The Truth and Reconciliation Commission states that “the current state of [Indigenous] health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian governmental policies, including residential schools”.¹ Among urban Indigenous adults, rates of chronic health conditions have been demonstrated to be between 2 to 10 times higher than the general population in Canada.² The high prevalence of health conditions has been linked to a disproportionate burden of poverty, adverse living conditions, and racism.³,⁴ Culturally based health care and health promotion initiatives have the potential to increase treatment uptake and health literacy, thus improving overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous people experiencing chronic health conditions.⁵

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission states that “the current state of [Indigenous] health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian governmental policies, including residential schools”.¹ Among urban Indigenous adults, rates of chronic health conditions have been demonstrated to be between 2 to 10 times higher than the general population in Canada.² The high prevalence of health conditions has been linked to a disproportionate burden of poverty, adverse living conditions, and racism.³,⁴ Culturally based health care and health promotion initiatives have the potential to increase treatment uptake and health literacy, thus improving overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous people experiencing chronic health conditions.⁵

Our Health Counts: Community health assessment by the people, for the people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Chronic Health Conditions</th>
<th>OHC Toronto</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis C</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Bronchitis/Emphysema/Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer**</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver Disease*</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergies**</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Liver Disease includes Hepatitis B and C
**Due to late-stage diagnosis among Indigenous people, the rate of cancer should be interpreted with caution
***Allergies includes food allergies
ᶧComparable statistics not available

The rate of learning disabilities was 11x higher among Indigenous adults in Toronto than the overall Canadian population⁷
Adult Chronic Health Conditions

65% of Indigenous adults in Toronto reported having one or more chronic condition.

15% of Indigenous adults in Toronto were diagnosed with diabetes by their healthcare provider. This is close to DOUBLE the diabetes rate (8%) of the general adult population in Toronto (CCHS 2015/16).

74% of Indigenous adults with diabetes took pills in the past month to control their blood sugar. 22% of adults with diabetes take insulin.

38% of Indigenous adults (20 years +) in Toronto were experiencing multimorbidity (two or more chronic health conditions), compared to 15% of adults in Canada (CCHS 2011/12)".

+OHC Toronto multimorbidity estimate does not include Alzheimer’s or other dementia.

Diabetes

In the past 12 months, Indigenous adults with diabetes have accessed these programs/services to manage their diabetes:

- Dietician: 32%
- Foot Clinic: 29%
- Diabetes Clinic / Care Program at a Hospital: 28%

Indigenous adults with diabetes were as likely to experience food insecurity as those without diabetes.

16% of Indigenous adults with diabetes did not use any services or programs to help manage their diabetes.

Tests for Diabetes Care

Indigenous adults in Toronto diagnosed with diabetes in the past 12 months...

- 77% have been tested for haemoglobin “A1C”.
- 63% have had their feet checked for sores or irritations.
- 75% have had their urine tested for protein.
- 49% have had an eye exam to screen for retinal damage or visual impairment.

Clinical practice guidelines indicate that...

- Haemoglobin “A1C” should be tested in diabetic individuals (Type 1 and 2) approximately every 3 months.
- Feet should be checked at least once a year.
- Urine tests should be conducted at least once a year.
- Eye exams should be conducted:
  - Type 1 diabetes - At least once a year
  - Type 2 diabetes - Every 1-2 years

Funding was provided by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Capacity Award.

Authors © Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.
**Implement TRC Call to Action 19:**

We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Indigenous peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as chronic diseases and the availability of appropriate health services.

**Implement TRC Call to Action 21:**

We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Indigenous healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms.

**Additional Recommendations:**

City of Toronto, provincial and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous peoples and organizations to:

- Address barriers in accessing programs and services, including culturally relevant public health and health promotion programs to address modifiable chronic disease risk factors. For example reducing commercial (non-traditional) tobacco use, improving nutrition such as access to traditional foods, and increasing safe environments for physical activity.

