CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES)

PEOPLES REPORT

JUNE, 2017
PREFACE:

For those individuals that are reading this document it is important to understand that the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES), was a self-reporting survey. This means that participants answered the survey questions as they felt at the time the participant completed the survey. As such, surveyors could not prompt or control the ways in which participants answered the survey questions. Adult respondents answered for themselves and their participant children who were under 12 years of age. Youth participants from 13 to 17 years of age also answered for themselves. Chiefs of Ontario would like to make the reader aware of this information while reviewing this report.
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The Chiefs of Ontario would like to take this time to express our gratitude and to thank all of the communities that have participated in the First Nations Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey. They are:

- Batchewana First Nation
- Couchiching First Nation
- Curve Lake First Nation
- Delaware Nation (Moraviantown)
- Eabametoong First Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Hiawatha First Nation
- Iskatewizaagegan #39 Independent First Nation
- Kashechewan First Nation
- Kingfisher Lake First Nation
- Kitchechewan First Nation
- Lake Superior Nation
- Long Lake No. 58 First Nation
- M’Chigeeng First Nation
- Mitaanjigamiing First Nation
- Mohawks of Akwesasne
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
- Moose Deer Point First Nation
- Munsee Delaware Nation
- Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation
- Oneida Nation of the Thames
- Pikangikum First Nation
- Sagamok Anishnawbek
- Saugeen First Nation
- Serpent River First Nation
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation
- Temagami First Nation
- Whitesand First Nation
- Wikwemikong First Nation

Sincere thanks to each of these communities – Miigwetch, N’ia weh!

Chiefs of Ontario would also like to thank all the community members that gave their time to the survey. The information that you have graciously shared is very important to future planning and policy development for Ontario First Nations.

We want to also give our sincere gratitude to the many community surveyors and community leads across Ontario who worked with their communities in gathering data, reporting results and coordinating information sharing. Your contribution will not be forgotten.

The Chiefs of Ontario would also like to thank First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey Implementation Team at the Chiefs of Ontario who worked diligently with the communities.
Executive Summary

The following report presents the Ontario First Nations findings from the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES). In Ontario Region, a total of 30 First Nation communities participated in the survey, which was conducted between November 2013 and May 2015 through the Chiefs of Ontario, a regional partner of the First Nations Information Governance Centre, responsible for reporting on national-level statistics.

FNREEES measures the status of early childhood development, education, and employment among First Nation children, youth and adults living in First Nation communities. Although the FNREEES Survey is the first of its kind, some of the issues examined through FNREEES overlapped with questions posed earlier in the First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS), making it possible to compare FNREEES data with RHS Phase 2 (2008/10) Ontario Region data. FNREEES was also similar to RHS in that it gathered information from four age groups: adults age 18 and over, youth age 12 to 17 and parents or guardians of children age 0 to 5 and age 6 to 11.

Early Childhood:

Most parents and families are focused on providing nurturing environments and guidance for their children and are very much involved in their children’s learning. There is a high level of satisfaction with child care arrangements and availability; less than one in ten parents are affected by lack of available child care.

First Nations language and culture is a strong feature of both child care and school settings. First Nations representation in the school setting has also increased from about two out of five older adults (over age 45) who had First Nations teachers at school, to nine out of ten children who now have First Nations teachers at school. More youth and children now attend school in their own community than adults did.
Education:

In terms of academic performance, more children and youth are above average in school than adults were, with more youth earning A’s and B’s and fewer earning C’s. Fewer youth than adults have repeated a grade, and far fewer children require tutoring. Most youth are not skipping classes, something that had been much more common among adults.

Both adults and youth reported feeling with a strong sense of belonging based on their school friendships, fun experiences and involvement in school activities. Youth and children are very active in extracurricular sports and clubs. Parents are involved in their children’s education, helping them with homework, attending parent-teacher interviews and school events, and helping out at class trips or school fundraising activities. Parents are quite satisfied with the school’s learning resources and support services.

A few areas of concern in education were noted, such as an increase in lateness among children and youth compared to adults, a significant number of children and youth missing school due to school closures, and the fact that half of youth are experiencing bullying at school. Students’ use of substances including drinking, drugs and smoking is problematic but less of an issue among youth than previously among adults.

Perceptions about the importance of school have shifted. The vast majority of youth now have a circle of friends focused on graduating from high school and going on to post-secondary education or training. Parents highly value graduation and post-secondary education. Youth believe that school has taught them things that could be useful in a job, it is not a waste of time and it is giving them confidence to make decisions. Nine out of ten adults and youth alike feel that doing well in school could help them get a job. However, almost half of adults and youth are concerned that the job skills they need cannot be learned in the classroom, and a significant portion feel that school has done little to prepare them for adult life.

Youth equate a good job later in life with school success and post-secondary education, and they expect to enjoy and do well in college or university. They are equipped with excellent reading and computer skills, and good writing and oral communication skills. However, over two thirds of youth have either not thought about possible future careers or have not yet decided on one they are interested in, and some are burdened by the pressure to achieve.

A quarter of adults are planning to take some post-secondary education. More adult learners attended college than university; over half had moved away from their home community for their post-secondary education and two thirds had been unable to access post-secondary courses through the Internet or other distance education.
Employment and Income:

FNREEES data indicates that the percentage of First Nation adults in Ontario with less than $20,000 annual income has increased since 2008/10, and First Nations income levels overall are much lower than the provincial average. Over half of First Nation adults are struggling to meet basic needs such as utilities, food and shelter expenses. Food security is an issue that affects over a third of First Nation households, four times higher than national levels. Over a quarter of First Nation youth are going to school hungry, a level much higher than among Canadian youth.

Less than half of adults are employed, down from 2008/10, and almost 40% of adults are currently looking for work. Four out of five employed adults are working within a First Nation community, mainly to be close to family, for financial reasons, to give back to the community or to stay connected to their culture, language and traditions. Working adults are happy at work, feel valued, and are generally satisfied with the balance between work life and home life. However, almost two thirds feel their work is stressful. Four out of five working adults feel their job offers opportunities to learn new job-related skills. Most adults have excellent or good reading and computer skills and other job skills. Most adults and about half of youth have also learned job-seeking skills such as writing a resume and preparing for a job interview.
I. Introduction

The following report describes the Ontario First Nations findings from the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES) and is organized in that manner.

The First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES) is a new cross-sectional survey designed to measure the status of early childhood development, education, and employment among First Nations children, youth and adults living in First Nations and Northern communities across Canada. FNREEES was funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC, formerly Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC, formerly Human Resources and Skills Development), and Health Canada. It was conducted between November 2013 and May 2015.

The First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) was responsible for coordinating the development of the survey and reporting on national-level statistics. Four age-specific versions of the survey were developed: children age 0 to 5, 6 to 11 years (conducted with parents or guardians); youth age 12 to 17 years; and adults age 18 and up. A total of 20,428 surveys were completed in 243 First Nations communities across Canada.

