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Relationship before partnership: Community connections bring Nuu-Chah-Nulth Youth Warriors to BCCDC

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In a display of unity and trust, the [Nuu-Chah-Nulth Youth Warriors Family](#) (the Warriors) joined staff from the [Food Skills for Families](#) (FSF) program for two days in late January. The event included hands-on learning to sharpen their culinary skills, knife technique and knowledge of hand hygiene. The collaboration is a testament to years of relationship-building and the power of community when it comes to working together on public health.

"Developing trust and building a solid, strong relationship takes time," said Jessica Chenery, director of the Indigenous Health Program, Chee Mamuk. "When we invest that time, you get the trust component."



Warriors Andy and KC hold up a salad they prepared at the food skills workshop.

The Warriors are a brotherhood of young Nuu-Chah-Nulth boys and men, part of a program that teaches leadership, wellness and survival skills through gatherings on the land. The group formed in 2015, with the vision of fostering hope, belonging, meaning and purpose. Ricardo Manmohan, a Warriors Board member, reached out to FSF, a team he became familiar with after being introduced by Jessica in 2022. The Warriors were planning a visit to Vancouver this year to practice navigating a large urban center, and wondered if the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) could support some food-related skill-building.

"We were delighted to be asked, so of course we said yes!" said Samantha Adamson, FSF operations coordinator. "We landed on hosting a two-day workshop that was jointly planned and lead by us and the Warriors. We tested a new knife skills resource, giving demos of knife cuts and getting everyone up and chopping."



The workshop taught hands-on skills like proper knife technique when cutting food.

Esther Tong from BCCDC Environmental Health Services was on hand to answer food safety questions, while Nick Smith from BCCDC Communicable Diseases & Immunization Service led an interactive activity on the importance of handwashing. Using a special gel and a UV light, the group tested how thoroughly they could wash their hands by checking for any remaining gel residue.

Leading up to the visit, two of the Warriors hunted and processed a deer. Using a recipe provided verbally by one of the Warriors' moms, the deer was prepared into a hamburger-style stew. With the Warriors, FSF recorded step-by-step instructions to have something to build on and share.

This process of preserving and sharing community recipes resonates with FSF's mission to make food skills more accessible. "We would love to record and share recipes like this—recipes from the community," said Samantha. "This is one model for how to introduce new recipes to the Food Skills curriculum, by cooking and enjoying the recipes while listening to the stories behind them."

Longstanding relationship

The workshop was about more than food; it represents a growing relationship between FSF and The Warriors. "Two years ago, Jessica brought together the people from Population and Public Health and FSF," said Ricardo Manmohan. "We met there, and that was the start of it. [Diane Collis, FSF program manager](#), came to visit two years in a row to help us move rocks at the clam garden."

"We have fostered a relationship. They saw our gaps and provided things like cutting boards, knives, pots, pot dragons. The effort is always there—that is really the way to understand what we do in community."

Jessica and Diane have worked alongside each other for two decades, supporting each other, creating a foundation of trust and respect, while bridging Community and public health.

"I met Diane over 20 years ago while we were both in food programming," said Jessica. "I was in the Downtown Eastside, and she was coordinating the Vancouver Community Kitchen Project. Fast forward some years later, I had the opportunity to train in the FSF program as a facilitator while it was under the Canadian Diabetes Association."

Over the years, their shared commitment to [community food initiatives](#) created a space for meaningful partnerships. The connections gained through trust and mutual support have not only strengthened food programming but have also created lasting opportunities for cultural knowledge-sharing, with a collective focus on supporting the preservation of food wisdom for future generations.

The food skills workshop with the Warriors highlighted the power of collaboration, demonstrating that before true partnership can flourish, a strong foundation of relationship and trust must be established.

[Food Skills for Families](#), part of the Population and Health Promotion program at BCCDC, is a hands-on skill-building program developed by dietitians and educators. Programs are delivered over the course of six weeks and are hosted in partnership with community-based organizations at local community-based kitchens.

Tags: [Across PHSA](#), [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)

HOME NEWS

RELATIONSHIP BEFORE PARTNERSHIP: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS BRING NUU-CHAH-NULTH YOUTH WARRIORS TO BCCDC

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mind to be strong” | Tee ma thit “Do your best”

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