

# Our Health Counts Toronto

An inclusive community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples in Toronto

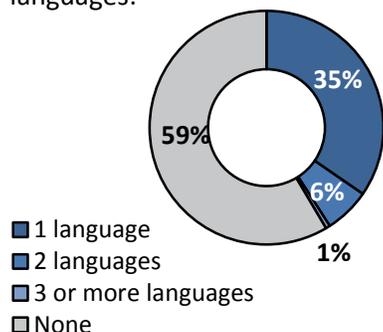
## Adult - Culture and Identity

Involvement in cultural practices and traditions are key elements in relation to Indigenous health and wellbeing. The Indian Act, residential school system, Sixties Scoop and other forms of cultural oppression have attempted to destroy Indigenous cultural practices and languages.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite ongoing historical traumas, Indigenous peoples have maintained many traditional practices. Among urban populations, most continue to practice cultural traditions and have a strong sense of cultural identity.<sup>2</sup>

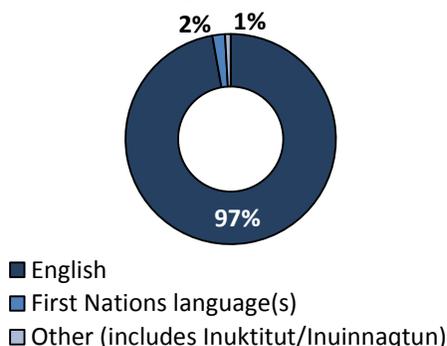
### Indigenous Languages

**42%** of Indigenous adults in Toronto speak an Indigenous language, higher than the TARP 2011 estimate of **19%** of Indigenous adults in Toronto.<sup>3</sup>

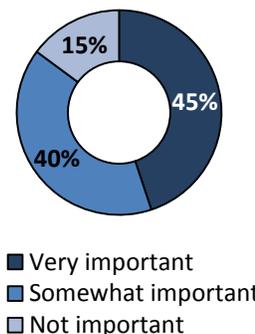
**7%** of Indigenous adults in Toronto speak multiple Indigenous languages:



The language most commonly used at home by Indigenous adults was:



Most Indigenous adults said that speaking/learning an Indigenous language was important:



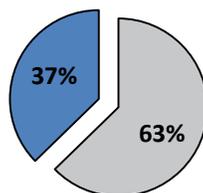
### Traditional Ceremonies

**2 in 3**

(65%)

Indigenous adults in Toronto have participated in traditional ceremonies.

**Over 1/3** of Indigenous adults experience challenges in accessing traditional ceremonies:



Common barriers faced accessing traditional ceremonies included:

- **Unsure where to access ceremonies**
- **Travel distance**
- **Not knowing enough about ceremonies**

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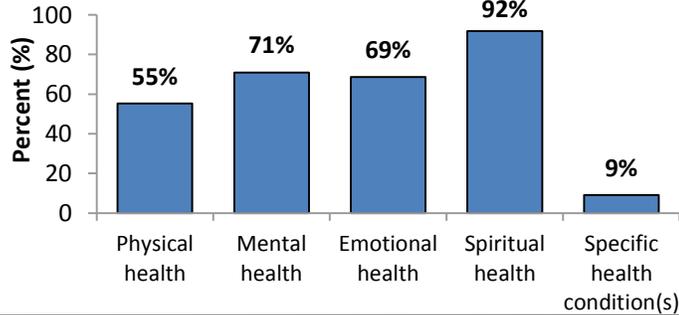
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## Adult - Culture and Identity

**49%** of Indigenous adults (2015) used traditional medicines to maintain health and well-being. This is slightly higher than the **33%** of First Nations adults in Hamilton (2009).<sup>2</sup>

### Traditional Medicines

Uses of traditional medicines/practices:



Common sources of traditional medicine knowledge and practices were:

- Elders/Knowledge Keepers
- Family members
- Other Indigenous people

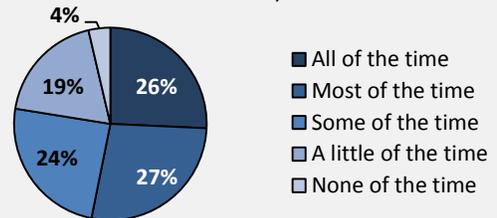
### Identity

**71%** of Indigenous adults in Toronto had a **total identity score** that reflected a strong sense of identity among the population in Toronto.