As a regional partner, the Chiefs of Ontario undertook the process of conducting the surveys for Ontario region and maintains the role of data steward for the Ontario First Nations database. A total of 29 First Nation communities participated in the survey in Ontario:

- Batchewana First Nation
- Couchiching First Nation
- Curve Lake First Nation
- Delaware Nation (Moraviantown)
- Eabametoong First Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Hiawatha First Nation
- Iskatewizaagegan #39 Independent First Nation
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- Saugeen First Nation
- Serpent River First Nation
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation
- Temagami First Nation
- Whitesand First Nation
- Wikwemikong First Nation
II. Methodology

The First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES) was implemented to collect information from First Nations living on-reserve. It utilized a cross-sectional study design, collecting and analyzing data from a specific point in time and allowing for a snapshot of the First Nations in Ontario. A two-stage sampling strategy was employed: first, choosing the Ontario First Nations communities that would be asked to participate and, second, choosing the Ontario First Nations individuals that would be asked to participate.

In the first stage, all Ontario First Nations communities were stratified by population size:

- large: 1500 or more individuals;
- medium: 300 to 1499 individuals;
- small: less than 300 individuals;

and Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAC) Geographic Zone:

Zone 1: Located within 50 km of the nearest service centre with year-round road access;
Zone 2: Located between 50 and 350 km from the nearest service centre with year-round road access;
Zone 3: Located over 350 km from the nearest service centre with year-round road access;
Zone 4: The First Nation has no year-round road access to a service centre and, as a result, experiences a higher cost of transportation. Ontario First Nations communities categorized as large were automatically included, and all other Ontario First Nations communities were randomly sampled, within their respective population size/INAC Geographic Zone, with an equal probability of being selected.

In the second stage, Ontario First Nations individuals were stratified by gender (male, female) and age (0-5 years old, 6-11 years old, 12-17 years old, 18-54 years old, 55+ years old). Ontario First Nations individuals were identified using Band Membership Lists and were randomly sampled, within their respective age/gender group, with an equal probability of being selected.

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Population Profile

The adult sample was made up of 50.5% men and 49.5% women. Most adult respondents (77.0%) were age 18 to 54; 23.0% were age 55 and up.

Youth age ranges were split fairly evenly from age 13 (20.7%), 14 (15.2%), 15 (15.5%), age 16 (26.9%), to age 17 (9.2%); the youth were 51.8% male and 48.2% female.

Children were 51.1% male and 48.9% female, ranging in age from 0 to 11; 45.9% of children were age zero to 5 years, and 51.4% were age 6 to 11. The children’s surveys were completed by their primary caregivers; seven out of ten (70.0%) were their biological mothers and 23.7% were their biological fathers.

Challenges

There were a number of challenges that the Ontario Region faced with respect to effectively collecting surveys. One of the more predominant challenges was the access to the band membership lists. Many communities did not have up to date band lists. Even though, there was a commitment by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to work with the First Nations Information Governance Centre the communiqué many times did not reach the Band Membership Clerks which raised issues with confidentiality and the development of the sample. Many communities did not have capacity to conduct the survey due to community readiness, and survey fatigue. Further, the participants themselves found the survey too long and were discouraged by the length and time commitment. More importantly, the northern communities had urgent issues and community crises such as suicides and winter road problems to address; consequently, they could not commit to the FNREEES, as a result there were many replacement communities which in turn lead to time sensitivity and not reaching survey targets. Finally, the high cost of meeting face-to-face with fly in communities prevented the Ontario Region team from enlisting the communities to take part in the survey. Modest funding did not allow for effective soliciting of the FNREEES.
First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education & Employment Survey (FNREEES)

Our Voices Build Strong Nations

Target Population

Sampling included a proper mix of male and female participants in five (5) age groups:

- 55+ years
- 12-17 years
- 18-54 years
- 6-11 years
- 0-5 years

The Children’s Survey were completed by their primary caregivers.

- 70.0% Biological Mothers Completed the Survey
- 23.7% Biological Fathers Completed the Survey

FNREEES SAMPLE SIZE

29 First Nations participated in Ontario

Respondents in Ontario consisted of:

- 643 ADULTS
- 280 YOUTH
- 665 CHILDREN
First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey

III. Early Childhood Development and Childcare

This following are findings and themes that emerged from the questions asked within the survey on early childhood development and child care.

Nurturing and Development

Nurturing Early Child Development at Home:
Families are providing nurturing environments and guidance. Over eight out of ten parents said their child’s environment provided indoor play space, plenty of child-friendly conversation, a safe environment, age-appropriate learning materials such as toys and books, constant adult supervision and outdoor play space. Over three quarters of parents said their child’s environment encouraged healthy behaviours and provided healthy nutrition.

Most parents (83.7%) were physically affectionate with their child every day, and 75.0% verbally praised their child every day (saying “good job” for example).

In terms of what they would do when their child does things they are not supposed to, parents said they would always or often: describe alternative, acceptable behaviour (68.0%); tell the child to stop (60.4%); or calmly discuss the problem (59.0%). They would rarely or never ignore it (71.0%). Over four out of ten parents (43.5%) would rarely or never raise their voice or yell at their child; 43.2% would sometimes do this and 11.5% would often do this. Forty-three percent (43.0%) of parents would rarely or never show their child disapproval through gestures or body language; 32.0% would sometimes do this and 13.6% would often do this. Other responses included taking away privileges, which 31.8% of parents would always or often do and 42.6% would sometimes do; or giving their child a “time out”, which 13.9% of parents would often do and 38.3% would sometimes do.

Parents and family members are involved in many aspects of their child’s learning. Over half of parents or family members sang songs and rhymed together with their child every day, and three out of five parents or family members read with their child at least once a week. Many parents said they or other family members were involved in their child’s learning on a daily basis, such as encouraging their child to do things on their own (84.4%); teaching them to solve problems (79.1%); showing them how to do chores, cook or fix things through hands-on learning (70.5%); helping them count objects (58.2%); and teaching them to identify letters and/or numbers (52.9%).
NURTURING EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT AT HOME

8 OUT OF 10 OF PARENTS SAID THEIR CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT INCLUDED:

- Constant adult supervision
- Indoor play space
- Outdoor play space
- Age-appropriate learning materials

CHILD-FRIENDLY CONVERSATIONS

- 83.7% of parents were physically affectionate with their child every day
- 75.0% of parents verbally praised their child every day
- 3 out of 5 parents or family members read with their child at least once a week
- Over 50% of parents sang songs & rhymed together with their child daily
Developmental Milestones:
Families see many developmental milestones being achieved by their two to five year olds. Parents said their child was able to: find things they needed without being told, such as finding a matching shoe (97.1%); dress themselves (89.3%); sort objects, clothes, food or any other items by groups (87.0%); their child was toilet trained (82.8%).

