



huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND



Panel of Inquiry Annual Report

2023 - 2024



PANEL OF INQUIRY REPORT SUMMARY

On July 24, 2023, the Huu-ay-aht Executive Council approved the Inquiry Report Implementation Plan (IRIP) “Building a Place of Safety & Wellness for All”. The IRIP consisted of three critical plans that were conducted in 2021, 2022, and 2023; the healing and intergenerational trauma related to residential school (2021), the Inquiry Panel Report (2022), and the Community Wellness Report (2023).

Each report provided the Executive Council with a set of recommendations to help support a process of healing intergenerational trauma that impacts all levels of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations (HFN) from the Traditional Leadership, Elected Leadership, Administration, and Citizens.

A critical part of the Inquiry Report was allegations of abuse of power by former Huu-ay-aht Government officials. This part of the report was handled and overseen by legal counsel and the Huu-ay-aht First Nation Law Clerk and is not part of the IRIP.

The IRIP was developed based on the approved 2024 Huu-ay-aht First Nation Strategic Plan key targets and categorizing all recommendations into themes. The themes identified were five areas of interest: Huu-ay-aht Governance, HFN Laws & Policy, HFN Government Programs, Enhanced Protection Services, and HFN Community Wellness.

For the fiscal year 2023-2024, the HFN Government Committees and Departments worked through the IRIP and began addressing the recommendations.



Huu-ay-aht Governance

Six key recommendations were made under Huu-ay-aht Governance

1 Public Apology & Acknowledgment

Was a key recommendation that set the foundation for the Huu-ay-aht First Nations (HFN) Government was the recommendation for a public apology for the wrongdoing and acknowledgment of the extent of the long-standing problem of sexual abuse and violence in the community. In May 2023 the HFN Executive Council made a citizen announcement stating the acknowledgment and recognition of wrongdoing and acceptance to do better. On July 5, 2023, at the Swearing-In Ceremony of the newly elected Executive Council, a formal commitment was made by the council to commit to the protection of women, children, youth, elders, and those vulnerable. This commitment has been and continues to be the foundation of this current government's foundation and mandate.

2 Reconciliation & Cultural Safety

This fiscal year, the administration staff undertook a two-day workshop on Indigenous Reconciliation & Cultural Safety. The two-day course was a mandatory course and one that was delivered by the Mother Earth Whisper consulting firm. The course was well received and further courses from this firm are planned for 2024. The Executive Council also conducted a three-day workshop about good governance and leadership delivered by the Nationhood services.

3 Recruitment & Mentoring

Huu-ay-aht Women in elected roles. Further work is required in this area; however, we should make note that we have two women in elected leadership roles, four women in a Ḥaw̓iiḥ seat, and six Huu-ay-aht women in senior director roles in administration. Everyone in these leadership roles is a mentor and guide to young Huu-ay-aht ladies.

4 Cultural Roles & Responsibilities

The Huu-ay-aht Ḥaw̓iiḥ Council have brought on an outside Nuu-chah-nulth Elder, Barney William Jr., to be part of their Ḥaw̓iiḥ Council meetings. This was a pilot to see if a role that is not connected to a house would be beneficial for the Ḥaw̓iiḥ Council. Along with this role, the Ḥaw̓iiḥ Council is beginning to formulate the traditional roles in their houses and coming up with a plan for developing a structure for their houses.

5 Oversight Committee

Currently the Inquiry Report Implementation Plan is being run through all operational committees. These committees include the Citizen Development Committee, Ḥaw̓iiḥ Council, Child & Family Wellness, Human Resources & Wellness Committee, Law & Policy Committee, and Anacla Community & Infrastructure Committee. All committees have outside support that consists of citizens and experts.

6 Cultural Healing

Intergenerational Trauma. The administration has been working with outside support programs to offer training to citizens, trauma counselling both internally and externally, and the Cultural Wellness Workers and Clinical Counsellors are developing a Grief and Loss Workshop that will be offered in early Spring or Summer of 2024. Further work is being discussed at all committee meetings and the Anacla Community Safety Engagement Sessions.



Huu-ay-aht Law & Policy

Four key recommendations were made under law & policy:

1 Tribunal Act & Policy

2 Public Complaints Policy

3 Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Act

4 Community Safety Act/ Regulation Update

HFN Government is currently working with the Nationhood team to conduct an overview of all HFN laws, acts, regulations, and policies to identify the need to update and align stronger with Huu-ay-aht Traditional Law. The Law and Policy team is working closely with consultants on tackling these changes.

Along with the law review, the administration is working with a team to identify funding to a wholesome review and research of the Huu-ay-aht Tribunal. To understand the purpose, process, any shortcomings, missing areas, etc.