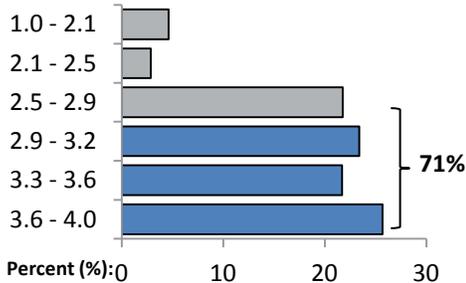
**74%** had a strong **identity affirmation factor score** and **62%** had a strong **identity search factor score**.

### Connection to the Land

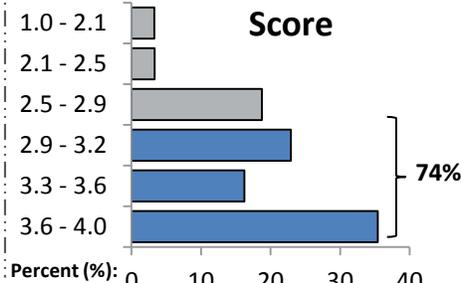
**Most** Indigenous adults feel a strong connection to the land and Mother Earth all, most or some of the time.



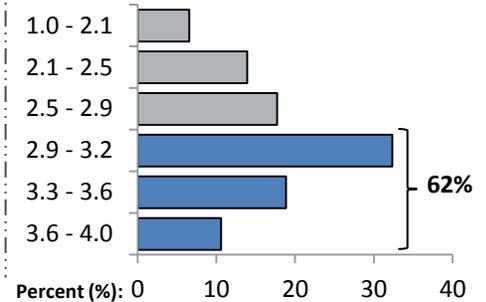
### Total MEIM Score



### MEIM Affirmation Score



### MEIM Identity Score



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



Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto



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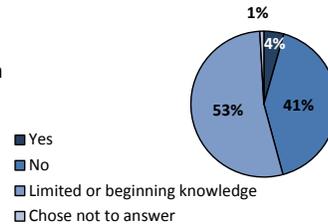
## Child - Culture and Identity

Consistent with the findings of a study among First Nations people living in Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> parents and caregivers of Indigenous children in Toronto emphasized the importance of transmitting Indigenous culture, traditions and languages to the next generation. These findings counter the narrative that Indigenous children are no longer connected to cultural

### Indigenous Languages

**83%** of parents/guardians of Indigenous children in Toronto believe it is very important or somewhat important for their child to learn an Indigenous language, consistent with the **93%** of First Nations parents in Hamilton.<sup>1</sup>

**Over 1 in 2** children (2 years +) have some level of understanding of an Indigenous language:



### Traditional Ceremonies

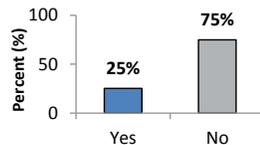
**87%** of parents/guardians of Indigenous children in Toronto believe that it is very important or somewhat important for traditional ceremonies to be part of their child's life. This is consistent with findings among First Nations parents in Hamilton<sup>1</sup> and Indigenous parents in London.<sup>2</sup>

Common sources of cultural knowledge for children were:

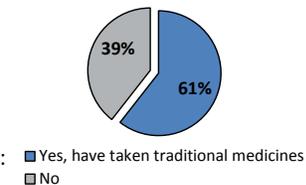
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Aunts and Uncles

### Traditional Medicines

**25%** of Indigenous children have seen and/or been treated by a traditional healer.



**3 in 5** Indigenous children have used and/or taken traditional medicines:



## Policy Implications

### Implement TRC Call to Action 14:

We call upon the federal government to provide sufficient funds for Indigenous-language revitalization and preservation; the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Indigenous languages and cultures are best managed by Indigenous people and communities; and funding for Indigenous language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Indigenous languages.

