

# Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

An inclusive community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples of Thunder Bay

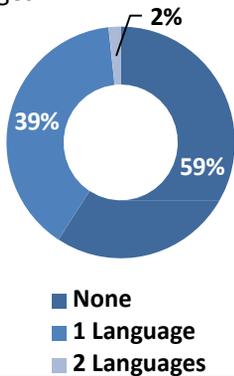
## Adult Culture and Identity

Involvement in cultural practices and traditions are key elements of 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> Despite ongoing historical traumas, Indigenous peoples have maintained many traditional practices. Among Indigenous peoples living in urban areas, most continue to practice cultural traditions and have a strong sense of cultural identity.<sup>2</sup>

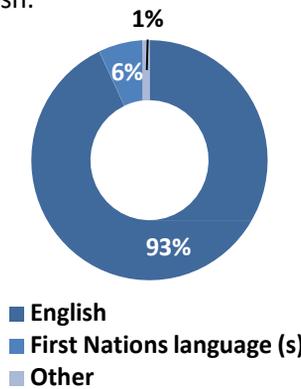
### Indigenous Languages

**41%** of Indigenous adults (15 years or older) in Thunder Bay speak an Indigenous language.

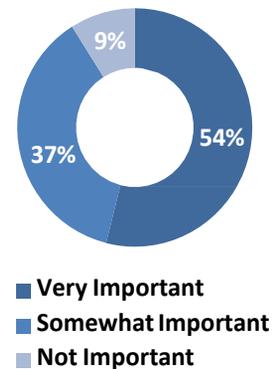
**2%** of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay speak multiple Indigenous languages:



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



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

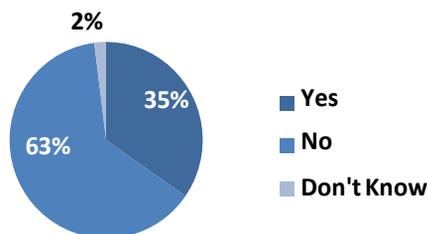


### Traditional Ceremonies

**1 in 2 (53%)**

Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay have participated in traditional ceremonies.

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



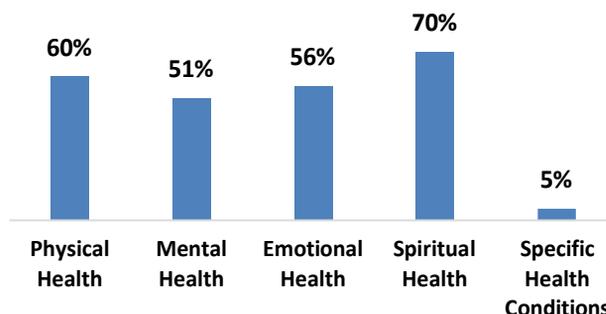
Common barriers faced accessing traditional ceremonies included:

- Unsure where to access ceremonies
- Travel distance
- Not available

### Traditional Medicines

**40%** of Indigenous adults used traditional medicines to maintain health and well-being.

Uses of traditional medicines/practices:



Common sources of traditional medicine knowledge and practices were:

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

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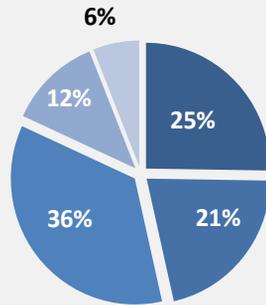
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## Adult Culture and Identity

### Identity

**83%** of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay had a **total identity score** that reflected a strong sense of identity among the population in Thunder Bay, using a modified MEIM\* score.<sup>3</sup>

### Connection to the Land



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

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- A little of the time
- None of the time

### Policy Implications

**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. Funding for Indigenous language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Indigenous languages.

**TRC Call to Action<sup>4</sup> 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.

**MMIWG Report Calls to Justice<sup>5</sup> 2.5:** We call upon all governments, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, to create a permanent empowerment fund devoted to supporting Indigenous-led initiatives for Indigenous individuals, families, and communities to access cultural knowledge, as an important and strength-based way to support cultural rights and to uphold self-determined services. This empowerment fund should include the support of land-based educational programs that can assist in foundational cultural learning and awareness.

**MMIWG Report Calls to Justice 7.5:** We call upon governments, institutions, organizations, and essential and non-essential service providers to support and provide permanent and necessary resources for specialized intervention, healing and treatment programs, and services and initiatives offered in Indigenous languages.

