

**WHAT PROTECTS YOUTH  
FROM GETTING INTO BAD HABITS:  
A MISTISSINI COMMUNITY STUDY**

**by**

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This study was prepared for:

Mamou Wechidodow, Mistissini  
&  
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&  
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Thanks to the 326 Mistissini youth  
and 5 key informants who participated in this study.

For further information about this study,  
or to obtain a copy, contact the sponsors.

# SECTION A

## *INTRODUCTION*

This spring we conducted a study with youth in Mistissini. We looked at what might protect youth from developing bad habits like drinking, sniffing solvents and smoking hash or grass. This is our report to the community about what we learned from this study.

The study on protective factors was carried out for the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program with money from the federal Solvent Abuse Program, Medical Services Branch, Health Canada. The study was planned as a participatory research project. This means that the community researchers designed and developed the study. It also means that Mistissini owns the results of this specific study. However, because this was a regional project, the results from Mistissini will also be combined with the results from other Cree communities and presented in the regional report prepared by the consultants.

To plan and develop the study, community youth researchers from seven Cree communities attended a training session in Oujé-Bougoumou with consultants. We learned how to map out the problem and plan the approach for the research. Then we developed the questions for the study (see Section D). When we came back from the workshop, we made a plan for the work in Mistissini, obtained community permission to carry out the work, carried out the research, entered the data into a computer program, analysed our data and wrote this report for the community.



## ***WHAT WE DID***

We conducted a study this past March to find out what protects youth from falling into problems like drinking, sniffing solvents and smoking hash or grass. The study mostly happened at the school. In total, questionnaires were filled out by 326 youth between the ages of 10 and 21. The average age of the youth sampled is 14 years old. (See Appendix A). We also interviewed several key informants in the education and social sectors to get their perspectives. We looked at the relationships youth have with their friends and parents or caregivers; their participation in community and school activities; and sources of information and support within the community.

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## **SECTION B**

### ***WHAT WE FOUND***

The main findings in our study of Mississauga were that, in the two weeks preceding the study, the youth who responded to our questions reported that:

- 48% had used hash and grass
- 34% had used other drugs
- 34% had sniffed solvents.

But we found that the biggest problem among youth in our community is drinking. Most of the youth we sampled (90%) think there is a drinking problem in our community. This finding matches the conclusion from the Mississauga Youth Forum.

According to our study, of the Mistissini youth who responded to our questions:

- 56% of youth drank to get drunk at least twice during the two weeks preceding the study;
- 63% of youth, or two out of every three, have friends who drink;
- 54% of youth, or over half, indicated that their friends ask them to drink.

We need to keep in mind that around the time of the study, minor hockey and broomball tournaments were being held and this could help to explain the high numbers of youth drinking at that time.

Among the youth who responded to our questions:

- 76% think there is also a drug problem in our community.
- 48% smoked hash or grass at least twice during the two weeks preceding the study.
- 64% youth, or two of every three, have friends who smoke hash or grass;
- 45% indicated that their friends ask them to smoke hash or grass.

*the average age when a youth starts  
to drink or smokes hash or grass is  
13 years old*



# SECTION C

## ***WHAT MIGHT PROTECT YOUTH FROM GETTING INTO BAD HABITS LIKE DRINKING, SMOKING HASH OR GRASS, AND SNIFFING SOLVENTS.***

Using the preliminary results from the study carried out in the four communities of Mistissini, Nemaska, Waskaganish and Eastmain, we looked at factors which might protect youth from falling into these problems<sup>1</sup>.

### ***Factors Protecting Youth From Drinking***

- In Mistissini, 45% of the youth who responded had *not* been asked by their friends to drink.  
In all communities, if a youth is *not* asked, by friends, to drink, he or she is more likely to remain sober (by 22 times) than a youth who is asked, by friends, to drink.
- In Mistissini, only 25% of the youth who responded had family members (other than parents) who *do not* drink.  
In all communities, if the family members of a youth *do not* drink, he or she is less likely to drink (by 3 times) than a youth whose family members drink.

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<sup>1</sup> This kind of analysis works best with large numbers of interviews. Although we surveyed 326 youth in Mistissini, for this analysis we combined the results with those from other communities. By doing this, we are able to present results which are more certain.