In terms of communication among four and five year old children, 95.7% of parents said their child could explain things they had seen or done in a clear, comprehensible way; 95.0% said their four and five year olds were able to carry out a simple instruction after hearing it only once; and 91.1% said that if their child did not understand what someone had said, they would ask for it to be repeated or explained.
Childcare

Childcare Quality, Availability and Accessibility
Families are satisfied with the quality of child care. Parents were very satisfied (62.5%) or satisfied (36.1%) with their child care arrangements. About a third of parents (34.3%) said their child was currently receiving regular child care and 94.7% said their child care is located in the First Nation community. A variety of child care arrangements were identified: 52.3% said their child was cared for in their own home with a relative; 30.0% said it was in a daycare centre; and 25.7% said it was in a before or after-school program.

Over eight out of ten parents said their child care arrangements offered plenty of child-friendly conversation, a clean and orderly physical setting, constant adult supervision, developmentally- and age-appropriate materials and equipment, and sanitary procedures such as hand-washing. Over three quarters of parents said their child care offers healthy nutrition, sufficient indoor and outdoor play areas, developmentally- and age-appropriate activities, and they are able to reach the parent in an emergency. Six out of ten said their child care provider has specialized training in early childhood education.

Out of those parents whose child is not receiving regular child care, three quarters (76.6%) said it was because they did not need it (stay-at-home parent, on maternity leave etc.), and 7.7% said it was because child care was not available for their child’s age.

Almost half of parents (45.9%) said their child care arrangement was subsidized and 54.1% said it was not. For over three quarters of parents (76.7%), their subsidy covered all child care costs, and for 23.3% it covered some child care costs.
First Nations Language and Culture at Child Care:

Child care arrangements support First Nations language and culture. Over half of parents (55.2%) said their child was exposed to a First Nations language some of the time at their child care and 13.1% said most of the time. When asked what language is spoken most often at their main child care, however, 73.0% of parents said English (no other languages were reported).

In terms of how often their child learns traditional teachings at their child care, 40.7% of parents said almost daily and 29.4% said weekly. 93% indicated that there were First Nations caregivers at their child care centre, and 98.6% said their child interacts with First Nations caregivers at the child care.

Youth and Adults in Early Childhood Programs

More youth than adults attended early childhood or preschool programs. About two thirds of youth (64.6%) and over a quarter of adults (27.0%) had attended an early childhood or preschool program. Most of those youth who attended early childhood or preschool were in a program designed specifically for First Nations such as a Head Start program (60.0%) or another First Nation-specific program (27.0%). Data on how many adults were in a First Nation-specific early childhood program was not available.
Sources of Parental Support:
There are many sources of support for parents. Close to half of parents (43.1%) said they always have someone they can turn to for support, and another third (34.2%) said they sometimes have this support. In terms of where they would go for support or information, parents said they went to: family and friends (95.0%); a doctor/family physician (69.0%); the internet (41.0%); a community health nurse (37.9%); a nurse or health care provider (35.3%); family members (31.7%); an obstetrician (29.7%); community members (28.1%); a parenting program or course (27.5%); Elders (27.2%); books on child development (25.7%); early childhood educators (20.8%); informational materials or pamphlets (20.6%); television or DVDs (15.9%); knowledge holders (12.1%); or a parent resource centre (9.4%).

Teen Parents:
First Nation adults have become parents much younger than Ontarians. Although none of the youth respondents in the FNREEES survey had been pregnant or fathered a child, almost two out of five First Nation adults (38.5%) indicated they were under age 20 when they first became parents. In comparison, research shows that for Ontario as a whole in 2011, only 3.0% of births were to mothers under age 20 (most of which were first-time births)\(^2\). Statistics Canada noted a possible link between teenage mothers and lower educational expectations, i.e. not expecting to achieve a high level of education.\(^3\)

Summary
In contrast to the over-representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system, FNREEES data are indicative of effective parenting as shown by parents’ warm nurturance, physical affection, praise and guidance of their children and encouragement of their learning – attributes which promote resilience in children, allowing them to bounce back from the many challenges they face.\(^4\)

Given that parents are obtaining information on child development and parenting mainly from family and friends, a family physician or the internet more than community health nurses, specialists, parenting programs or resource materials, there may be a need for more online, user-friendly, up to date, culturally-based resources on parenting for First Nations families.

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IV. Education

The following section outlines the findings and themes that emerged from the questions that were asked in the survey on education.

School

School Location:
Four out of five parents (81.0%) said their child attended school in a First Nation community. Those parents whose child had attended school outside the First Nation community gave the following reasons: no school available for the child’s age group (59.1%); on a waiting list (24.3%); and for convenience (9.7%).

Three quarters of adults under age 45 (74.9%), 68.1% of adults 45 and over, and 48.3% of youth had attended school outside of a First Nation community. Half of adults under 45 (49.4%), 64.9% of adults age 45 and over, and 40.1% of youth who attended school outside their First Nation community said it was because there was no school available in their community; and 29.4% of adults under 45, 30.9% of those 45 and over, and 33.8% of youth said there was no school available for their grade level in the community.

A greater proportion of adults age 45 and over than adults under 45 had gone to school outside the community for every grade level. More youth had attended school outside the community for the primary grades, while fewer had gone outside the community for their senior years. Over a third of adults under 45 (36.8%) and 19.6% of those 45 and over had had to live away from home at some point in order to attend elementary or high school.

Changing Schools:
Respondents were asked how many times in total they had changed schools, including preschool, kindergarten, elementary and high school. One in ten adults and youth changed schools twice, roughly two out of five adults and slightly less youth (22.6% of adults, 17.4% of youth) changed schools three times, and 10.9% of adults and 7.7% of youth did so four times. For about half of adults (48.7%), their only school changes were for normal transitions (progression through the grades such as from elementary school to high school). For another 29.5% of adults and 20.3% of youth, one school change was for another reason other than normal grade transitions; and another 8.0% of adults and 27.5% of youth experienced two school changes that were for reasons other than normal transitions (reasons were unspecified).

About two thirds of parents (65.5%) said their child had never changed schools; 17.5% said their child had changed schools once and 5.0% said their child had changed schools three times.
Over half (54.1%) of parents said none of these changes were for reasons other than normal transitions through the school system; 28.3% said one change was for a reason other than normal transitions and 12.8% said their child had changed schools two times for reasons other than normal transitions.

**Commuting to School:**
When asked how often they had a reliable way of getting to school, 89.0% of youth and 89.7% of parent who answered for their children said all the time, compared to 71.3% of adults. Almost two thirds of youth (62.4%) and 75.4 % of children took the school bus (compared to 47.2% of adults); a third of youth (32.0%) walked or rode a bicycle (compared to 42.6% of adults), and about one in five youth (19.3%) and children (19.9%) were a passenger in a vehicle.