- Provide funding to undertake longitudinal research to better understand chronic health conditions among the Indigenous communities.
Similar to Indigenous adults, Indigenous children are more likely to experience chronic health conditions than non-Indigenous children. Diagnosis of a chronic health condition at a young age increases the likelihood of having multiple health conditions in adulthood.¹ Determinants of health, such as diet, discrimination, and environmental pollution, tend to exacerbate the prevalence of chronic diseases.² Indigenous children are more likely to experience these factors due to inequities in access to health/social services and barriers faced by families to meet optimal healthy living environments. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlights the importance of addressing the health inequities by regularly collecting health outcome data for Indigenous adults and children.³

### Our Health Counts: Community health assessment by the people, for the people

#### Child Chronic Health Conditions

**Learning Disability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 5-14 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Speech/Language Difficulties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 5-14 years</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Asthma**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 0-14 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 0-19 years (CCDSS 2011/12)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cognitive/Mental Disability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 5-14 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dermatitis or Atopic Eczema**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 6-14 years</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 13-14 years (ISAAC 1997)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 6-7 years (ISAAC 1997)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hearing Impairment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Children in Toronto, 5-14 years</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Children, 5-14 years (PALS 2006)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An inclusive community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples in Toronto

Child Chronic Health Conditions

Allergies

7% of Indigenous children in Toronto, aged 0-14 years, were reported to suffer from allergies, including food allergies.

Heart Condition

4% of Indigenous children in Toronto, aged 0-14 years, were reported having a heart condition.

Anxiety and Depression

Of Indigenous children (0-14 years) in Toronto:

- 20% had at least one chronic health condition
- 18% had two or more chronic health conditions

Blindness/Serious Vision Difficulties

Of children with chronic health conditions over 1 in 3 were prevented or limited from participating in school and/or other activities as a result of their conditions or health problems.

Policy Implications

Implement TRC Call to Action 19:

We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Indigenous peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as chronic diseases, poverty, food security, housing and availability and access to appropriate health services.

Additional Recommendations:

- City of Toronto, provincial and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous peoples and organizations to provide funding to undertake longitudinal research to better understand chronic health conditions among the Indigenous community, including Indigenous children.

Definitions

Indigenous children: persons self-identifying as Indigenous such as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit aged 0-14 years living or using services in the City of Toronto. Multiple chronic conditions included asthma, blindness, anxiety/depression, speech/language difficulties, cognitive/mental disability, dermatitis and atopic eczema, chronic bronchitis, heart conditions, physical disability, allergies, ADD/ADHD, learning disability, FASD/FAS/FAE, and cancer

Population based estimates were created using respondent driven sampling (see Methods and Design Factsheet for more details)

Sources

Adult Chronic Conditions Health Reference

Our Health Counts Toronto is an inclusive community-based health survey for Indigenous peoples of Toronto and is part of the largest Indigenous population health study in Canada. Participants were selected using respondent-driven sampling, a statistical method which uses social networks in the community to recruit Indigenous people living in the city.

Survey Question

Have you been told by a healthcare provider that you have any of the following chronic health conditions (conditions expected to last or have already lasted 6 months or more and that have been diagnosed by a healthcare provider)...

- Asthma: 24.1% (17.3, 30.9)
- Arthritis: 21.3% (16.2, 26.5)
- Heart Disease (adults aged 20 years and older): 7.7% (4.6, 10.8)
- Stroke: 4.3% (1.5, 7.1)
- Liver Disease: 14.5% (9.2, 19.9)
- High Blood Pressure: 23.7% (17.3, 30.0)
- Hepatitis B (adults aged 15 to 79 years): 2.0% (0.7, 3.3)
- Hepatitis C: 11.2% (6.0, 16.4)
- Allergies (including food allergies): 38.1% (30.5, 45.7)
- Chronic Bronchitis, Emphysema, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD): 8.8% (4.0, 13.7)
- Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder: 9.2% (5.6, 12.7)
- Learning Disability: 22.0% (14.2, 29.7)
- Cancer: 7.1% (1.9, 12.2)

Multimorbidity among Indigenous adults (adults aged 15 years and older)

- One or more chronic health conditions: 64.7% (57.2, 72.2)
- None: 35.3% (27.8, 42.8)

Multimorbidity among Indigenous adults (adults aged 20 years and older)

- Two or more chronic health conditions: 38.4% (30.7, 46.1)
- One chronic health condition: 27.9% (21.1, 34.7)
- No chronic health conditions: 33.8% (26.5, 41.0)

To the best of your knowledge, how up-to-date is your child on the following services or programs to help manage your diabetes?

