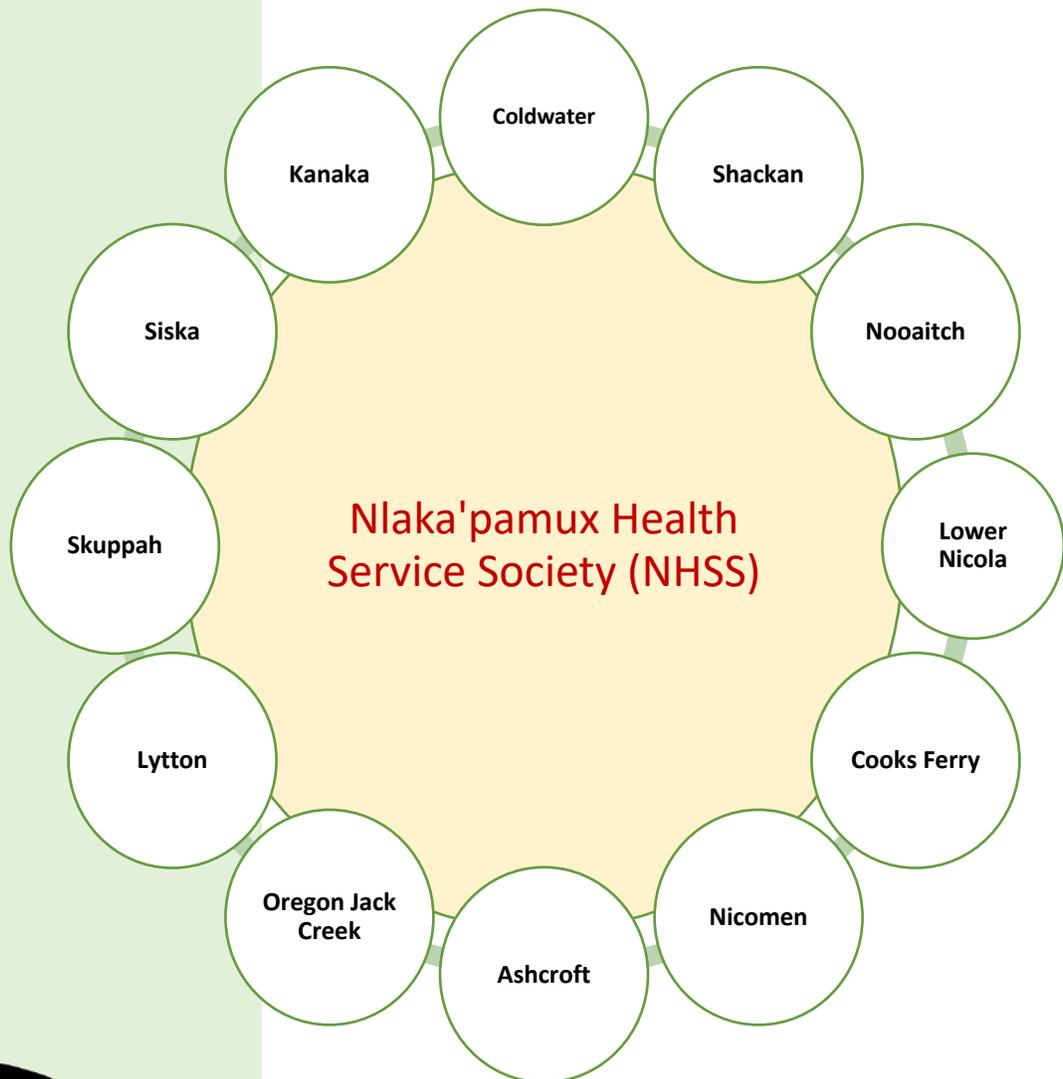


# Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society Annual Report 2022-23



# Annual Report

Nlaka’pamux Health Services

For fiscal year 2022-23

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# ʔéx kʷ n' Hello!

We are delighted to share our Annual Report with you!

Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society (NHSS) is a young organization, so this report begins with an overview of our shared health services and the governance oversight that guides our work. This is followed by summaries of the activities of each of our departments.

The report has been a team effort, prepared from the reporting completed by our staff about the many services and initiatives of the year 2022-23.

## About Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society

**Vision: Improving health services for Nlaka'pamux members.**

### Overview

Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society (NHSS) works closely with 12 Bands of the Nlaka'pamux Nation in order to enhance wellness opportunities identified by community leadership, frontline health staff, and members. Activities of NHSS include:

- Directly provide certain healthcare services.
- Supplement current services being provided within the Interior Health region.
- Support and enhance programs and services being provided by NLX Bands.



