Health and Social Conditions of Children 0-6 years old in liyiyiu Aschii

What Parents told the Aboriginal Children's Survey

The Aboriginal Children's Survey was developed by Statistics Canada with advice from Aboriginal experts and was authorized by the GCC/CRA and the CBHSSJB. Aboriginal parents of children 0-6 years old were surveyed all across Canada in 2006 and in liyiyiu Aschii in 2007. IA was the only First Nations area included in the survey.

In liyiyiu Aschii a total of 600 parents, living in all nine communities, answered questions about their young children's health, home life and development. Four out of five parents who were asked agreed to answer the survey.

Healthy Kids

The majority of parents (73%) answered that their children were in very good or excellent health.

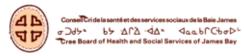
Nearly all children (94%) had seen a medical professional, such as a doctor, nurse, or dental professional, in the past year. However, only a very small number (3%) had seen a traditional healer.

According to parents, 6% of children had not received care that they needed. Sometimes, this was because the treatment was not available in the community. Other times it was due to cost, inconvenience, or transportation issues.

Common health problems were ear infections, allergies and asthma. One in 10 children had been diagnosed with asthma. This is similar to the rate in the rest of Canada.

One in five children under 6 had had problems with their teeth. Dental problems were slightly more common among children who drink pop and juice every day.





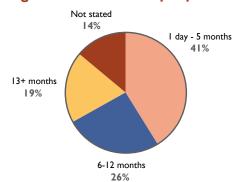
Nutrition Breastfeeding

Parents with more education were more likely to breastfeed (85% of parents with university education breastfed at least once, compared to 70% of parents with high school or less).



Parents in coastal communities were more likely to breastfeed than parents in inland communities (78% compared to 59%).

How long are children breastfed for*?



*These percentages are among children who were breastfed at least once.

Bottles

Three out of four children had been given a bottle. Often, children were bottle fed with breast milk, formula, cow's milk, powdered milk or soy milk. However, a third of children had been given bottles containing juice, kool-aid, pop or coffee whitener. These sugary drinks can contribute to dental problems.

Copies of this broadsheet may be found at: http://www.creehealth.org

Solid food

Most children under six eat a healthy mix of fruits & veggies, grains, milk and meat every week. Most parents (85%) said that their children eat fast food less than 4 times per week.

However, about 3 out of 4 children drink pop and juice regularly. Drinking these sugary drinks excessively can contribute to overweight and diabetes.

Hungry kids

About 3-4% of children under six may go hungry once a month or more when the family runs out of money for food. When money is tight, many parents say they ask relatives or friends for help,

but some skip meals. Few went to social services for help.

Physical activity

Over a third of young children in the territory spend three or more hours per day watching television, watching videos, or playing computer games.



Full Houses

The majority of households surveyed had 3-5 children under 14 years of age.

The majority of children under six were being raised in 2-parent families. However, about 1 in 5 children lived with a single mother. This is slightly higher than in the rest of Canada.

Most of the children who live with only one parent also have the fortune to live with their grandparents. In all, 30% of children in liyiyiu Aschii live in 3-generation households compared to only 5% of children in the rest of Canada.

Even when the grandparents don't live in the same house, they still play an important role in child-rearing. Grandparents usually care for and play with children on a daily basis (in 45% of cases) or on a weekly basis (in 37% of cases).

Aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings also lend a hand with looking after young children.

Just over half of children under 6 received regular childcare, for instance in a pre-school.

Developmental Milestones

Who's talking?

The survey found large differences in communication and language development between liyiyiu children aged $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 6 and aboriginal children living off-reserve. liyiyiu children are less likely to speak in full sentences, to tell stories, and to be understood by people outside the family.

Children in liyiyiu Aschii also take longer to learn to count to three and to 10 than other aboriginal children living off-reserve.

Some people who work with children in liyiyiu Aschii confirmed this finding. They offered some possible explanations:

- Cree children develop language skills more slowly because they are learning two and sometimes three languages at the same time.
- Parents in liyiyiu Aschii have different expectations about language and reading skills than do parents in the south.
- liyiyiu Aschii has fewer resources such as libraries.
- Daycares in the south make more of an effort to teach children new words.
- Parents in liyiyiu Aschii enforce less structure on their children's activities.
- Some households have problems that make it difficult to focus on the child's needs.