- In Mistissini, almost half (43%) of the youth who responded *have never* spent any time in a boarding home.  
In all communities, these youth are *less likely* to drink (by 2 ½ times) than youth who have lived in boarding homes.
- In the responses from youth in Mistissini, 23% had parents who participate in their child's sports events *all the time or often*. By contrast, 41% of youth said their parents participate *only sometimes*, and 36% said their parents *never* participate.  
In all communities, a youth whose parents attend his or her sports events is *less likely* to drink (by 2 times) than a youth whose parents do not attend his or her events.
- In the responses from youth in Mistissini, 63% had participated in a school workshop. 88% of them found this helpful.  
In all communities, if a youth attends school workshops on alcohol abuse and finds them helpful, he or she is *less likely* to drink (by 2 times) than a youth who does not attend or does not find these workshops helpful.

### ***Factors Protecting Youth From Smoking Hash Or Grass***

- In the responses from youth in Mistissini, 37% said their friends *do not* smoke hash or grass.  
In all communities, a youth who has friends who *do not* smoke hash or grass is less likely to smoke hash or grass (by 17 times) than a youth whose friends smoke.
- In the responses from youth in Mistissini, 55% said their friends *do not* ask them to smoke hash or grass.

- In all communities, if a youth's friends *do not* ask him or her to smoke hash or grass, he or she is less likely to use hash and grass (by 15 times) than a youth whose friends ask him or her to join in.
- In the responses from youth in Mississauga, 44% came from families where *no one* smoked hash or grass.

In all communities, if a youth has *no* family members who smoke hash or grass, he or she is less likely to do this (by almost 6 times) than a youth whose family members smoke.
  - In the Mississauga study, 79 youth had lived in a boarding home.

In all communities, a youth who has *never* lived in a boarding home is less likely to smoke hash or grass (by 2 times) than a youth who has boarded.
  - If a youth's parents attend his or her sports events and school events, he or she is *less likely* to smoke hash or grass (by 2 times) than a youth whose parents do not attend.
  - A youth who attends workshops and find them helpful is *less likely* to smoke hash or grass (by 2 times) than a youth who does not attend or who does not find them helpful.

### ***Factors Protecting Youth From Sniffing***

- In the youth who responded from Mississauga, 72% said their friends had *never* asked them to sniff.

In all communities, if a youth's friends *do not* ask him or her to sniff, he or she is less likely to sniff (by almost 5 times).  
If a youth's family members *do not* sniff, he or she is less likely to sniff (by 3 times).

- In the youth who responded from Mississauga, 61% said their friends *did not* sniff.

In all communities, if a youth's friends do not sniff, he or she is less likely (by 3 times) to sniff.

If a youth does not live in a boarding home, he or she is less likely to sniff (by 3 times).

If a youth's parents attend his or her sports events, he or she is less likely to sniff (by almost 3 times).

A youth who participates in community activities is less likely to sniff (by 1<sup>1/2</sup> times).

We found that 64% of the youth sampled in Mississauga have parents who attend their sports events.

In talking to key people in Mississauga's education and social service sectors, we were told that a number of activities are offered to provide information and to help youth with their problems, but that youth do not take advantage of these services. However, from our survey we learned that many youth do not know where to go with problems.

### ***Suggestions from the survey on where services might strengthen protective factors in the community***

23% of youth felt they had some or many problems in their life. Those who talked to someone about their problem found it helped them. However, in our survey, almost a third of the youth who feel they have problems do not talk to anyone about them. Those who did talk to someone tended to talk to someone in their family.

In our survey, two out of every five youth who responded said did not have enough information about the bad effects of drinking alcohol. And almost half of youth who responded felt alcohol was the most important problem faced by youth in the community.

And about half of them felt they did not have enough information about the bad effects of sniffing and smoking grass and hash.

We found it interesting that most of the youth responding had had someone talk to them about the risks of sniffing, while fewer said they had been talked to about the risks of drinking and smoking grass and hash.

In our survey, NNADAP workers and parents were the most important sources of information about drugs and alcohol.