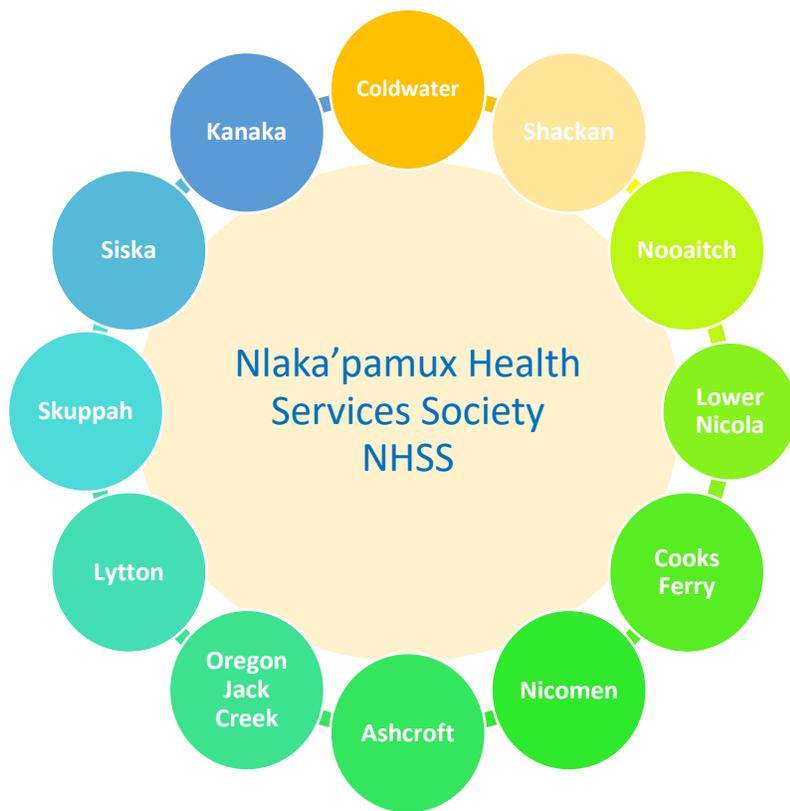
**Approach:** In order to build capacity in our Nation and communities, NHSS uses a shared services approach that was developed by the 7 Nations of the Interior and has been evolving since 2014 when leadership first moved this vision forward.

**Self-Determining:** The Nlaka’pamux Nation is charting our own path and defining shared services in the way that works best for us and our people.

**Community and Nation Rebuilding:** For Nlaka’pamux communities, shared services is a way of supporting rebuilding through the collaborative delivery of health services that enable Bands to bring services and resources closer to home.

Instead of receiving all services from Interior Health and others, Nation members are able to access a growing number of health supports through Nlaka’pamux Health Services Society.

The shared service approach builds capacity within our Nation by bringing healthcare resources and positions into our Nation and shifting them away from Interior Health and other centralized providers. This approach honors the rebuilding work that our leaders and ancestors have been doing for many years. Working together with the Interior Regional team at First Nations Health Authority, it is Bands and Nations that are leading this process of moving healthcare closer to our communities. Note that 3 Nlaka’pamux Bands are with Fraser Health Authority: Boothroyd Indian Band, Boston Bar First Nation, Spuzzum First Nation.



#### Nlaka’pamux Bands in NHSS

1. Ashcroft Indian Band
2. Coldwater Indian Band
3. Cooks Ferry Indian Band
4. Kanaka Bar Indian Band
5. Lower Nicola Indian Band
6. Lytton First Nation
7. Nicomen Indian Band
8. Nooaitch Indian Band
9. Oregon Jack Creek
10. Shakan Indian Band
11. Siska Indian Band
12. Skuppah Indian Band



## Governance: Board of Directors

The NHSS is currently governed by 7 Directors and continues to welcome other Bands to select their own Board appointees.

The Board serving from April 2022- March 31, 2023 included the following Directors who were each appointed by their communities.



**Jason Robertson**

Lytton First Nation  
*President*



**Patricia Munro**

Siska Indian Band  
*Vice-President*



**Patrick Michell**

Kanaka Bar Indian Band  
*Treasurer*



**Mary Angus**

Shackan Indian Band  
*Secretary*



**Christine Minnabarriet**

Cooks Ferry Indian Band  
*Board Member*



**Sherry McIntyre**

Skuppah Indian Band  
*Board Member*



**Donna Aljam**

Nicomén Indian Band  
*Board Member*

*Governance Representative: Ko'waitco Michel*

*Technical Representative: Sherry McIntyre*

**Board of Directors Meetings** were held on the following dates:

- March 16, 2022
- May 26, 2022
- July 6, 2022
- October 28, 2022
- November 10, 2022
- February 3, 2022
- March 9, 2022

### Health Caucus

Nlaka'pamux Health Caucus was hosted on April 21, 2022 and again on October 18, 2023.

### Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The 2nd AGM for 2021-22 was held on December 13, 2022.