On average it had taken half of adults (47.3%) about ten to fifteen minutes to get to school. It took most youth (29.1%) about ten to twenty minutes, and over half of parents (53.6%) said it took their child between ten to twenty minutes.
School Attendance:
In terms of attendance, over two out of five adults attributed their absence from school to lack of interest or disliking school, however none of the youth and very few children had been absent for this reason. A quarter of adults (26.6%) said they were absent from school on average one to two days per month, mainly due to illness or injury (55.3%); disliking or being disinterested in school (41.1%); or sleeping in (32.8%). Half of youth (50.3%) were absent one to two days per month and 23.1% were absent three to five days a month, mainly due to illness or injury (73.0%); sleeping in (50.4%); medical appointments (30.2%), or due to the school being closed (23.9%).

Two out of five parents (42.3%) said their child was absent from school one to two days per month and 24.9% said it was three to five days. Reasons for their children’s absence included: illness/injury, 82.8%; school was closed, 36.1%; medical appointment, 33.9%; slept in, 22.3%; family-related issues, 17.6%; and dislike or disinterest in school, 3.6%.

In terms of lateness, about a third of adults (32.5%) said they were late for school one to two days per month, mostly because they slept in (65.2%); 26.1% said it was due to disliking or being disinterested in school; 18.7% said it was due to illness or injury. Almost half of youth (46.5%) were late one to two days a month; 13.1% were late three to five days a month; 8.9% were late six to nine days a month; and 24.2% said they were never late. Lateness among youth was due to sleeping in (76.2%); problems with transportation such as no ride or missing the bus (41.3%); medical appointments (25.4%); or illness/injury (17.2%).

Parents reported their children arriving late for school one to two days per month (36.6%); three to five days (15.6%); or none (38.0%). Reasons for children’s lateness included sleeping in (77.6%); problems with transportation (26.7%); medical appointment (21.6%); illness or injury (21.2%); and family-related issues (9.9%).

One quarter of adults (25.4%) had never skipped classes and 15.8% had skipped classes three to five days per month.

Among youth, 74.7% had never skipped classes and 14.2% had skipped classes one to two days a month. Most youth (93.3%) said that if they skipped classes without their parent or guardian’s permission, the school contacted them to let them know.

Seven out of ten adults (69.4%) and 67.2% of youth had never been suspended from school. Among youth, 18.4% had been suspended once and 14.4% had been suspended more than once; for 15.2% of adults this had occurred more than once. When asked if their child had ever been suspended, 11.2% of parents also said yes.
Academic/Grade Retention Early Leave/Completion

Academic Performance:
In terms of their overall grade average on their report card during their last year at school, 17.1% of adults and 26.0% of youth had earned 80% or more (mainly A’s); 38.7% of adults and 47.9% of youth had earned 70 to 79% (mainly B’s); and 29.0% of adults and 18.2% of youth had achieved 60 to 69% (mainly C’s). The data indicate that First Nations youth in Ontario performed better academically than First Nations youth at the national level as reported by the First Nations Information Governance Centre.5

Overall, 58.1% of adults and 67.9% of youth described their performance at school as average; 26.2% of adults and 8.3% of youth said their performance was below average; and 15.7% of adults and 23.8% of youth said it was above average.

Parents reported their child’s overall grade average as follows: 27.3% mainly A’s (80% or above); 40.3% mainly B’s (70 to 79%); 14.9% mainly C’s (60 to 69%). Overall, parents indicated that 24.0% of their children did above average, 65.9% did average; and none of their children were reported as performing

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Grade Retention and Tutoring:
Two out of five adults, (41.5%) and 18.3% of youth had repeated a grade at some point. For three quarters of adults (74.0%) and 71.7% of youth, no additional help or tutoring was seen as necessary by their teachers, parents/guardians or themselves.

A quarter of parents (24.8%) reported that they or their child’s teachers felt that their child required additional help or tutoring; 54.6% said that their child was receiving additional help or tutoring (not counting from a family member).

Leaving School Early:
Almost two thirds of adults (62.9%) had dropped out of elementary or high school; over half (52.3%) dropped out once and 31.4% dropped out a second time. Almost half of adults (47.3%) had eventually returned to school. When asked if any of their brothers or sisters or step-siblings had ever dropped out of high school, 69.1% of adults and 20.9% of youth said yes.

High School Completion:
Adults, youth and parents were asked about the highest grade they had completed. Almost three quarters of adults (71.9%) had earned a high school diploma, and 14.3% of adults had completed high school through upgrading (none were attending high school equivalency or upgrading at the time of the survey). Over a quarter (28.2%) of adults had completed Grade 12; 7.7% had completed Grade 11; 14.8% had completed Grade 10; 7.2% had completed Grade 8; and 3.0% had completed Grade 1 to 5.

Out of the parents surveyed, more fathers or male guardians had completed a high school diploma or equivalency certificate (18.7%) than mothers or female guardians (13.0%). This trend was reversed at the post-secondary level however, where only mothers or female guardians completed a diploma/certificate from community college (14.3%) or a Bachelor’s degree (5.2%, described further below under Post-Secondary Education).
Language/Culture/Belonging and Family Involvement

First Nations Language and Culture at School:
Although most adults (93.3% of those under 45 and 86.1% of those 45 and over), and virtually 100% of youth said the language they used most often at school was English, over four out of five adults (82.3%) under 45, 38.3% of adults 45 and over, and 96.5% of youth were taught a First Nations language in school. Most adults under 45 learned the language between Grades 1 to 6 (over 70% each grade); fewer learned from Grade 7 on; only 11.9% learned it in Grade 12. Compared to adults, a higher percentage of youth were taught a First Nations language starting from nursery school or pre-school (27.7%); Kindergarten (73.2%); and Grade 1 to Grade 6 (all over 80%); 77.4% in Grade 7; 59.4% in Grade 8; 25.4% in Grade 9 and 12.7% in Grade 10. Adults were only taught the language during language class (no immersion). Youth reported some First Nations language immersion in Grade 4 (5.7%) and Grade 5 (5.8%).

Nine out of ten parents (91.1%) said their child had been taught First Nations language at school, primarily in Nursery school or preschool (40.3%), Kindergarten (81.6%) Grade 1 (68.1%) and Grade 2 (54.3%), and then dropping from 44.4% in Grade 3 to 12.3% in Grade 6.

Well over half (58.1%) of adults and 62.7% of youth had participated in First Nations cultural activities such as drumming, singing, dancing and storytelling at school. For 40.3% of youth these activities occurred one to three times a month; for 37.4% they occurred less than once a month and for 20.0% they occurred one to three times a week. Most adults (69.5% of those under 45 and 68.7% of those 45 and over) and youth (87.1%) felt that the school supported First Nations culture through teaching and/or activities. A significant number of adults under 45 (70.8%), age 45 and over (46.4%), and youth (73.5%) also said they did have teachers during elementary or high school who were First Nations, as did 93.2% of children.