### Implement TRC Call to Action 48:

We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups in Canada to respect Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practice, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, consistent with Article 12:1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

### Additional Recommendations:

- The City of Toronto, provincial and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous peoples and organizations to develop and implement expanded Indigenous cultural supports and programming for children and their families, including Indigenous languages and traditional practice throughout Indigenous and mainstream early childhood education programs and schools.

#### Definitions

Parents/guardians of Indigenous children or Indigenous children: parents/guardians of persons 1 to 14 years self-identified as Indigenous by their parent or guardian, such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Indigenous nations, living or using services in the City of Toronto; Traditional ceremonies: such as pow-wows, sweat lodges and community feasts; Traditional medicines: such as smudging or teas

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

#### Sources

1. Smylie et al. (2011); 2. Smylie et al. (unpublished)

# Our Health Counts Toronto

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## Adult Culture and Identity 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

### RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)

#### Do you speak an Indigenous language or languages?

Yes 41.5% (33.7, 49.4)  
No 58.5% (50.7, 66.3)

#### How many Indigenous languages do you speak?

None 58.5% (50.7, 66.3)  
1 language 34.6% (27.2, 42.1)  
2 languages 6.3% (1.4, 11.3)  
3 or more languages 0.6% (0.0, 1.5)

#### What language do you speak most often at home?

English 97.2% (95.6, 98.8)  
First Nations language 1.9% (0.7, 3.2)  
Other (includes Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun) 0.9% (0.0, 1.8)

#### How important is speaking or learning an Indigenous language to you?

Very important 44.9% (37.2, 52.6)  
Somewhat important 40.2% (32.7, 47.7)  
Not important 14.9% (8.5, 21.2)

#### Do you participate in traditional Indigenous ceremony?

Yes 65.2% (57.5, 73.0)  
No 34.8% (27.0, 42.5)

#### Have you experienced challenges in trying to access traditional Indigenous ceremonies?

Yes 37.3% (27.4, 47.2)  
No 62.7% (52.8, 72.6)

#### Do you use traditional Indigenous medicines or practices to maintain your health and wellbeing?

Yes 49.4% (41.6, 57.2)  
No 50.6% (42.8, 58.4)

#### If yes, for which aspects of your health and wellbeing do you use traditional Indigenous medicines?

Physical health 55.2% (45.2, 65.3)

Mental health 71.0% (62.9, 79.1)  
Emotional health 68.6% (58.9, 78.4)  
Spiritual health 91.9% (87.5, 96.2)  
Specific health condition 9.1% (4.8, 13.4)

#### How often do you feel strong in your relationship to the land/ Mother Earth?

All of the time 25.7% (18.8, 32.6)  
Most of the time 27.4% (20.5, 34.4)  
Some of the time 24.4% (18.8, 29.9)  
A little of the time 18.8% (11.3, 26.4)  
None of the time 3.7% (1.6, 5.7)

#### Total MEIM Score

1.000-2.124 4.6% (0.0, 9.4)  
2.125-2.499 2.9% (1.1, 4.7)  
2.500-2.874 21.8% (14.7, 28.9)  
2.875-3.249 23.4% (18.1, 28.7)  
3.250-3.624 21.7% (14.9, 28.5)  
3.625-4.000 25.7% (18.5, 32.8)

#### MEIM Affirmation Score

1.000-2.124 3.3% (0.0, 7.9)  
2.125-2.499 3.3% (1.3, 5.4)  
2.500-2.874 18.8% (11.8, 25.7)  
2.875-3.249 22.9% (17.6, 28.2)  
3.250-3.624 16.3% (11.7, 20.8)  
3.625-4.000 35.4% (27.3, 43.5)

#### MEIM Identity Search Subscale

1.000-2.124 6.5% (1.6, 11.5)  
2.125-2.499 13.9% (7.2, 20.6)  
2.500-2.874 17.7% (13.0, 22.5)  
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3.625-4.000 10.6% (7.1, 14.1)

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