The 3rd AGM for 2022-23 is being held on February 7, 2024. Like many organizations, NHSS found ourselves running behind as continued to deal with the extra workloads and the burnout created by Covid and the climate disasters. We are grateful to finally be sharing our Annual Report for 2022-23. We have set the goal to hold our next AGM (2023-24) in fall 2024.

## Our Staff

### Administration

**TAMARA GEORGE**

Executive Director

**ANDREA ELLIOTT**

Operations and HR Manager

**BERNADETTE COLLINS**

Community Engagement Coordinator

**VACANT**

Administrative Assistant

**DAPHNE MCRAE**

Receptionist

### Emergency Management

**KEVIN SAMPSON**

Emergency Program Manager

### Mental Health

**STACEY HEBNER**

Child & Youth Mental Health Counsellor/  
Manager

**WANDA DEXEL**

Adult Mental Health & Addictions Counsellor

**TRISH RAINVILLE**

Child & Youth Mental Health Counsellor

**CHERYL BILLY**

Mental Health Outreach Navigator

**ERIN ALECK**

Traditional Wellness Counsellor

**TAMMI FROESE**

Child & Youth Mental Health Counsellor

**DIANA LAPINE-THOMAS**

Clinical Art Therapist

**RICARDO PICKERING (CONTRACTOR)**

Adult Mental Health Counsellor

### Harm Reduction

**TAMMY PIERRE**

Street Angel

### Wellness

**HILIARY WILLIS**

Wellness Outreach Manager

**JULIA MUNRO**

Wellness Coordinator

**JOEL RAPHAEL**

Wellness Coordinator

**SAVANNAH JOE**

Office Assistant

### Elder Homecare

**VACANT**

Registered Nurse/Elder Home Care Manager

**CHRISTEENA CLARKE**

Health Care Assistant

**CHANDLER RAYMOND**

Health Care Assistant

**SUSIE MANUEL**

Licensed Practical Nurse

**LANA CLYDESDALE**

Health Care Aide Assistant

# Administration

## A Note from the Executive Director

*Greetings Nlaka'pamux Membership!*

**About Me:** I am Tamara George from the Nlaka'pamux Nation and a member of the Coldwater Indian Band. My parents are May George and Mike Smith. My grandma was Alice George (Justice) and my grandfather was David McCuish. My paternal grandmas are Mary- Ann Phillips and Annie May Jules and my grandpas are Larry Taylor and Larry Smith. I am the oldest of two other siblings, Shayla George and Danton Smith, and the proud mother of my daughter Zakara Stirling.

For me, it has been my pleasure and an honor to work for my own Nation. I have worked in Indigenous Health since 2010. I graduated from NVIT in 2014. In 2019, I graduated as a Certified Aboriginal Professional Administrator with the Aboriginal Finance Officers Association. Currently, I am working toward completing the Indigenous Financial Management certificate program. In October 2018, I accepted this role of managing shared health services for our Nation, and in November 2019, Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society was officially incorporated into a non-profit society which is currently governed by a board of 7 Directors.



**Role of Executive Director:** Ensuring meaningful connection with the leadership and community members of our 12 Bands is a focus for this role. The position is responsible for providing planning, leadership, operations, and financial oversight for NHSS. This includes supervising day-to-day operations, managing budget activities, securing sustainable funding, overseeing staff, and working with partners. A full list of Executive Director responsibilities was included in the Annual Report for 2021-22 and is available upon request.

**Shifting Gears:** This was a transition year for NHSS—as for so many in the Nlaka'pamux Nation. We began to shift out from under the heavy burden that Covid has placed on us and worked to return to business as usual. Of course, in our Nlaka'pamux territory, we were also still coming out of wildfires and floods and the new realities of climate uncertainty. As we moved back to in-person gatherings, we began to see increased social anxiety and a continued rise in demand for mental health supports which we did our best to provide. The residual effects of previous environmental disasters were compounded in the summer of 2022 as we continued to see high temperatures and out-of-control wildfires that created the loss of even more homes on the westside reserve of Lytton First Nation and required the additional evacuation of our Canyon communities.

Through all these challenges, our people continue to speak about the importance of land and culture, health and family, and the values of our ancestors.

At NHSS, we have been humbled by the level of commitment, connection, and strength that we see daily in our work with NLX communities.

**As always, we remain stronger together.**

**Responding to Community Needs:** During this time, NHSS identified high and urgent needs and an incredible effort was made by our Mental Health and Wellness Team and our Elders Home Care Team, backed by staff and administration, to gather resources to coordinate support and continue providing services in these areas by any means possible. We continue to hear about the high value placed on the services provided by our teams.