**Additional Recommendations:** The City of Thunder Bay, provincial and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous Peoples and organizations to:

- Fund an expansion of Indigenous language education programming for children and adults
- Expand the number and accessibility of dedicated safe spaces for the practice of ceremony and traditions
- Develop, fund, and implement an Indigenous language and cultural teacher/ knowledge keeper human resource strategy
- Further unpack and address barriers for Indigenous Peoples in the access of Indigenous language and cultural programming, services and supports

#### Definitions

Indigenous adults: persons 15 years or older self-identifying as Indigenous, such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Indigenous Nations, living or using services in the City of Thunder Bay; Traditional ceremonies: smudging, sweat lodges, fasting, healing Qulliq or Kudlik lamp lighting ceremony, etc.; Traditional medicines: such as smudging or teas

#### Sources

1. Allan & Smylie (2015); 2. Smylie et al. (2011); 3. Phinney (1992); 4. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015); 5. MMIWG Calls to Justice (2019).

#### Citation

Brar, R., Muir, N. M., Martin, E., McConkey, S., Bean, J., Gomez, C. Hardy, M., & Smylie, J. (2020). Our Health Counts Thunder Bay: Culture and identity [Fact sheet].

Population based estimates were created using respondent driven sampling

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



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# Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

## Adult Culture and Identity Reference

Our Health Counts Thunder Bay is an inclusive community-based health survey for Indigenous peoples of Thunder Bay 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)
<b>Do you speak an Indigenous language or languages?</b>	
Yes	41.00% (34.60, 47.40)
No	58.50% (52.10, 64.90)
<b>How many Indigenous languages do you speak?</b>	
None	59.00% (52.60, 65.40)
1 language	38.90% (33.00, 45.00)
2 languages	1.70% (0.00, 3.00)
3 or more languages	0.20% (0.00, 1.00)
<b>What language do you speak most often at home?</b>	
English	92.60% (89.50, 95.70)
First Nations language	6.20% (3.20, 9.30%)
Other (includes Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun)	1.10% (0.90, 1.40)
<b>How important is speaking or learning an Indigenous language to you?</b>	
Very important	53.50% (47.00, 59.90)
Somewhat important	36.80% (30.70, 42.90)
Not important	8.90% (4.80, 13.00)
<b>Do you participate in traditional Indigenous ceremony?</b>	
Yes	53.10% (46.60, 59.70)
No	46.60% (40.00, 53.10)
<b>Have you experienced challenges in trying to access traditional Indigenous ceremonies?</b>	
Yes	35.30% (27.50, 43.10)
No	63.70% (55.90, 71.50)
Don't know	1.00% (0.40, 1.60)
<b>Do you use traditional Indigenous medicines or practices to maintain your health and wellbeing?</b>	
Yes	39.80% (33.50, 46.10)
No	60.20% (53.90, 66.50)
<b>If yes, for which aspects of your health and wellbeing do you use traditional Indigenous medicines? (Can check more than one option)</b>	
Physical health	59.90% (50.60, 69.10)
Mental health	50.90% (41.50, 60.40%)
Emotional health	55.90% (46.50, 65.30)
Spiritual health	69.80% (62.51, 77.20)
Specific health condition	5.30% (2.40, 8.20)



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## Adult Culture and Identity Reference

Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
<b>How often do you feel strong in your relationship to the land/Mother Earth?</b>	
All of the time	25.20% (19.70, 30.70)
Most of the time	21.20% (16.40, 25.90)
Some of the time	34.50% (28.20, 40.90)
A little of the time	12.20% (8.10, 16.30)
None of the time	5.80% (2.00, 9.50)
<b>*Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) Modified<sup>3</sup></b>	
<b>I have spent time trying to find out more about Indigenous traditions and customs</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly Indigenous people</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I have a clear sense of my cultural background as an Indigenous person and what that means to me</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I think a lot about how being Indigenous influences my life</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I am happy that I am an Indigenous person</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I have a strong sense of belonging to an Indigenous community</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I understand pretty well what being Indigenous means to me</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>In order to learn more about being an Indigenous person, I have often talked to other Indigenous people about being Indigenous</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I have a lot of pride in my Indigenous identity</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I participate in cultural practices, such as pow wows, National Indigenous Peoples Day events, jigging/dancing, ceremonies, feasts, drumming, singing, etc.</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I feel a strong attachment towards other Indigenous people</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I feel good about my Indigenous background</b>	
Strongly agree	Agree
Disagree	Strongly Disagree



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