

# Our Health Counts Toronto

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

## Project Overview & Methods

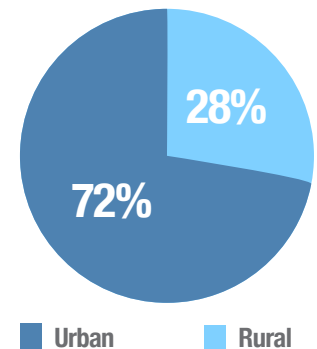
There is a critical and alarming gap in high quality, comprehensive, and inclusive data for urban Indigenous populations in Canada. Such limitations are compounded by system barriers and colonial processes. These include the lack of culturally-based, Indigenous-led and specific measures and health information systems that prevent and exclude Indigenous people from governing, managing, and leading their own research and data processes.<sup>1</sup> Our Health Counts (OHC) aims to address the health information gap and ensure that urban Indigenous communities have ownership, access, control, and possession of data that impacts their health and wellbeing.

## Why Our Health Counts Toronto?

At least **72%** of the Indigenous population in Ontario live in urban areas.

Existing data are not representative of the population.

Absence of population based health data for Indigenous people.



**How?** Work in partnership to develop urban Indigenous population-based health status and health care utilization dataset.

## Innovative Methods

1. Community Based Participatory Research Partnerships

2. Respectful Health Assessment Survey

3. Respondent Driven Sampling Methodologies

4. Data Linkage to the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences

*The OHC model recognizes that Indigenous community leadership and investment are essential for successful health programming and services for Indigenous individuals, families and communities.*

*OHC project processes is structured to ensure respect, cultural relevance, mutual capacity building, representation, and sustainability.*

What is **Respondent Driven Sampling**? Respondent driven sampling (RDS) is a chain-referral technique that is recognized internationally by scientists as a cutting edge method of gathering reliable information from hard-to-reach populations. RDS was selected for OHC because it builds on the existing strength of social networks and kin systems known to be in Indigenous communities. RDS allows for the generation of unbiased estimates of a population's composition by adjusting for different probabilities of being sampled and by use of a structured recruitment frame.<sup>2-4</sup>

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

References: 1. Smylie, J., Firestone, M., Cochran, L., Prince, C., Maracle, S., Morley, M., Spiller, M. (2011). Our Health Counts Urban Aboriginal Health Database Research Project: Community Report First Nations Adults and Children, City of Hamilton. 2. Abdul-Quader A, Heckathorn D, Sabin K, Sidel T. Implementation and analysis of respondent driven sampling: Lessons from the field. J Urban Health 2006;83(1):1-5. doi: 10.1007/s11524-006-9108-8. 3. Heckathorn D. Respondent-driven sampling II: Deriving valid population estimates from chain referral samples of hidden populations. Soc Probl 2002;49(1):11-34. doi: 10.1525/sp.2002.49.1.11. 4. Heckathorn D, Seeman S, Broadhead R, Huges J. Extensions of respondent driven sampling: A new approach to the study of injection drug users aged 18-25. AIDS Behav 2002;6(1):55-67. doi: 10.1023/A:1014528612685. 5. Firestone, M., Smylie, J. K., Spiller, M., Mcshane, K. E., Prince, C., Yu, M., & Siedule, C. (2012). Our Health Counts Urban Aboriginal Health Project Community Report: Inuit Adults, City of Ottawa. Ottawa ON.

# Our Health Counts Toronto

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

## Project Overview & Methods

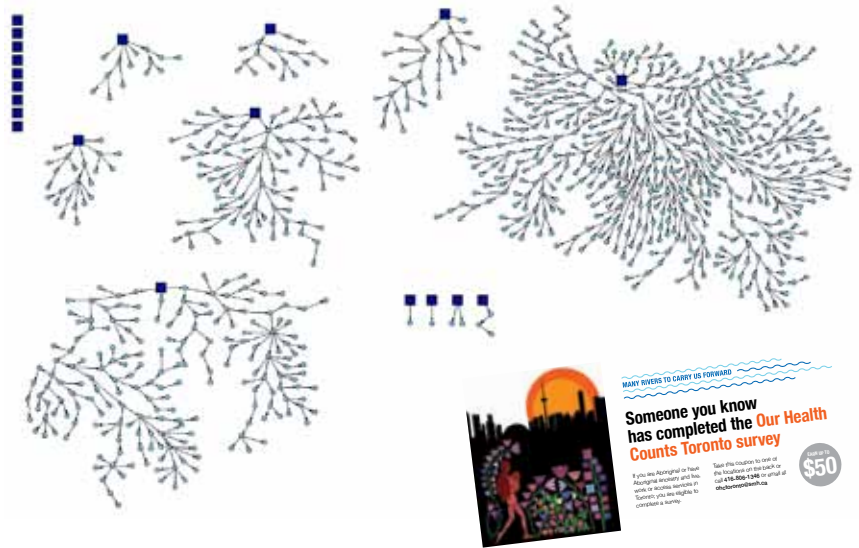
**Recruitment:** The RDS process began through the careful selection of individuals to begin recruitment, also called 'seeds'. To participate in the study, people needed to self-identify as Indigenous, be 18 years of age or older, and reside within the geographic boundaries or use services within the City of Toronto. Study participants, including the 20 seeds, received a coupon to participate, provided informed consent and then completed a health assessment survey. Participants then received 3-5 coupons to refer people from their social networks to participate, expanding through successive 'waves' of peer recruitment.

## Recruitment Dynamics

*Among Indigenous adults in Toronto, 88% of participants were recruited through referral trees originating from 3 seeds.*

*This is consistent with other RDS studies. RDS methods are structured to overcome sampling bias. This is usually achieved when recruitment chains are 6 or 7 waves long. The two longest waves in our sample were 19 and 16 waves in length, indicating our sample is statistically robust.*

## Recruitment Tree of OHC Toronto



## Our Health Counts Impact

OHC has successfully implemented an Indigenous-led health information database system to gather urban Indigenous health information across four diverse urban areas in Ontario, Canada<sup>1,5</sup>. OHC is built on Indigenous values, skills, knowledge, beliefs and practices while also balancing power relationships to promote individual and community self-determination of health information. This system has effectively bridged Indigenous practices into Western public health systems, through the maintenance of epidemiologic rigor using RDS methods, building on existing knowledge, social networks, and kin systems within Indigenous communities. The OHC model also demonstrates scalability across diverse urban contexts and community-relevant policy applications, suggesting that OHC could provide a model for the gathering and governance of data for other Indigenous communities.

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



For the full OHC Toronto report visit: [www.wellivinghouse.com](http://www.wellivinghouse.com)

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.