being on time is very important: “our ancestors got up with the sun and did what had to be done, haul water, chop wood, check nets,” said one of our Knowledge Keepers. Positivity, openness, being mindful of what we put into our bodies, and learning a

strong work ethic contribute to healthy youth identity formation. The growth in confidence and self-esteem was evident, as one apprentice shared: “I enjoyed working with all the tools. You just showed me once and I grabbed the tool and was like, ok this is how we do it.” In addition, there was practical transferable skill building that can be applied to diverse work settings, such as chainsaw safety and maintenance; worksite safety; working with hand tools; carving; stencils and formline design; public speaking; planning and logging activities; and teamwork.

We started this project in ceremony. The apprentices helped with a Nuu-chah-nulth ceremony to bless the log and welcome the work in the village. The youth got to know the cedar and the cultural uses of the bark, and as they carved, she took on a feminine spirit. They learned how to read her character – the contours, shapes, and grooves of the cedar. They would talk to the cedar, soak her with water when needed, and move her with care to carve different angles. There is an intimacy to working with cedar in this way, with good feelings and a strong work ethic, while enlivening the culture of the People of the Seafoam. One carver referred to the crew as “a band of brothers.” By the time of the canoe blessing and first bath ceremony, there was a reverence for what was created and would soon be gifted to the community. Our community partner explained, “it’s more than just a vessel, it’s a life, it’s a provider, it’s a protector, it’s a means of transportation to better things.” In discussing Simpson’s (2013) stories of Decolonial Love, Guy (2021) writes, “[it is] the very simple idea of loving as an action that could liberate people from colonial violence and its lasting effects” (para. 1) These land-based activities provided a space for self-love, matriarchal love, brotherly love, and community love.

What Insights on Indigenous Youth Identity and Community Wellness do the Youth Stories Offer?

It's really empowering to see this from start to finish, initially a raw log and everything that went in between, working with the other guys and creating a brotherhood, something so positive like this and to have a connection with the ancestors, it's something that's been long overdue.

A youth apprentice reflected on his experience after the canoe was completed, highlighting the empowerment he felt, the connection to ancestors, and the need for this type of project and approach, which offered youth a deepened understanding of their Nuu-chah-nulth identity, including how they contribute to community wellness. One young carver shared: "People bond together when they're doing things like this. I feel a traditional healing process, you know, the artwork is good for the heart." Redirecting youth energy in the village to create with their hands, practice an ancient art form, and produce something both practical and ceremonial contributed to personal and community healing.

During the summer months, the children and younger youth would visit the site each week as part of the role model program. Once school was in session, the elementary students had field trips to the carving site. Apprentices were given the opportunity to share what they were learning and teach their younger relatives who would take turns using hand tools. At our second ceremony (the first adzhe cut), the canoe had been shaped and was ready to be hollowed out. The oldest carver of the village was helped up to the canoe and used his adzhe to make the first cut. The late Elder carver shared: "they gave me the honour of taking the first swipe at it because I did build them. This is part of our tradition and our life." We are very fortunate to have received the guidance and teachings of the late Pacheedaht Elder Marvin McClurg before he passed. Intergenerational knowledge transmission was key to the community healing that occurred. One youth shared: "The canoe is really strong for this community, I think the community needed it. It's super powerful for everyone to be involved in, on making it." These observations suggest that a youth land-based project that engages the kinship system of the

Nation, involving everyone from young children to Elders, promotes Pacheedaht youth roles and responsibilities to their family and community. Witnessing four generations working on the canoe was a very moving and powerful experience. It brought memories and visions of a time when the village lived as a canoe family, as well as the confidence to bring this cultural knowledge and identity forward into the present.

What Insights on Indigenous Youth Identity and Community Wellness do the Mentor Stories Offer?