**Flexible and Committed:** NHSS is a small organization with strong ties to our communities, which enables us to be responsive and pivot quickly. Two instances that come to mind are seconding our Emergency Programs Coordinator to Lytton First Nation to head up their emergency response during the summer wildfire season. Another is the way our nurse and Homecare Team were able to fill the gap created by the lack of primary care services in Lytton. Interior Health wasn't there—but NHSS was able to step in to meet the needs of community in a multitude of ways including advocacy, picking up medications, and other supports that reached beyond our program.

**In Community:** The Wellness team does so many events and activities to support the wellbeing of our community members throughout the year. A significant achievement in 2022 was graduating 40 community members and NHSS staff from the Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) Training. Our Wellness Team hosted 121 people at an event in Merritt to honour the graduates. The training is of value for anyone working with Indigenous peoples with its trauma-informed, land-based, experiential, and ceremonial processes and healing techniques.

**Accountability to Our Communities:** NHSS is committed to working effectively, efficiently, and in alignment with the priorities of our Bands. This past year we developed reporting templates that enable our staff to keep records in an orderly way that doesn't take away from their focus on service delivery. Reporting tells a story and we are happy to be able to share these accounts of NHSS activities with you.

**Supporting Survivors:** Responding to the mental health and traditional wellness needs of our communities around Indian Residential School impacts, NHSS was able to secure \$600,000 for IRS trauma work. Each community received \$50,000 to spend in response to this ongoing need which was made more pressing by the 215+ children found at the Kamloops IRS.



We continue to remain flexible, recognizing that adaptation is key to both surviving and thriving.

## Words of Gratitude

**Celebrating our Staff:** NHSS is fortunate to have amazing staff. In all of our departments, each staff member is uniquely talented in their duties, working well with individual clients and communities, providing activities that meet the social-emotional needs of our members. This annual report gives credit to the entire Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society staff and to the cohesiveness of our Management Team. No one person does anything alone. We all work together in support of the organization in all areas of administration and management, building relationships and processes to support daily operations and long-term program development. I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to all our managers and staff for their contributions. This has been a year of growth for NHSS.

**Excellence in Governance:** A special thank you to Ko'waintco Michel, NLX Governance Representative, Sherry McIntyre, Technical Representative, and staff member Bernadette Collins for sitting at the various health tables—political and operational—while representing the NLX Nation and providing communication to our Health Directors and Leadership.

**Great Partners:** I would like to acknowledge our partnership with Scw'exmx Community Health Services Society for processing NHSS finances and payroll. A huge K'uk'scemx'w to the SCHSS Board of Directors, SCHSS Staff and Jim Adams.

### For Future Generations

It is crucial that we look towards our children and grandchildren when planning. We are always looking to see how we can expand by identifying health gaps and planning culturally appropriate health programs and services. I look forward to another year of opportunities and growth at Nlaka'pamux Health Services Society.

I would like to finish by stating that it has been an absolute blessing to work for my own Nation.

K'uk'scemx'w | Thank you,

*Tamara George*

Executive Director



## Operations & Human Resources

**Responding to Change:** The effects of Covid created a rapid change in our work environment, further intensified by the devastating heat events followed by atmospheric rivers experienced in 2020-21. These impacted the trajectory and focus of our newly formed society as we shifted services and operations in response to the needs of communities and staff due to these difficult conditions. The Management Team rallied around the shifting program delivery model, met regularly, realigning the organization to meet emerging needs and grew stronger as a team. Maintaining staff and finding new staff was challenging as people's priorities changed because of these environmental effects.

**NEW ROLE: Operations and HR Manager:** One of the staff roles that shifted to better align with operational requirements was the Project Manager which has become Operations and HR Manager with responsibilities for supporting the Executive Director in a technical capacity, organizing data for budget management, funding reports, grant writing, program development strategy, and assisting in executing decisions of the Executive Director in day-to-day operations.

**Better Accountability:** Record keeping of the work staff do with our communities is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of NHSS, fulfill our funding requirements, and provide valuable information to our communities. At the same time, we want to ensure that staff are able to focus on service delivery and aren't burdened with excessive reporting. Custom forms have been developed to make reporting accurate and easy to manage, reflecting data tailored to the priorities of each program and service. We are excited about the outcomes which include freeing staff to focus on clients while also ensuring reliable data for our monthly and annual reports.

**Staff:** For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the focus was on transferring HR services over from Scw'exmx Health. The new Operations and HR Manager assisted the Executive Director with hiring, staff orientation, maintaining confidential staff records, and refining HR standards and processes. The position also served in an advisory capacity for HR issues by being a neutral mediator and safeguard for fair processes to assure the rights of employees, as well as protect the Society by being a sound board for the Executive Director for maintaining fiduciary responsibilities. The Manager was able to participate in professional development by taking the Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) which is relevant training to anyone serving in an Indigenous organization and especially for NHSS HR with the role of supporting staff members within the holistic approach of the IFOT prospective.

