



## Aboriginal Health

***“The health status of Aboriginal Peoples, measured by life expectancy and many other indicators, is much worse than the health status of Canadians as a whole.”***

Canadian Institute for Health Information, February, 2004

### Life Expectancy

- Life expectancy at birth has improved among the First Nations' population. In 2000, it rose to 68.9 years for males and 76.6 years for females, an increase from 1980 of 13.1 per cent and 12.6 per cent respectively, but still **five to seven years below** the national average. (Source: *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Basic Departmental Data, 2001*)

### Infant Mortality

- The 1999 First Nations' infant mortality was 8.0 deaths per 1,000 live births or **1.5 times** higher than the Canadian infant mortality rate of 5.5. (Sources: *Statistics Canada; Health Canada, Healthy Canadians, A federal Report on Comparable Health Indicators, 2002*)

### Birth Weight

- The First Nations and the Canadian populations had similar proportions of births with low birth weight in 1999; however, almost **twice** as many First Nations births were classified as high birth weight in the same year. (Sources: *Statistics Canada, Health Canada, Healthy Canadians, A federal Report on Comparable Health Indicators, 2002*)

### Suicide and Injury

- First Nations' populations lose almost **five times** as many potential years of life (per 100,000 population) to unintentional injury and three times as many years to suicide as do Canadians overall. (Source: *Health Canada, Unintentional and Intentional Injury Profile for Aboriginal People in Canada, 1990-1999*)

### Youth Suicide

- The rate of First Nations' youth suicide is extremely high – up to **six times higher** than the Canadian average. Among First Nations men between the ages of 15-24, the rate is 126 per 100,000 compared to 24 per 100,000 for young Canadian men. Young women from First Nations registered a rate of 35 per 100,000 versus only 5 per 100,000 for Canadian women. (Source: *Canadian Institute of Child Health, 2000, Ottawa*)

### Tuberculosis

- In 1999, the TB rate among First Nations remained **8 to 10 times higher** than that seen in the Canadian population as a whole. (Source: *Health Canada, Tuberculosis in First Nations Communities, 1999*)

## Diabetes

- The prevalence of diabetes in the Canadian population seems to be increasing, and the self reported rate is **two to three times higher** among First Nations populations than for Canadians as a whole. (Source: *Diabetes Among Aboriginal People in Canada: The Evidence, 2000*)

## AIDS

- The proportion of Canada's total AIDS cases contracted by Aboriginal people climbed from 1.0 per cent in 1990 to 6.2 per cent in 2001, this represents **six times** the national average. There are concerns AIDS may reach **epidemic** proportions among First Nations. (Sources: *Health Canada, HIV/AIDS Among Aboriginal Persons in Canada: A Continuing Concern. HIV/AIDS Epi Update, Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada, April 2002*)

## FAS/FAE

- Studies on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effects are very limited in Canada, but any evidence suggests "a very high incidence among Canadian Aboriginal children."\* Research done in BC and the Yukon suggest the rate in some First Nations communities is one in five children. Overall, FAS/FAE among First Nations is estimated at **25 to 30 times** the national average. \*(Source: *Canadian Paediatric Society, Paediatric Child Health, Volume 7, No 3, March 2002*)

## Smoking

- The percentage of First Nations' population aged 18 and over, who smoke, is 48.3 per cent. Many children suffer from the effects of second-hand smoke. (Source: *Health Canada, Healthy Canadians, A federal Report on Comparable Health Indicators, 2002*)

## Living Conditions

- First Nations living conditions/quality of life is ranked **63<sup>rd</sup>**, or amongst **Third World** conditions – the root cause of poor health. Overcrowded housing, mold, and unsafe drinking water helps spread communicable diseases at a rate 10 to 12 times higher than the national average. Over 40 per cent of homes are considered as inadequate shelter. (Source: *Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1999 and Health Canada, 2003*)

***"For health gains to be achieved, Aboriginal communities need the resources and capacity to be able to move beyond responding to crises and begin to address the determinants of health."*** Canadian Institute for Health Information, February, 2004

***"Until housing shortages are gone, until there is an economy that can support the growing number of young people reaching working age, until the education system can produce more high school graduates, and until a wide-range of post-secondary opportunities are available. . . the situation is unlikely to change."*** Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2002