School Climate and Sense of Belonging:
Adults and youth alike felt safe and happy at school. Over four out of five adults under age 45 (86.5%), 45 and over (82.8%), and most youth (94.6%) had felt safe at school. Seven out of ten adults under 45 and 57.7% of those 45 and over, and 87.2% of youth had generally been happy at school. Over four out of five youth (84.9%), half of under 45 adults (51.3%) and 78.5% of adults 45 and over said that the school offered parents opportunities to get involved in activities.

Adults and youth alike (90.9% and 92.5% respectively) felt that they had enough friends at school. Adults (96.8%) and youth (96.5%) were friendly towards others at school, and 95.6% of adults and 96.6% of youth cooperated well with others at school.
Adults (97.3%) and youth (94.0%) agreed that they liked joking and having fun; 82.2% of adults and 94.0% of youth said they laughed a lot at school. Four out of five adults (81.4%) and 92.0% of youth agreed that people generally liked them at school. Seven out of ten adults (71.5%) and 58.9% of youth enjoyed going to school (25.8% of adults and 19.9% of youth disagreed). Over three quarters of adults (78.7%) and youth (78.6%) were involved in school activities. Three quarters of adults (76.5%) and 58.9% of youth agreed that they liked to join in (22.7% of adults and 23.9% of youth disagreed). Seven out of ten adults (71.8%) and over half of youth (55.6%) trusted people at school (25.5% of adults and 30.3% of youth disagreed).

**Family Involvement:**

In terms of family involvement at school, over half of adults (54.8%) and 72.3% of youth reported that their parents or guardians did speak to, correspond with or visit their teachers, including attending parent-teacher interviews. Over three quarters of parents (77.6%) also reported speaking to or visiting their child’s teachers.

Over half of adults (55.0%) and 76.7% of youth said their parents or guardians had attended a school event in which they had participated, such as a school play, sports competition or science fair, and 73.4% of parents also said they attended their child’s school events. Over half of parents (54.1%) volunteered or helped out in school activities such as class trips or fundraising activities.

Almost half of adults (45.1%) and over half of youth (56.5%) said their parents, guardians or other family members had talked with them about how they were doing in school several times a week or several times a month; this occurred more frequently among youth. Almost three quarters of parents (72.8%) said they or another family member talked with their child about what they were learning in school every day.

Parents or family members also tried to help with homework when needed; youth said this happened some of the time (34.0%), most of the time (30.5%) or all of the time (15.2%); adults said this had been some of the time (30.0%), most of the time (24.8%) or all of the time (8.0%).

In terms of how often they or other family members try to help their child with homework when needed, 18.8% of parents said they did so some of the time; 18.8% said most of the time; and 52.2% said all the time; this was not applicable for 8.8% of parents.
Parents were asked about the type of communications their child’s teacher or school staff was sharing with them. Most parents (88.6%) said that teachers and school staff let them know between report cards how their child was doing; 78.2% said they gave them information on how to help their child with homework; and 87.5% said they offered parents/guardians many opportunities to be involved in their child’s school activities.

Extracurricular Activities:
Three quarters of adults (75.3%) and slightly less youth (72.7%) had participated in sports or physical activity outside of regular classes. Over half (55.4% of adults and 50.2% of youth) participated one to three times per week; another 33.9% of adults and 28.8% of youth participated four or more times a week.

Over a quarter of youth (26.0%) participated in extracurricular art, drama or music programs (no adult participation was reported).

For other extracurricular activities such as student council, yearbook or science clubs, participation among adults was 15.7%; and 19.8% of youth participated.

Well over half of parents (58.2%) said that their child participated in extra-curricular sports or physical activities, one to three times a week for over half (55.4%). About one in five parents (18.6%) said their child participated in extra-curricular art, music or drama, usually one to three times a week. Reasons some children did not participate in art, music or drama were: not interested, 39.3%; not available in the community, 32.3%; cost is too high, 13.8%; transportation difficulties, 10.1%; doesn’t fit family schedule, 9.0%; too busy, 6.1%.

Parents reported that on average, their child engaged in physical activity (outside of school hours) one to two hours a day (29.0%); thirty minutes to an hour (22.0%); two to three hours (17.1%); less than thirty minutes (14.4%); three hours or more (11.4%).
Peer Behaviour and Substance Abuse

Negative Peer Behaviours at School:
When asked about the behaviour of their close friends at school, almost two thirds of adults (64.3%) and youth (63.3%) said that some of their friends had a reputation for causing trouble at school and for another 23.8% of adults it was most of their friends who had this reputation. A quarter of youth (26.0%) said none of their friends had this reputation.

About three quarters of parents (73.4%) had never talked to the school principal or administrator because their child caused trouble at school; however within the past school year 13.2% of parents had talked to the principal or administrator once and another 5.0% had done so three or four times for this reason.

Almost a third of youth (30.4%) said that none of their friends skipped classes each week; almost half (48.2%) said some of their friends skipped classes each week and 10.9% said that most of their friends skipped each week. Compared to youth, about two thirds of adults (64.6%) had some friends who skipped classes and 31.4% said most of their friends skipped classes each week.

Substance Use:
Adults said that either some (54.5%) or most (24.8%) of their school friends had smoked cigarettes at school. 42.5% of youth said that some of their friends smoked cigarettes; 13.2% said most of them did and 37.3% said none of them did.

Over two thirds of adults (68.5%) and 41.6% of youth said that some of their school friends used drugs; another 9.4% of adults said most of their school friends had used drugs, and 43.0% of youth said none of their friends used drugs. Over a third of adults (38.4%) and 44.6% of youth said that some of their school friends drank alcohol; 19.4% of adults said most of their school friends drank, while 36.6% of youth said none of their friends drank alcohol.

Over a third of adults (35.7%) and 11.1% of youth agreed that the presence of alcohol was a problem at school; many respondents disagreed (62.2% of adults and 85.6% of youth). Almost half of adults (46.4%) and 27.7% of youth agreed that the presence of drugs was a problem at school (42.0% of adults and 48.6% of youth disagreed). The presence of drugs negatively impacted the schooling of almost a third of youth (31.1%), compared to the presence of alcohol which negatively impacted 12.5% of youth.
**SUBSTANCE USE**

54.5% of adults said some of their friends had smoked cigarettes at school.

24.8% of adults said most of their friends had smoked cigarettes at school.

42.5% of youth said most of their friends had smoked cigarettes at school.

13.2% of youth said most of their friends had smoked cigarettes at school.

**DRUGS & ALCOHOL**

68.5% of adults said some of their school friends used drugs.

41.6% of youth said some of their school friends used drugs.

35.7% of adults agreed that the presence of alcohol was a problem at school.

11.1% of youth agreed that the presence of alcohol was a problem at school.