**Finance Operations:** Payables also moved in-house, working closely with the Admin Assistant/Finance Clerk to redefine finance policy and internal process for finance and payroll. This included attention on quality control and creating clear operational plans with the outcome of providing excellent operational services that align with the needs of our team and partners.

**NHSS Management & Staff Retreats:** In July 2022, the management team met for a four-day retreat to focus on communication, the roles and responsibilities of our staff and managers, detailed staff job descriptions, and to update HR processes including our Orientation Checklist and End of Employment. The retreat included sessions with well-known consultant Janice Otremba who worked with the team to help recognize individual core strengths and communication styles and use these insights as a foundation for working together more effectively. The staff retreat that was held subsequently also featured Janice Otremba and her insightful process for creating stronger team dynamics.

## Community Engagement

The effectiveness of Nlaka'pamux Health Services relies on strong connections and communication with member Bands as well as with other partners within the healthcare landscape. The Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC) plays a vital role in helping to build and maintain these many important relationships, connecting with members, leadership, other NHSS staff, and partners including neighboring First Nations, First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), and Interior Health. This position keeps current on information coming from regional and provincial health partners and works to ensure that relevant updates reach our communities and preparing briefing notes on key topics like mental health and primary care networks as needed.

**Hearing From Our People:** A key focus was organizing the Nlaka'pamux Health Caucus for both spring and fall, ensuring these gatherings continued to serve as opportunities to hear from our communities and help identify and prioritize health care needs to drive NHSS planning and advocacy work. The position also maintained open channels of communication with Health Directors and Chiefs, including providing orientations to current health initiatives.

**Responding at Every Level:** Emergency management has been in the forefront for the Nlaka'pamux Nation and the CEC responded with diverse supports that included participating in policy engagement with the province, supporting trainings to build community capacity, and even scoping out how to bring air conditioners into communities during the heat wave.

**Point Person on Primary Care:** The CEC worked closely with FNHA and Interior Health, supporting various Nation tables on discussions about planning and primary care including supporting communities as the Primary Care Network Liaison. The position worked with Interior Health to provide a Nlaka'pamux lens on recruitment and other activities within the territory.



## Emergency Management

Our Nlaka’pamux communities continued to deal with multiple emergencies including the Covid pandemic as well as situations compounded by climate change. Extreme temperatures impacted the entire Nation. Specific communities were hard hit by the wildfires of Elephant Hill, Lytton Creek, Stein Valley, and Nohomin and by the atmospheric rivers that devastated the Nicola Valley and Fraser Canyon.

**Strengthening Communities:** The Emergency Program Coordinator supports communities in responding to these new realities. In-community engagement and relationship building are the foundation of the work of strengthening the preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities of the Nlaka’pamux Nation. The Coordinator helps communities improve coordination and collaboration in emergency management in numerous ways including holding Nation Emergency Planning Sessions, organizing supports for enhanced communications in emergencies, and supporting knowledge sharing both informally and through formal reports and commitment letters. Coordinating and collaborating with neighboring St’at’imc Nation on information sharing, training opportunities, and resource/personnel sharing has been a focus with plans to include Nicola Valley communities. The Coordinator is also a liaison—when required—between government agency, health agency, service provider, and emergency organization representatives.

**Building Capacity:** The Coordinator has spearheaded regional funding and training opportunities for Bands and community members on important topics including psychosocial resilience in disasters, essentials of setting up an emergency operations centre, community evacuations, risk mapping and planning, and developing community-to-community networks and supports. This is important work as some communities do not have the capacity to research and apply for the funding and training opportunities available in emergency management. The coordinator assists with the research, proposal writing, and subsequent Band Council Resolution documents and is available, if required, to support the work carried out from the successful acquisition of funding.

**Responding to Need:** NHSS is committed to being responsive to community needs as they arise. While the Coordinator was originally a liaison focused on building capacity in community, NHSS recognized the impact of the Lytton fire and responded by seconding the Coordinator to Lytton First Nations during fire season to serve as their Director of Emergency Operations, employing his emergency response capacity and knowledge.

**Looking to the Future:** NHSS is looking towards a Nlaka’pamux Nationwide coordinated alert system and opportunities to increase funding and capacity of the emergency program at the Nation level given the ongoing needs of communities for capacity building through training, planning, and coordination. Also, to persist in improving collaboration and coordination with communities, municipalities, regional districts, government agencies, and neighboring nations to continually enhance the NHSS emergency management program.