The youth in our survey also seem confused about where to go for help to stop a problem with substance abuse. Over 40% of youth in our survey said they did not know where someone could go for help to stop sniffing or using drugs. The others gave a great variety of ideas about where to go.

70% of youth in our survey had suffered the loss of someone close to them. But a significant proportion of these youth had not done anything to make themselves feel better at the time of this loss.

In our survey, few youth said they had used social services to help them deal with their problems. And almost half felt that their privacy might not be respected if they did use social services.



# SECTION D

## INDIVIDUAL YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

“Question”	“Number of youth answering question”	“Results”	
<b>HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION</b>			
1 Are you female or male?	326	50 % 50%	female male
2 How old are you?	326	14 is the average age	(see Appendix A) age 10 - 13: 144 surveyed age 14 - 17: 128 surveyed age 18 - 21: 54 surveyed
3 How many people live in your home?	325	10% 68% 21%	1 - 4 people 5 - 8 people 9 - 13 people
4 Starting with the youngest one, what is the age and sex of each?			
5 In question 4, put a check mark next to the response that is you.	318	33% 20% 26% 20%	first child in family second child third to fourth child fifth to ninth child
6 Do you have any children?	326	5 % 95%	yes no
7 Do you live with both of your parents?	323	87% 13%	yes no
8 How often are your parents home?	288	75%  26%	all the time (35%) most of the time (40%)  some of the time (21%) rarely (5%)

(Note: percentages are rounded to the highest number and sometimes add to 99 or 101)

9	How many years have you lived in a boarding home? (people who answered they had never boarded were excluded)	79	average is 5.7 years in a boarding home	1 year boarding (25%) 2 - 5 years (30%) 6 or more years (46%)
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### SCHOOL

10	Do you go to school?	326	90% 10%	yes no
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11 Why did you leave school?

12	Did you participate in any workshops your school may have organised on drinking, sniffing or drug abuse?	291	63% 37%	yes no
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13	If yes, were these workshops helpful or not helpful to you?	177	88% 12%	helpful not helpful
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14	How many days of school did you miss during the last two weeks?	275	29% 45% 19% 8%	none 1 - 2 days 3 - 4 days 5 or more days
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15	Do you like school?	292	80% 20%	yes no
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### COMMUNITY SERVICES

16	What would you like to do after you graduate?	273	50% 20% 28%	further my education work don't know
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17	Do you think there is a drug problem in your community?	320	76% 23%	yes no
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18	Do you think there is a drinking problem in your community?	322	90% 9%	yes no
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19	Which community activities for youth do you participate in?	279	44% 11% 9% 35%	sports (29%) competitive (15%) trips traditional none
20	Which sports do you do?	299	30% 28% 18% 13%	hockey none broomball basketball
21	In the last two weeks, how much time did you spend playing sports?	179	13% 36% 44% 8%	0 hours 1 - 5 hours 6 - 10 hours 11 + hours
22	Did you ever go to a healing circle to deal with your problems?	315	95% 5%	no yes
23	Do you feel that your privacy is respected when you go to Social Services?	179	57% 43%	yes no
24	Do you consider that you have no, few, some or many problems in your life?	316	77% 23%	no (40%) few (37%) some (17%) many (6%)
25	Who did you talk to about the most important ones you have experienced?	69	38% 26% 4% 30%	cousin or relative parents social worker no one
26	Was that person helpful to you?	50	90% 10%	yes no



**FRIENDS**

27	Do your parents (or caregivers) like your friends?	317	93% 7%	yes no
28	How many of your friends sniff?	324	61% 39%	none a few (34%) most of them (5%)
29	How many of your friends smoke grass/hash?	323	37% 64%	none a few (41%) a lot of them (12%) most of them (11%)
30	How many of your friends drink?	325	27% 73%	none a few (34%) a lot of them (22%) most of them (17%)
31	How often do your friends ask you to sniff?	326	72% 28%	never sometimes (25%) often (3%) all the time (1%)
32	How often do your friends ask you to smoke grass/hash?	326	55% 45%	never sometimes (36%) often (6%) all the time (3%)
33	How often do your friends ask you to drink?	325	46% 55%	never sometimes (41%) often (10%) all the time (4%)