The presence of drugs negatively impacted the schooling of almost a third of youth (31.1%).
Racism/Bullying/Physical Violence

Racism:
Many First Nation students have experienced racism at school. Almost a quarter of youth (23.3%), and almost half of adults (45.4% of those under 45 and 48.3% of those age 45 and over) had experienced racism at school. Many adults had experienced it weekly or more than once a week (24.5% of adults under 45 and 40.6% of those 45 and over).

Bullying:
Bullying at school is a significant problem. Although most First Nations youth felt safe and happy at school, half of youth (50.1%) experienced bullying at school. Almost half (46.5%) of adults under 45 and 39.8% of adults 45 and over had also experienced bullying at school. In terms of how often it happened, most adults under 45 said more than once a week (23.2%).

Half of parents (51.1%) also agreed bullying is a problem at school (less than the 47.4% of parents who agreed plus 19.7% who strongly agreed in the National FNREEES report); 9.3% of parents said their child experiences bullying more than once a week. Other parents reported their child experiencing bullying once a week (7.6%), or two to three times a month (24.9%).

This compares with the roughly one in four Canadian students from Grade 6 to Grade 10 in 2014 who reported being bullied at least twice a week (a rate that increased to 29% in some cohorts such as Grade 7 girls) in a Public Health Agency of Canada report. This report noted that bullying can erode one’s confidence and jeopardize relationships, increase risk for mental disorder and poor academic and vocational achievement, and criminality. It listed many physical and psychological health problems associated with victimization including anxiety, depression, difficulties sleeping, headaches, and self-harm behaviours. Bullying others is also linked to an increased risk of antisocial behaviour, gang involvement, and substance use. The Public Health Agency report also noted that cyberbullying is associated with many of the same negative outcomes as traditional forms of bullying.

Bullying

50% of youth experienced bullying at school

51% of parents also agreed bullying is a problem at school.

Physical Violence

1/4 of youth said, physical violence is a problem at school.

Physical Violence:
Over half of adults (54.2%) and a quarter of youth (25.8%) said that physical violence was a problem at school. Of those adults who experienced physical violence at school, most (21.4%) said it happened two to three times a month. Over a quarter of youth (28.5%) said they had personally experienced physical violence at school.

School Supports and Resources:
In their last year at school, less than one in five adults (17.8%) and 13.0% of youth needed support for course schedules or choices. Almost one in three youth (30.7%) needed support for personal issues (no adults reported needing support for personal issues).

Parents were asked how satisfied they were with the school’s resources. They responded: available learning resources (books, support etc.) - 94.9%; quality of the teachers/educators - 92.6%; class sizes - 91.6%; quality of computers and computer-related technology such as internet access/speed - 89.6%; curriculum - 88.5%; and school support services - 84.7%.

Research such as a 2016 report on Ontario’s schools by People for Education7 raise the issue of how geographical location impacts students’ equitable access to education including school supports and resources. This report noted that students living in small towns, rural and Northern communities are less likely to have music or health and physical education teachers, have less access to psychologists, and are more likely to attend schools that put caps on waiting lists for special education.

Attitudes and Perceptions about School

Family Schooling and Attitudes about School:
In terms of their parents’ highest level of education, 17.3% of adults said their mother or female guardian had completed some high school, and 11.1% said high school diploma or high school equivalency. Youth responses were: some high school, 27.3%; high school diploma or equivalency certificate, 13.8%; some postsecondary education, 10.8%; and a diploma or certificate from a community college, 29.5%. One in five adults (20.3%) said their father or male guardian had completed some high school; youth said their father/male guardian had completed: some high school (22.6%); some postsecondary education (12.4%); or a diploma or certificate from a community college (26.9%).

When asked about parental attitudes about school, 42.5% of adults said it was very important to their father/male guardian that they graduate from high school, and it was either very important (58.7%) or fairly important (25.2%) to their mother or female guardian that they graduate from high school. Similarly, over seventy percent of adults said it was very important (49.1%) or fairly important (21.5%) to their father or male guardian that they complete a post-secondary education, and over three quarters of adults said it was very important (53.4%) or fairly important (24.4%) to their mother or female guardian that they complete a post-secondary education.

Among youth, the level of importance their parents put on high school graduation was even higher. 86.5% of youth said it was very important to their father or male guardian, and 95.5% said it was very important to their mother or female guardian, that they graduate from high school. In terms of post-secondary education, 80.4% of youth said it was very important and 12.8% said it was fairly important to their father or male guardian that they complete a postsecondary education, and 86.2% said this was very important to their mother or female guardian.

**Peer Perceptions about School:**
Adults and youth were asked their friends’ perceptions about the importance of school. A third of youth (32.9%) said that some of their friends thought it was okay to work hard at school, half (50.3%) said that most of their friends thought this way, and 15.2% said all of their friends thought this way. Among adults, some (46.9%) or most (26.7%) of their friends thought it was okay to work hard at school.

In terms of whether their friends thought completing high school was important, 29.4% of youth and 60.5% of adults said some of their friends thought so; 40.4% of youth and 27.4% of adults said most of their friends thought so, and 28.5% of youth said that all of their friends thought it was important to complete high school.

About nine out of ten adults said that either some or most of their friends (61.5% and 27.5% respectively) were planning to further their education or training after leaving high school. This was even more pronounced among youth: 47.7% of youth said most of their friends, 30.9% said some, and 15.3% said all of their friends were planning to further their education or training after leaving high school.

Over half of adults (55.9%) said some of their friends had dropped out without graduating; 31.4% said most of their friends dropped out. A quarter of youth (26.2%) said that some of their friends had dropped out without graduating (62.7% said none).
Respondents’ Perceptions about School:
Almost three quarters of adults (72.0%) and 86.7% of youth felt that school had not been a waste of time. Two thirds (66.5%) of adults and 78.6% of youth agreed that school had helped give them confidence to make decisions. 71.2% of adults and 90.1% of youth felt school had taught them things that could be useful in a job. Nine out of ten adults and youth (90.2% and 91.1% respectively) agreed that doing well in school could help you get a job. However, 43.3% of adults and 42.3% of youth felt that the skills you need to do a job can’t be learned in the classroom. Over half of adults (57.1%) and 35.8% of youth felt that school had done little to prepare them for adult life.
Success and Aspirations

Fear of Academic Success among Youth:
Asked how they would feel if they did well in school or better than their friends, 38.6% of youth said they would feel pressured to do well all the time and live up to expectations (61.4% disagreed); 20.1% said they would worry about being labelled or losing their friends (77.1% disagreed); and 16.8% agreed that they would feel nervous or embarrassed (59.8% disagreed and 20.9% strongly disagreed).

Future Aspirations:
In thinking about the future, 95.3% of youth felt that getting a good job later in life depends on their success in school. Most youth agreed (93.8%) that they would need to go to college or university to achieve what they want in life; 4.4% disagreed.