“If you’re not paddling in harmony together, your čapac goes crooked, sways around. But when you’re paddling in harmony together, in unity, it goes straight,” a Ditidaht knowledge keeper explained. We understood from this teaching that there are both individual and collective aspects to community wellness that need to be cared for together. We each need to be ready for the work, help each other, and have a shared vision or understanding of the work, in order to paddle together. The Master Carver explained: “This was an important exercise to remind younger men of the importance of being who you are and where you come from and actually living it and doing it.” He further explained, “[they] matured and come through adversity.” Regarding cultural healing in this community, the community partner explained: “it’s not done, it’s a beginning to so many cultural pathways we need to rekindle in our community, put that fire back in.” Essentially, the excitement and commitment of the youth to the project, alongside the matriarchal approach of care, created community interest and ownership of the canoe. A father of one of the youth explained:

The canoe means a lot, I can’t say enough what a canoe means to us. We harvest animals with it, we take kids out on it, we go on (tribal) journeys, we learn languages, we learn songs, it’s just priceless

This affirms that cultural continuity is critical to Indigenous community wellness (Dion Stout, 2012; Gallagher, 2019; Gaudet, 2016; Loppie & Wien, 2009, 2013; Tagalik, 2015).

In preparation for the final ceremony, the naming ceremony, the children of the village named the čapac diłk^waŋqł xaada?k (warrior woman) and helped paint her. While the bulk of the carving was completed over four months, the entire process took 51 weeks. During that year, each new baby of the village was brought to site to meet their relative diłk^waŋqł xaada?k. This project centered young men's wellness. Their growth and the brotherhood they created were important; yet an equally important and unexpected outcome was the breathe of life diłk^waŋqł xaada?k gave to the entire community. Young men's wellness is not insular; from a relational kinship perspective, the healing was circular. As the young men showed up, the community showed up for them. As the community shared, the young men shared. And while this knowledge had been sleeping for some time, it didn't take much to awaken. After witnessing this one year journey, our Pacheedaht Elder-in-Residence Kathy Horne reflected:

The canoe as it goes through life needs care and attention and always needs to be put away after the journeys and always cared for in a good way and these teachings are being passed on now. It was kind of left for a while but you know our people never lose that knowledge, it's in our very being. Passing it on to the younger men is only going to empower all of our future.

We thank our Elders-in-Residence, Kathy Horne and Doug LaFortune, our Elder-in-Training Leona Jones, and the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht, and Makah Knowledge Keepers for their guidance, encouragement, and wisdom throughout this journey.

Conclusion

Ultimately, stories of community wellness replace colonial narratives. For the community, revitalizing the canoe family system of governance and youth well-being creates pathways to address the colonial disruptions to healthy Indigenous male identities and nurtures

healthy community relationships. For the youth who were in service to their community, there is renewed interest in Nuuchahnulth knowledge, cultural participation, and teachings of respect and reciprocity. This study contributes to current decolonization and Indigenous resurgence scholarship and future public policy development on mental health in Indigenous communities and aims to inform Health, Human and Social Development educators and practitioners about wise practices when planning and implementing research and programs with and alongside Indigenous nations and communities. To the reader, we offer this story of how the community brought the čapac to life, and in *Community Love Part 2: A Pacheedaht Youth Wellness Framework* we will share a youth wellness framework that emerged with insights on self-determination and community wellness. Paddles up!