# MENTAL HEALTH

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**Our Team:** NHSS is fortunate to have a highly skilled Mental Health Team with deep experience, significant training in multiple areas, and a strong focus on equitable mental health counselling for rural communities. The team has focused on providing decolonized trauma therapy and has supported community members aged 4 and up with a variety of mental health challenges. The team has included with up to 10 staff ranging from mental health counsellors (adult and child/youth), outreach worker, youth worker, and harm reduction worker. With the ongoing trauma surrounding natural disasters in Nlaka'pamux territory, there has been an increase in anxiety, depression, and substance use. Having the ability to support community members with a skilled team has shown positive impacts.

We have 3 programs within Mental Health.

1. Adult mental health counselling
2. Child and youth mental health counselling
3. Mental health outreach and harm reduction

## Responding To Clients

**High Needs:** The mental health needs in all communities are quite high. The compounding issues around natural disasters throughout the territory have created concerns that lead to higher rates of substance misuse, unstable housing, domestic violence, and risk of suicide and overdose. The NHSS Mental Health Team is meant to be a secondary service provider. Our mental health counsellors fill in the gaps when primary services are unavailable or not a good fit. Some examples of primary service providers for mental health are: Interior Health counselling, school counselling, health office or band counsellors, delegated agency counsellors and mental supports. Due to staff shortages among primary providers, the NHSS team often find ourselves doing intake for clients who have been unable, or uncomfortable, accessing mental health supports through primary care providers.

**Flexible:** An important shift this year was made in response to community need. We noticed an increase in community members seeking brief counselling, wellness check-ins, and support navigating other health and government systems. One of the adult mental health counsellors who focuses on the Canyon communities was finding that community members could not dive into trauma therapy as they were just trying to survive within the chaos of regular life. We developed a plan that moved this role into a Mental Health Outreach Navigator position. This allowed a continuation of mental health support while focusing on prevention and filling in gaps in social supports as well. This shift happened in November 2022 and has seen success through the numbers of people reaching out and positive feedback from community members and leadership. This has prevented people from slipping through the cracks.

**Return to In-Person:** With the loosening of Covid regulations, most mental health supports returned to in-person. However, there are still many clients who choose to have sessions through Zoom or phone call. We leave it for clients to decide what works best for them. This is a best practice for client-centered care. Having the ability to use virtual counselling has also been useful when clients have been displaced due to natural disaster or when counsellors are unable to travel to community due to road conditions.

**Equitable Services:** Travel between communities in such a vast geographic territory will always be a challenge. Staff do their best to provide equitable service delivery to all communities based on client

need. NHSS is also mindful of the burnout that can come from ongoing lengthy travel, and we work to support a balanced travel schedule for staff.

**New Education Opportunities:** Group work and psychoeducation has been requested throughout the communities, but we have been limited for the last several years due to restrictions and counsellors being stretched thin with caseloads. We are in the final stages of planning in-person group workshops using Indigenous Tools for Living and Somatic Experiencing techniques for 2023-2024.

### **Our Staff Team**

**A Dedicated Team:** The Mental Health Team is fortunate to have consistent staff with limited turnover. This allows for more seamless service delivery for clients. The team has been able to evolve service delivery through Covid, natural disasters, and community tragedies. The flexibility and creative thinking within our team has been remarkable. This included supporting community members during the Lytton-area fire in July 2022. All of this has happened while many staff members were themselves dealing with personal impacts from fires and floods. There is a high level of dedication.

**Investing in Staff:** We have been able to invest in training with existing staff, resulting in the team having a wider range of skills to support community members.

**Retaining Staff:** Hiring and keeping qualified staff is a challenge due to the demanding nature of the work, the size of the territory with the necessary travel, and the natural disasters over the past three years. It takes a dedicated and capable person to work within the team. All of this along with the cost of living increases this past year has created constraints within the budget to properly compensate existing staff. There are many mental health jobs available in our communities and across the province and the importance of being able to offer competitive compensation compared with other organizations is vital.

**Staff Wellness:** All staff are working with clients experiencing serious mental health concerns. They do so with great skill and empathy, but the level of support needed can lead to burnout in staff. NHSS pays attention to staff wellness by maintaining manageable and balanced caseloads, ensuring access to clinical supervision and case management support. We have implemented staff wellness activities, yearly staff retreats, and do our best to create a supportive environment. Even with all the best support in place this work is challenging. A severe cold and flu season along with ongoing cases of Covid contributed to a challenging year.



*Harvesting and preparing red willow for making traditional charcoal*

## Adult Mental Health Services

**No Wait List:** We had 3 adult mental health counsellors and ongoing referrals for adult mental health services but we did not carry a waitlist. This was partly because funding from Interior Health enabled us to contract a counsellor to work in the Canyon area where he was able to support many high-risk individuals and his services, along with NHSS staff counsellors, prevented a waitlist from forming. Since the end of his contract, he has returned to private practice with many clients choosing to go through FNHA non-insured benefits to carry on with him. This transition worked well.

### By the Numbers

Note that the following statistics reflect the work of the Adult Mental Health Team.