When asked if they thought they would enjoy going to college or university, 93.6% of youth agreed and 5.3% disagreed. Most thought they would do well in college (92.7% agreed and 6.1% disagreed) and in university (86.3% agreed and 11.4% disagreed).

In terms of thinking about possible future careers, 38.8% of youth said they had not yet thought about future careers; 31.3% had thought about it and decided on one that they are interested in; and 29.9% had thought about it but not yet found one that they are interested in.

Upgrading/Post Secondary Education and Technology

Upgrading:
Over a quarter of adults (26.6%) said they had attended an upgrading or high school equivalency program at an adult high school or alternative school (none said it was at an Indigenous institution). Their primary reason for attending upgrading was realizing the value of an education and wanting a diploma (51.0%).

Post-Secondary Education:
Over half of adults (53.5%) reported having some post-secondary education. The majority of adults (61.3%) obtained some post-secondary education at colleges; 27.5% obtained additional education at university; and 26.8% at trade school. 13.6% of adults said their post-secondary education was at an Indigenous education institution.
Most adults (85.5%) had completed the requirements for some type of post-secondary diploma, certificate or degree. Of these, almost half (48.5%) said it was for a college certificate or diploma, and 36.9% said it was a trade school certificate or diploma. They reported their highest diploma, certificate or degree was in social and behavioural sciences and law (17.7%); business, management and public administration (11.2%); or other fields of study not listed (39.1%). As noted earlier, of the parents surveyed, only mothers or female guardians completed a diploma/certificate from community college (14.3%) or a Bachelor’s degree (5.2%); an additional 3.6% of mothers had earned a diploma/certificate from trade or vocational school (compared to 5.6% of fathers or male guardians).

Over half of adults (56.7%) moved away from their home community for their post-secondary education. Most (64.3%) were unable to access any of their post-secondary courses through the Internet or other forms of distance education; 21.3% were able to do so.

One quarter of adults (25.8%) were planning to take some post-secondary education.
Access to Technology:

Two thirds of adults (65.3%) reported having a working computer in their home. Almost three quarters of adults (74.1%) said they had Internet access in their home (up from 65.9% in RHS Phase 2\(^8\)). When asked how much time per day they spent on screen time (watching TV, movies, videos, computer etc.), 9.0% of adults said from one to two hours; 23.5% said two to three hours; 11.6% said three to four hours; 11.3% said four to five hours; 5.1% said five to six hours; 4.8% said six to seven hours; and 6.1% said ten hours or more per day. 4.3% of adults said they did not have any screen time.

Among youth, three quarters (74.8%) said they had access to a working computer in their home, and 81.4% had access to the Internet at home. In terms of daily screen time, youth reported they spent the following amount of time per day: one to two hours, 13.4%; two to three hours, 23.2%; three to four hours, 12.0%; and four to five hours, 10.3%. Three quarters of youth (74.1%) said some of this on-screen activity is educational.

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\(^8\) First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS) Phase 2, Ontario Region, op. cit.
Parents reported that on average, their child spent the following amount of time watching TV or on computers, tablets etc. (screen time): thirty minutes to an hour, 11.9%; one to two hours, 29.1%; two to three hours, 20.1%; three to four hours, 14.1%; four to five hours, 11.2%. Three out of five parents (59.3%) said that some of this time is educational and a quarter (25.2%) said most of it is educational; 9.0% said none of it is educational. Seven out of ten parents (69.6%) said they had a working computer in their home, and three quarters (75.5%) said their child has access to the internet in their home.

Reading:
In terms of how often they read for pleasure, 16.5% of adults said four or more times per week; 29.2% said one to three times per week; 20.3% said less than once a week; and 34.1% said rarely or never. Among youth, 12.3% said they read four or more times a week; 29.4% said one to three times a week; 23.4% said less than once a week; and 34.9% said rarely or never.

Summary
Along with improved overall academic performance, FNREEES data indicate that youth feel a strong sense of belonging at school and perceive education to be important. There are some youth, however, who feel pressured to achieve and live up to expectations. Despite their positive attitudes towards graduation and anticipation of enjoying and doing well at the post-secondary level, many youth have not decided on or thought about a career. For some, their motivation to succeed on a career path might be downplayed by the likelihood that they would have to leave their family and community behind for employment.

First Nations Language and Traditional Teachings

Understanding and Speaking First Nations Language:
Almost all adults (92.4%) reported having some knowledge of a First Nations language, even if only a few words; as did 91.6% of youth.

More than two out of five adults (41.7%) would understand very well (fluently) when spoken to in the language; 9.3% of adults would be able to understand relatively well (intermediate); 14.2% would be able to understand with effort (basic understanding); and 32.7% would only understand a few words when spoken to in the language. Among youth, none reported being able to understand very well (fluently); 10.4% of youth would understand the language relatively well (intermediate); 38.5% would understand the language with effort (basic); and 39.2% would only understand a few words in the language.
Parents reported that 80.6% of children had knowledge of a First Nations language (even if only a few words); this question was not applicable for 10.4% of children due to being too young. In terms of their child’s ability to understand when spoken to in the language, 19.2% of parents said they could understand with effort (basic); 37.6% said only a few words; and 4.2% said they could not understand. Parents rated their child’s ability to speak a First Nations language as: relatively well (intermediate), 11.5%; with effort (basic), 27.7%; and only a few words, 47.1%.

One third of adults (34.1%) said they could speak the language very well (fluently) and 14.4% could speak relatively well (intermediate); 13.2% could speak at a basic level, with effort; another third (33.4%) could only speak a few words in the language; and 4.9% could not speak the language. There were no reported youth who could speak the language fluently or relatively well; 25.3% could speak the language with effort (basic); and 38.6% of youth could speak only a few words in the language.

Reading and Writing in the Language:
15.9% of adults could read fluently and 8.7% of adults could read relatively well (intermediate); 20.6% adults and 31.0% of youth could read in the language with effort (basic). 28.0% of adults and 33.6% of youth could read only a few words; 26.7% of adults could not read in the language.

There were no reported adults or youth who could write fluently in the language. About one in ten adults and youth (9.1% of adults and 9.3% of youth) could write relatively well; 11.2% of adults and 29.6% of youth could write basic language with effort; 29.1% of adults and 33.1% of youth could only write a few words; and 38.4% of adults said they could not write in the language.

Parents rated their child’s ability to read in the language as: relatively well (intermediate), 4.1%; with effort (basic), 9.6%; only a few words, 28.0%; and cannot read, 54.0%. Similarly, they rated their child’s ability to write in the language as: relatively well, 6.2%; with effort (basic), 7.5%; only a few words, 24.7%; and cannot write, 59.2%.

The Importance of First Nations Language:
The importance of the language was clearly evident. 71.9% of adults and 60.2% of youth said it was very important to understand the language, and 17.8% of adults and 23.3% of youth said it was somewhat important.