- Dietician: 32.5% (8.9, 56.1)*
- Foot clinic: 29.0% (4.7, 53.3)*
- Diabetes clinic or care program through a hospital: 28.3% (4.1, 52.5)*
- Did not use any services or programs to help manage diabetes: 15.6% (5.4, 25.7)

Within the past year, did any health care provider discuss your child’s immunizations with you?

- Yes: 14.9% (9.3, 20.4)
- No: 85.2% (79.6, 90.7)

In the past month, did you take pills to control your blood sugar?

- Yes: 74.3% (57.6, 91.0)
- No: 25.7% (9.0, 42.4)

Do you currently take insulin for your diabetes?

- Yes: 22.1% (9.7, 34.5)
- No: 77.9% (65.5, 90.3)

In the past 12 months, have you used any of the following services or programs to help manage your diabetes?

- Did not use any services or programs to help manage diabetes: 28.3% (4.1, 52.5)*
- Did not use any services or programs to help manage diabetes: 15.6% (5.4, 25.7)

HAD diabetes by food security

Always or most of the time: 72.1% (58.1, 86.2)
Sometimes or often: 17.9% (13.8, 21.9)

For the full OHC Toronto report visit: www.welllivinghouse.com

Funding was provided by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Capacity Award
Authors:© 2018 Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto
**Survey Question**

Did not have diabetes by food security
Always or most of the time you and others had enough of the kinds of food you wanted to eat 73.8% (67.6, 80.1)
Sometimes or often you or others did not have enough to eat 26.2% (19.9, 32.4)

In the past 12 months, has a health care professional tested you for hemoglobin A1C?
Yes 76.8% (60.2, 93.5)
No 23.2% (6.6, 39.8)

In the past 12 months, has a healthcare professional checked your feet for any sores or irritations?
Yes 63.2% (44.9, 81.5)
No 36.8% (18.5, 55.1)

In the past 12 months, has a healthcare professional tested your urine for protein (i.e. microalbumin)
Yes 74.8% (58.1, 91.4)
No 25.3% (8.6, 41.9)

Did you have an eye exam to screen for retinal damage or visual impairment?
Less than one year ago 48.7% (28.0, 69.5)*
A year ago or more 20.2% (7.9, 32.5)
Never 31.1% (13.7, 48.4)

Have you ever been told by a health care professional or teaching/child care professional that your child has any of the following health conditions?
Learning disability 18.3% (6.2, 30.4)
Speech/language difficulties 6.0% (1.9, 10.1)
Cognitive or mental disability 3.8% (0.3, 7.3)
Asthma 12.3% (4.3, 20.3)
Dermatitis, atopic eczema 18.9% (3.5, 34.3)
Hearing impairment 2.5% (0.0, 5.1)
Allergies 6.9% (2.5, 11.3)
Anxiety/Depression 3.3% (0.9, 5.8)
Blindness or serious vision problems 1.7% (0.0, 3.4)
Heart condition 3.7% (0.2, 7.1)

Multimorbidity among Indigenous children
Two or more chronic health conditions 17.7% (9.0, 26.3)
One chronic health condition 19.8% (9.1, 30.5)
None 62.5% (50.9, 74.2)

Does this/do these condition(s) or health problem(s) prevent or limit your child’s participation in school, at play or any other activity for a child their age?
Yes 35.9% (17.5, 54.3)
No 64.1% (45.7, 82.5)