**PARENTS (OR CAREGIVERS)**

34	Which parent (or caregiver) do you find it easier to talk to?	296	51% 30% 14%	mother both mother and father father
35	How often do your parents (or caregivers) participate in your sports events?	303	36% 41% 23%	never sometimes often (10%) all the time (13%)
36	How often do your parents (or caregivers) participate in your school events?	318	26% 28% 46%	never sometimes often (10%) all the time (36%)
37	Would you want to do more enjoyable things with your parents (or caregivers)?	326	94% 6%	yes no
38	Do your parents (or caregivers) set rules in your home?	316	80% 20%	yes no
39	Are you happy at home?	325	93% 6%	yes no
40	Why / Why not?	238	30% 27% 26% 8% 5% 5%	I feel comfortable don't know parents care lots to do at home have fun no problems at home
41	How much do your parents (or caregivers) care if you smoke grass/hash?	318	91% 9%	they care they do not care at all
42	How much do your parents (or caregivers) care about whether you drink?	312	91% 9%	they care they do not care at all

43	Do you think that the adults in your house argue too much?	316	82% 18%	no yes
44	What do you do when that happens?	53	26% 25% 23% 17%	go to a friend's place go to my room don't know butt in on their argument
45	Do your parents sniff?	324	99.7%	one person responded yes no
46	Do your parents smoke grass/hash?	324	3% 97%	yes no
47	Do your parents get drunk?	324	13% 87%	yes no
48	Besides your parents, do any members of your family sniff?	318	22% 78%	yes no
49	Besides your parents, do any members of your family smoke grass/hash?	318	56% 44%	yes no
50	Besides your parents, do any members of your family drink?	320	75% 25%	yes no
51	Are you close to your relatives?	320	88% 12%	yes no
52	If yes, who are you closest to?	264	31% 26% 21% 10% 6% 6%	aunt/uncle cousin grandparents don't know brother/sister other
53	Has anyone taught you about the Cree way of life?	317	88% 12%	yes no

54	If yes, who?	276	47% 39% 8% 3%	grandparents parents teacher aunt/uncle
55	How often do you visit the elders?	318	11% 63% 26%	never once in a while often
56	Do you try to live by what they say?	282	87% 12%	yes no
57	Compared to other kids your age, would you say that you go to the bush more than them, about the same, or less?	313	13% 57% 30%	more than them about the same less

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

58	How important is religion to you?	317	48% 42% 10%	very important important not important
59	Have you ever suffered the loss of a person close to you?	313	70% 30%	yes no
60	What did you do to make yourself feel better?	186	35% 26% 16% 7% 6% 4%	nothing kept busy talked to my parents prayed cried talked to other family members
61	What do you know about the bad effects of sniffing?	289	52%   43%	it can kill you (32%) kills brain cells (16%) health problems (4%)  don't know

62	How old were you when you first sniffed?	114	12 years is average age when people began	between age 7 - 9 (9%) between age 10 - 12 (61%) between age 13 - 15 (30%) between age 16 - 17 (5%)
63	How often did you sniff during the last two weeks?	115	66%  23% 10% 2%	never  once 2 to 6 times (11 people) every day (2 people)
64	How long have you been sniffing?			
65	What do you know about the bad effects of smoking grass/hash?	284	47%    54%	it can kill you (19%) health problems(11%) memory loss (7%) its bad / dangerous (6%) causes black-outs (4%)  don't know
66	How old were you when you first tried grass/hash?	117	13 years is average age to first try	between age 8 & 9 ( 4%) between age 10 - 12 (21%) between age 13 - 15 (63%) age 16 or older (12%)
67	How often did you smoke grass/hash during the last two weeks?	115	52%  15% 27% 6%	never  once 2 to 6 times (people) every day (people)
68	How long have you been doing grass/hash?			
69	Starting with the one you use the most, what other drugs do you use?	238	76% 13% 6% 5%	none acid coke other