Adult Mental Health Services 2022-23	
Wellness Check-ins	462
Total Clients	104
Direct Client Contact Hours	871 hours
Travel Hours	178 hours
Group Support Events Held	19 events
Participants at Group Events	630

The following table shares a glimpse of the magnitude of the mental health needs among NLX Bands. Note that the numbers represent the average for the Adult Mental Health Team.

Adult Mental Health Services <i>Presenting Client Concerns</i>	<i>% of clients presenting</i>
Indicators of trauma	98%
Indicators of anxiety	62%
Indicators of depression	32%
Addiction	32%
Social isolation	30%
Suicidal Ideation	28%
Self-harm	13%
Risky behavior concerns	12%
Anger/domestic violence	10%
Gender/sexual identity support	8%
Disordered eating	3%

**New Outreach Mental Health Navigator** role was implemented to address the reality that many clients were in a state of survival and not ready to dive into trauma therapy. This new role has been able to support a greater number of community members, help connect them to other services, assist in removing barriers, and maintain contact to prevent isolation and mental health distress. This pilot project is still in the early stages; however, we are seeing great success.

## Child and Youth Mental Health Services

Supporting children and youth with mental health challenges is of the utmost importance and this work is prioritized by NHSS. Our services continue to be well received and well known throughout the territory. This fiscal year saw our team connect with many children and youth despite being short-staffed for part of the year.

**Shortage of Counsellors:** One of our counsellors was on education leave until January 2023 and we were unable to fill this temporary position. There is a shortage of child and youth counsellors in the Nicola Valley, Canyon area, and Ashcroft. All available counsellors often have waitlists. Schools often have a shortage of counsellors, and the ones available are spread thin. There is also a lack of specialized services, requiring families to travel to Kamloops, Kelowna, and the Fraser Valley with even these typically having wait times. As a result of this situation, we had a lengthy waitlist of up to 26 children and youth—equal to a 4-6 months wait time. Fortunately, we were able to use funding from Interior Health to hire a part-time counsellor with many years of experience working with children. By the end of the fiscal, our one staff member had returned from education leave. With such highly skilled counsellors onboard, our waitlist was reduced to a manageable level. The challenge is providing fair compensation to counsellors with master's level education and additional child and youth specialized training.

**New Mental Health Funding:** For this fiscal year, the funding covered three positions: Child and Youth Mental Health Counsellor, Family Wellness Counsellor, and a summer season Youth Outreach Worker. All of these positions had a focus on children and youth. In the Canyon there is very little mental health support for children and youth. Unless they can travel out of the community, those under 10 years old are only serviced by our staff. This remains an ongoing concern that creates long waitlists for our mental health program. The Family Wellness Counsellor did outreach to help community members connect with one another and culture through community beading events and through individual supports.

**On-the-Land:** NHSS was able to hire a male youth worker for a summer term. He took at-risk male youth on the land, helping with connection and wellness. We often have mental health referrals for male youth, however they do not always feel comfortable with a female counsellor. This summer program filled a gap as we do not have a male counsellor on staff.

**Practicum Placement:** We had a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology student join our team for her practicum term. This gave staff the opportunity to provide mentorship, and created a decrease in wait time as she was able to take on lower-risk referrals with ongoing clinical supervision.

**Meeting Space:** We mainly see children and youth in confidential spaces in the schools in Lytton and Ashcroft. Although this is convenient, it is not always conducive to therapy. The play therapy space in the Merritt office continues to be an excellent resource for clients.

## By the Numbers

Note that the following statistics reflect the work of the Child and Youth Mental Health Team.

Child and Youth Mental Health Services 2022-23	
Wellness Check-ins	282
Total Clients	88
Direct Client Contact Hours	1065 hours
Point of Contact Hours partners, schools, social services, etc.	576 hours
Travel Hours	362 hours
Group Support Events Held	37 events
Participants at Group Events	1151

The following table shares a glimpse of the magnitude of the mental health needs among NLX Bands. Note that the numbers represent the average for the Child and Youth Mental Health Team.

Child & Youth Mental Health <i>Presenting Client Concerns</i>	<i>% of clients presenting</i>
Indicators of trauma	91%
Indicators of anxiety	68%
Risky behavior concerns	61%
Indicators of depression	55%
Social isolation	28%
Suicidal Ideation	14%
Self-harm	14%
Gender/sexual identity support	12%
Addiction	11%
Peer issues	5%
Grief and loss	4%
Disordered eating	3%

## Art Therapy

**Upcoming:** This year saw the planning and development of an adaptable and inclusive art therapy program for Nlaka’pamux children, youth, and adults. This program responds to community needs and works for groups or individuals. There is flexibility to run sessions online or in person, hold them for several days, or host them once weekly—whatever works for the community. Art therapy can be linked with other modes of counselling and can focus on assisting with feeling of isolation, depression and anxiety, and grief and loss. It’s also a great way to learn stress reduction techniques and better ways of coping generally.