In February 2023, two HFN administration employees, the acting Law Clerk and the Executive Director attended training provided by the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge on Indigenous Law. The facilitators are willing to come and work with Huu-ay-aht First Nations to train others on how to incorporate Indigenous Law in First Nation Legislation.



Huu-ay-aht Government Programs

Six key recommendations were made under the Government Programs:

1 Enhanced Training Related to Trauma Recovery

An area that is also connected to the HFN Social Services Report. The Child & Family Wellness (CFW) team has begun expanding their set of skills in trauma recovery, as well members of the Community Services team have been working with others to bring in the services. The administration is working to bring in a Drug & Alcohol Counsellor and an Outreach Worker, along with new staff the Clinical Counsellor has undertaken Eye Movement Professional Development which is a level of training for the treatment of PTSD.

2 Support for Those Facing Violence

An area that both the Child & Family Wellness team and Community Services team have been working together on. The CFW has sent three staff members to receive training related to sexual abuse survivors and has been working with the First Nations Representative Services to provide training and support on violence prevention and persons fleeing from violence. For Anacla, we currently have a safe place in the traditional territory to provide quick places for families to escape to, and in the long term, we will be opening the Oomiiqsu Centre in Port Alberni for families facing violence.

3 The Creation of Women's Group

This has been a topic for the administration and government over the past few years. Two women's groups were formulated and offered after women were coming forward about abuse of power and assaults. These two groups were well attended but did not continue to operate. Further investigation and work must be undertaken to bring this group back together. It is with the Community Services team and the Citizen Development Committee.

4 Healing Centre

Has been a topic brought forward in many reports and at various people's assemblies. In December 2023, the Tseshaht First Nation announced bringing Nations and Governments together to begin looking at a healing centre in Port Alberni. Further work is being undertaken on this possible opportunity that Tseshaht First Nations is leading. Intergenerational trauma and cultural healing are important areas for the Nation, it will take time to ensure resources both financially and capacity can be achieved.

5 Addressing Lateral Violence Throughout the Nations

Is an important item that the Nation is taking seriously. It is also an area that will require everyone to work towards solutions and changes in how we conduct ourselves. The Nation has endorsed new posters outlining our guiding principles, what it means to live up to them, and how we conduct ourselves, our citizens, and our employees. We have created posters and videos about our sacred principles and the meaning behind them. Performance Management agreements outline what it means for leaders to live up to these principles. Further work including staff training is being considered in future work activities.

6 Ensuring Housing Needs

Is important as more citizens are wanting to move home and additional growth in the Government. Huu-ay-aht Government and Group of Businesses are working with a consultant firm, Forum, to help us prepare a master plan that will support in developing a plan that is sustainable, adaptable, and focuses on what is needed in the whole Anacla and Bamfield region. HFN has developed a Housing Society that will be managing all new housing and social housing for Huu-ay-aht.



Enhanced Protection Services

Three key areas were identified under enhanced protection services:

1 RCMP Collaboration

Is such a vital partnership for Huu-ay-aht. Over the past several months the Citizen Development Committee and the Community Safety Committee have been working closely with the RCMP to strengthen their relationship. In the past several months the RCMP have conducted local workshops and are now scheduled to be in the office every other Tuesday to build relationships with citizens and provide on-the-ground support.

2 Peace Officer Program

Is a potential option as we work to implement the Offence and Enforcement Act, Community Safety Act and the Maanulth Enforcement guides. Hwiih Council is working on funding to support a Witwak program that is estimated at \$300k to operate with four Witwak. Along with the Witwak is the opportunity to partner with a security firm such as Footprints to provide mentorship. Further investigation and research are underway with the opportunity to pilot a program for 2024.

3 Ombudsman Program

Was identified to bring aboard to manage complaints against government members. Highbridge consultation has been brought on to support the amendment of our Human Resources Policy. Highbridge also has a section of their firm that offers Ombudsman services. HFN is not large enough government to have an internal Ombudsman program but does have the ability to contract this to an outside agency, such as Highbridge. Working with Heather Castleton, the administration is bringing forward a research project to do an in-depth look at the Tribunal part of HFN. The purpose is to better understand if there are any gaps or needs to make better use of the Tribunal.



Community Wellness

Three key areas were identified under enhanced protection services:

1 Intergenerational Trauma and Healing

Are symptoms that many Indigenous communities are grappling with, Huu-ay-aht First Nations continues to work with many partners to bring in resources to support citizens.

2 Building Capacity within the Nation

To develop cultural and historical knowledge and increase staff skills. Over the past several months the staff have completed training in many different areas such as residential school awareness. Further work is underway to identify gaps in staff knowledge and working with AFOA Financial Management training will be occurring in April 2024.

3 Community Wellness Training

To focus on education and training on speaking out and reaching for support. Over the past several months administration and leadership have been holding community engagement sessions in Anacla to better understand what is needed for community safety and infrastructure needs for a healthy and safe community.





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