70	What do you know about the bad effects of drinking?	286	52%	suffer hangovers (15%) become violent (12%) kills you/suicide (12%) get into mischief (6%) black-out (4%) its bad/dangerous (3%)
			45%	don't know
71	How old were you when you first drank?	Average		13 years of age when first drank alcohol
72	How often did you drink enough to feel it during the last two weeks?	152	44%	once
			56%	more than once
73	How long have you been drinking?			
74	Does most of your drinking take place inside or outside the community?	144	80%	inside
			20%	outside
75	Have you ever been picked up by the police for something serious?	314	22%	yes
			78%	no
76	Have you ever stolen?	315	42%	yes
			58%	no
77	Have you ever done vandalism?	312	37%	yes
			63%	no

#### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION & SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY**

78	Has anyone ever talked to you about the risks of sniffing?	319	80%	yes
			20%	no

79	If yes, who?	247	51% 24% 5% 4% 4% 3% 3% 2% 2% 2%	NNADAP worker parents health worker counsellor other relative friend social worker grandparents brother/sister teacher
80	If someone wanted help, where would that person go for help to stop sniffing?	292	14% 14% 10% 6% 6% 4%  42%	healing centre social worker NNADAP worker minister parents police  don't know
81	Do you feel that you have access to enough information about the bad effects of sniffing?	214	53% 47%	yes no
82	Has anyone ever talked to you about the risks of smoking grass/hash?	315	67% 33%	yes no
83	If yes, who?	203	40% 31% 5% 5% 3% 3% 3% 3% 3% 2% 2%	NNADAP worker parents health worker counsellor brother/sister other relative friend teacher social worker grandparents police

84	If someone wanted help, where would that person go for help to stop smoking grass/hash?	273	52%	healing centre (17%) social worker (12%) NNADAP worker (8%) parents (6%) minister (5%) police (2%) other family (2%)
			46%	don't know
85	Do you feel that you have access to enough information about the bad effects of smoking grass/hash?	197	47%	yes
			53%	no
86	Has anyone ever talked to you about the risks of drinking?	313	74%	yes
			26%	no
87	If yes, who?	222	55%	parents
			19%	NNADAP worker
			5%	other relative
			5%	health worker
			4%	counsellor
			3%	brother/sister
			3%	friend
			2%	grandparents
88	Do you feel that you have enough information about the bad effects of drinking?	215	61%	yes
			39%	no
89	What do you think is the most important problem faced by the youth now?	286	43%	alcohol
			15%	drugs
			7%	sniffing
			5%	suicide
			4%	smoking
			2%	boredom
			21%	don't know

Youth interviewed: 326 Language of interview: English (65%); Cree (35%)



# APPENDIX A

## AGES OF YOUTH SURVEYED IN MISTISSINI

In total, we interviewed 326 youth between the ages of 10 and 21 and 5 key informants. This works out to 46% of all youth of these ages. This means that our results tell you what almost half of the youth thought of a question (at least those questions which most answered).

Ideally, we had planned to try to interview 66% of youth of each age. This would have meant that our results would have told you what 2 out of every 3 10 years olds thought; what 2 out of every 3 16 year olds thought, etcetera. In the end we were able to interview 71% of our target.

Age group	Mistissini population in each age group			Ideal number in sample	Interviews completed
	boys	girls	total		
10	24	37	61	41	39
11	20	30	50	32	35
12	22	30	52	32	34
13	32	32	64	41	36
14	32	30	62	41	37
15	28	29	57	37	34
16	28	25	53	37	32
17	34	28	62	41	25
18	28	33	61	41	17
19	28	34	62	41	12
20	33	24	57	37	12
21	35	27	62	41	13
Totals:			703	462	326

## APPENDIX B

These were the results when we combined the Mistissini data with information from Eastmain, Nemaska and Waskaganish.

	<b>MORE LIKELY</b>		
	<b>to be picked up by the police</b>	<b>to have done vandalism</b>	<b>to have stolen</b>
<i>A youth who drinks is:</i>	2.7 times more likely	2.4 times more likely	2.3 times more likely
<i>A youth who smokes hash or grass is:</i>	1.9 times more likely	2.2 times more likely	2.2 times more likely
<i>A youth who sniffs is:</i>	2.2 times more likely	3.4 times more likely	2.8 times more likely