**No Experience Needed:** It’s okay if you’ve never done any art before. No previous art experience is needed! Art therapy is for everyone from children as young as 3 to Elders in their 90s. Art therapy uses the universal language of creativity to help us explore and express our inner experiences. It is not about analyzing the art we make, rather it is about helping us become curious about what our art can tell us. It is about using art to support community wellbeing, healing, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.



## Harm Reduction Services

The Street Angel position has been in place for this full fiscal year with an active and consistent caseload. The position checks in on at-risk community members, distributes harm reduction supplies, provides wellness-checks, food supports, participates in community events to provide education on harm reduction, and has committed time to advocating and mentoring youth in the community. The Street Angel has strong connections to members and brings in valuable outside resources as necessary.

**Loss of Lytton Office:** Before losing our health building in downtown Lytton to the wildfire, the position did a great deal of street outreach. As NHSS's office is now in the community of Skuppah, clients are more spread out and less likely to drop into the office for supports. This has led to more travel time and missed opportunities to support community members who would have "dropped in."

**Crisis Support:** The greatest challenge in this position is the need for crisis support. Due to the lack of professionals providing crisis support in communities, the Street Angel is often called upon. It is not possible to provide crisis support with just one staff member on the team, and this does not fall in line with NHSS's secondary service provider model. This is an obvious gap in the Canyon area, and the need puts stress on the Street Angel.

### By the Numbers

Below are this year's stats for the Street Angel position.

Street Angel: Harm Reduction Services 2022-23	
Wellness Check-ins	2062
Total Clients	30
Direct Client Contact Hours	854 hours
Travel Hours	111 hours
Group Events Supported	6 events
Participants at Group Events	92

*In collaboration with Nicola Valley organizations, NHSS participated in the first annual Harm Reduction Event in Merritt, setting up a table with mental health resources, wellness activities, harm reduction supplies, and traditional medicines.*



# Wellness

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**For Our People:** Nlaka’pamux communities have prioritized the importance of the wellbeing of our community members. The Wellness Team works in regular contact with our communities to host and collaborate on events that support wellbeing in a variety of different ways including:

- Caring for our Elders
- Engaging with our youth
- Supporting harm reduction
- Taking community on the land
- Promoting physical fitness
- Working with our children and families
- Revitalizing our culture and traditional foods

Together with communities, NHSS has done much work over the past few years to improve wellness and build capacity in our communities.

**Flexible Trainings:** One area of focus has been providing community members with certified programs such as Mental Health First Aid and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), among others. Covid made this difficult with programs being suspended and also impacting our staffing resources. As a result, the decision was made to shift to a more flexible arrangement that better fits our staffing situation and offers communities less restrictive and more accessible formats for these important training programs. Certified programs will continue to be offered to communities via contracted service providers under the oversight of our Wellness Team.



*Preparing red willow for making traditional charcoal*



# Homecare

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The Homecare Team works to ensure community members are able to stay at home for as long as they choose and are safely able to do so. During the fiscal year 2022-23, the Homecare Team was managed by our Registered Nurse (RN) and supported by 3 Health Care Aides (HCAs). The number of clients fluctuates from month to month. In this period, 27 clients were seen weekly. The number of visits for each client depends on need: for example, surgery, fall risk, lives alone with no family support, or the chronic health conditions they live with.

**Keeping an Eye on Clients:** The Health Care Aides help clients in community by taking vital signs, delivering medications, helping with SAIL exercises, making meals, and doing light housekeeping. The team keeps an eye out for any emerging issues or changes in the health of members and shares these back with the RN.

**Good Partners:** The RN reviews and updates homecare plans as needed. She maintains good working relationships with NLX RNs as well as the community Health Directors. Work with partners includes collaborating with Interior Health teams for wound care, prescription renewals, health care concerns, and palliative care in communities. The team has also built relationships with Nightingale Medical Supplies and Red Cross to get medical equipment to clients in a timely fashion.

**High Burnout:** Turnover is a difficult reality with the Homecare Team as this is a demanding job that involves a large amount of commuting. It is common for Health Care Aides to travel as much as 3 or more hours each day. This is an ongoing challenge.

**Professional Development:** Some of the training for the team included the diabetes conference in Penticton and the in-community palliative care training for Indigenous communities.





**MAIN OFFICE - MERRITT**

PO Box 1624 Merritt BC V1K 1B8  
2088 Quilchena Ave Merritt BC V1K 1B8  
(Entrance at Rear)

**SATELLITE OFFICE - LYTTON**

281 Main St, Lytton BC

**HOURS OF OPERATION**

8:30am – 4:30pm  
(closed on Stat holidays)

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