

Aboriginal Canadians: A Dozen Statistics that Tell a Story

Carolyn Bray, Executive Director, March 2008



Canada's Aboriginal population has surpassed the 1,000,000 mark, representing our youngest and fastest growing segment. Without a doubt, however, they are also Canada's population demographic at greatest risk for personal, social and economic instability. Consider these facts:

- In Canada, 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually abused. Among the entire Canadian population, this compares to 24% of girls under the age of 16 experiencing rape or coercive sex, and a further 17% being victims of incest.
- 60% of Aboriginal children under the age of 6 live in poverty. Compare that to the entire Canadian population where only 11.7% of children under the age of 18 live in low income families.
- The average yearly income of Aboriginal people in Canada is \$15,700 as compared to \$25,400 for non-Aboriginal people
- 70% of Aboriginal youth drop out of school nationwide. This rate drops to 15% among the entire Canadian population.
- 3% of First Nation people have obtained a university degree. Among all Canadians age 25 and 65, 23% have obtained a university degree.
- 72% of Aboriginal single mothers identified government transfer payments as their major source of income (Northern Development Commissioned Study of Aboriginal Mothers 1996)
- The main reason for Aboriginal children being placed into care is poverty. Only 2.5% of Aboriginal children were placed in Aboriginal foster homes
- Aboriginal women were three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than those who are non-Aboriginal. (Stats Canada - 2005)
- Over the last two decades, some 500 indigenous women in Canada have been murdered or are missing and rendered dead (NWAC, 2004).
- Aboriginal children in Canada are twice as likely to be born prematurely, underweight, or die within the first year of life, and three to four times more likely to suffer sudden infant death syndrome
- Aboriginal youth are 11 times more likely than non Aboriginal youth to have abused solvents or sniffed aerosols. The average age for Aboriginal youth to begin abusing solvents is 9.72 yrs.
- First Nations female youth are eight times more likely to commit suicide than non First Nations female youth

Poor health, limited education, and poverty have become the casualties of generational ignorance and racism experienced by Aboriginals including government legislated atrocities that lead First Nation, Inuit and Métis children away from their homes, parents, cultures and languages and into inexcusable injustices, including abuse in residential schools. YWCA Muskoka and all YWCA's in Canada are committed to greater equity and justice for our Aboriginal community. Meaningful dialogue always begins with awareness and empathy. This month we encourage you to share these statistics that inform our work with your family, friends, and neighbours. Together, we can make a difference.