References

- Absolon, K. E. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*. Fernwood Pub.
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.
- CBC All Points West. (2021, October 31). *Pacheedaht First Nation on Vancouver Island crafts first dugout canoe in 50 years*. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/pacheedaht-first-nation-dugout-canoe-1.6231334>
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. (1998). Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's first nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35(2), 191-219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346159803500202>
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. SAGE Publications.
- Corntassel, J. (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1). <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18627/15550>
- de Finney, S. (2017). Indigenous girls' resilience in settler states: Honouring body and land sovereignty. *Agenda (Durban)*, 31(2), 10-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2017.1366179>
- de Finney, S., Krueger-Henney, P., & Palacios, L. (2019). Reimagining girlhood in white settler carceral states. *Girlhood Studies*, 12(3), vii-xv. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2019.120302>
- de Leeuw, S., Lindsay, N. M., & Greenwood, M. (2015). Introduction: Rethinking determinants of Indigenous People's health in Canada. In M. Greenwood, S. de Leeuw, N. M. Lindsay, & C. Reading (Eds.), *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' health in Canada: Beyond the social* (pp. xi-xxix). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Dion Stout, M. (2012). Ascribed health and wellness, Atikowisi miyw-āyāwin, to achieved health and wellness, Kaskitamasowin miywāyāwin: shifting the paradigm. *The Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 44(2), 11-14.
- Gallagher, J. (2019). Indigenous approaches to health and wellness leadership: A BC first nations perspective. *Healthcare Management Forum*, 32(1), 5-10.
- Garrouette, E. M. (2003). *Real Indians: Identity and the survival of Native America*. University of California Press.
- Gaudet, J. C. (2016). An Indigenous Methodology for Coming to Know *Milo Pimatisiwin* as Land-Based Initiatives for Indigenous Youth [Doctoral dissertation, University of Ottawa]. uO Research. <https://doi.org/10.20381/ruor-518>
- Guy, G. (2021). Book review: Barrel of lapstock. *Yellowknifer*. <https://yellowknifer.com/2021/07/07/book-review-barrel-of-lapstock/>
- Hatala, A. R., Morton, D., Njeze, C., Bird-Naytowhow, K., & Pearl, T. (2019). Re-imagining miyo-wicehtowin: Human-nature relations, land-making, and wellness among indigenous youth in a Canadian urban context. *Social Science & Medicine*, 230, 122-

130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.04.012>
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.
- Loppie, C., & Wien, F. (2009). *Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health*. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. <https://www.ccnsa-nccah.ca/docs/determinants/RPT-HealthInequalities-ReadingWien-EN.pdf>
- Loppie, C., & Wien, F. (2013). *Health inequalities and social determinants of Aboriginal peoples' health*. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/docs/social%20determinates/nccah-loppie-wien_report.pdf
- McAdam, S. (2015). *Nationhood interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw legal systems*. Purich.
- Salloum, M., & Warburton, D. (2019). Importance of spiritual wellbeing in community-based health interventions in Indigenous peoples in BC. *Health & Fitness Journal of Canada*, 12(1), 117-123.
- Simpson, L. B. (2008). *Lighting the Eighth Fire*. Arbeiter Ring Publishing.
- Simpson, L. B. (2013). *Islands of decolonial love: Stories and songs*. ARP Books.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.
- Stelkia, K., Beck, L., Manshadi, A., Jensen Fisk, A., Adams, E., Browne, A., Dixon, C., McEachern, D., Ritchie, W., McDonald, S., Henry, B., Marsden, N., Behn-Smith, D., & Reading, J. (2021). Letsemot, “togetherness”: Exploring how connection to land, water, and territory influences health and wellness with First Nations knowledge keepers and youth in the Fraser Salish. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 16(2), 356-369. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ijih/article/view/33206>
- Tagalik, S. (2015). Inuit knowledge systems, elders, and determinants of health: Harmony, balance, and the role of holistic thinking. In Greenwood, S. de Leeuw, N.M Lindsay, & C. Reading (Eds.), *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' health in Canada: Beyond the social* (pp. 16-24). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Thomas, R. (2015). Honouring the oral traditions of my ancestors through storytelling. In L. Brown, & S. Strega, (Eds), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (2nd ed., pp. 137-154), Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Wright Cardinal, S. (2017). Beyond the sixties scoop: Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reconnection to place, and reframing understandings of being Indigenous [Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/8956>
- Wright Cardinal, S. (2021, April). *Being a helper where invited* [Webinar]. Community-Based Research Canada. <https://www.communityresearchcanada.ca/events-1/cbrcanada-webinar-indigenous-approaches-being-a-helper-where-invited?lang=fr>
- Wright Cardinal, S., & Charlie, T. (2022, September). *Bringing the čapac to life* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/UpXR0V2enH4>