Similarly, 71.8% of adults and 58.7% of youth said it was very important to speak the language and another 18.3% of adults and 23.8% of youth said it was somewhat important; 4.1% of adults said it was not important to speak the language.
As for reading and writing in the language, 60.7% of adults and 53.4% of youth said it was very important and another 21.8% of adults and 22.4% of youth said it was somewhat important to read in the language. 11.0% of adults said it was a little important and 6.6% said it was not important to read in the language.

61.6% of adults and 53.3% of youth said it was very important and another 19.2% of adults and 22.3% of youth said it was somewhat important to write in a First Nations language; 11.8% of adults said it was a little important and 7.3% of adults said it was not important.

Learning the Language:
Over half of youth (54.4%) said it was very important and 23.9% said it was somewhat important to them to learn a First Nations language; 16.2% of youth said it was a little important.

In terms of who helped them to learn the language, 60.1% of adults said it was their parents; 53.0% said it was their grandparents; for 39.8% it was an Elder; for 32.8% it was teachers or school staff; 31.3% said it was other family members (aunts, uncles etc.); 25.8% said it was community members; 24.1% said it was friends; 17.4% said siblings; 17.4% said it was their spouse or common-law partner; and another 8.6% said a knowledge-holder. Youth reported the following as helping them learn the language: teachers or school staff, 87.6%; parents or guardians, 52.7%; grandparents, 42.9%; other family members, 38.6%; Elders, 25.6%; and other community members, 20.4%.

Parents reported that in terms of who was helping their child to learn the First Nations language, it was: mother/father or male/female guardian, 66.0%; other family members (grandparents, aunt/uncle etc.), 63.5%; teachers/other school staff, 59.9%; Elders, 22.7%; community members, 18.8%; other early childhood educators (preschool/nursery school), 16.7%; Head Start teacher, 6.0%. Parents (81.8%) were satisfied with their child’s opportunities to learn a First Nations language. Almost half of adults said they were not satisfied (23.3%) or only a little satisfied (25.4%) with their knowledge of their First Nations language; 27.7% of youth were a little satisfied. Another 37.9% of adults were very satisfied; 13.4% of adults and 29.3% of youth were somewhat satisfied with their knowledge of the language.

Respondents identified several reasons that stop them from learning or improving their knowledge of their First Nations language: 34.6% of adults and 34.9% of youth said they were not motivated enough; 32.9% of adults and 23.3% of youth said there was no language class available; 32.7% of adults and 30.5% of youth said there was no-one to practice with; 28.5% of adults and 19.8% of youth said there was no-one available to teach them the language; 27.7% of adults and 16.8% of youth were too busy; 10.8% of adults reported transportation difficulties and 8.9% of adults were not interested in learning or improving.

In terms of what is standing in the way of their child learning or improving their knowledge of a First Nations language, parents cited the following: no-one to practice with, 52.0%; no-one available to teach the language, 46.5%; no language classes available, 39.9%; too busy, 20.6%; not interested, 5.4%.
FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE AND TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS

The importance of First Nations Language was clearly evident.

UNDERSTANDING AND SPEAKING FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE

92.4%
OF ADULTS REPORTED HAVING SOME KNOWLEDGE OF A FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE, EVEN IF ONLY A FEW WORDS.

91.6%
OF YOUTH REPORTED HAVING SOME KNOWLEDGE OF A FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE, EVEN IF ONLY A FEW WORDS.

MORE THAN 2 OUT OF 5
(41.7%) OF ADULTS WOULD UNDERTAND VERY WELL WHEN SPOKEN TO IN THE LANGUAGE.

AMONG YOUTH, NONE REPORTED BEING ABLE TO UNDERSTAND VERY WELL (FLUENTLY).

READING AND WRITING IN THE LANGUAGE

15.9%
OF ADULTS COULD READ FLUENTLY.

26.7%
OF ADULTS COULD NOT READ IN THE LANGUAGE

THERE WERE NO REPORTED ADULTS OR YOUTH WHO COULD WRITE FLUENTLY IN THE LANGUAGE.

9.1%
OF ADULTS SAID THEY COULD WRITE RELATIVELY WELL.

9.3%
OF YOUTH SAID THEY COULD WRITE RELATIVELY WELL.

4.1%
OF PARENTS SAID THEIR CHILD COULD WRITE RELATIVELY WELL.
IMPORTANCE OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE

ADULTS 71.9%

YOUTH 60.2%

71.9% of adults said it was very important to understand the language.

60.2% of youth said it was very important to understand the language.

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

54.5% of youth said it was very important to them to learn a first nations language.

In terms of who helped, with learning the language:

60.1% of adults, said it was their parents.

53.0% of adults, said it was their grandparents.

Respondents identified several reasons that stop them from learning or improving their knowledge of their First Nations Language:

ADULTS

34.6% said they were not motivated enough.

32.9% said there was no language class available.

32.7% said they were no one to practice with.

28.5% said they were no one to teach them the language.

YOUTH

34.6% said they were not motivated enough.

32.9% said there was no language class available.

32.7% said they were no one to practice with.

28.5% said they were no one to teach them the language.
**First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey**

**USE OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE**

- **The Language Used Daily Was Primarily English.**
  - **76.7% Adults**
  - **78.2% Youth**
  - **21.6% of adults reported using a first nations language daily.**

**TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS**

- **Learning Traditional Beliefs and Values**
  - **64.0% Adults**
  - **59.9% Youth**
  - **Said it was very important to them.**

**Mother Tongue**

- **57.9% of adults said English**
- **74.6% of youth said English**

Which differed from the previous generation, where over half of adults said that their parents’ mother tongue had been a first nations language.

- **55.1% of their father/male guardian**
- **53.1% of their mother/female guardian**

**Who helped them learn traditional teachings:**

**Adults**

- **43.7% Elders**
- **43.1% Parents or Guardians**
- **30.8% Community Members**

**Youth**

- **37.3% Grandparents**
- **25.8% Other Family Members**
- **24.7% Friends**

- **34.8% Elders**
- **57.0% Parents or Guardians**
- **21.4% Community Members**

- **46.4% Grandparents**
- **37.0% Other family Members**
- **21.4% Friends**
Use of First Nations Language:
The language used daily by adults was primarily English (76.7%); 21.6% reported using a First Nations language daily. Of youth, 78.2% said they used English daily. In terms of the amount of exposure to a First Nations language at home, 29.3% of adults and 32.1% of youth said it was none of the time; for 28.9% of adults and 36.1% of youth it was some of the time, for 17.2% of adults and 9.5% of youth it was most of the time; and for 24.6% of adults it was all of the time.

In their community (not including school or work), 41.3% of adults and 41.9% of youth reported being exposed to the language (listening to or engaging in conversations) some of the time; for 25.0% of adults and 25.9% of youth it was none of the time; for 15.4% of adults and 10.7% of youth it was most of the time; and for 18.3% of adults it was all of the time.

In terms of mother tongue, the first language learned in the home, for 57.9% of adults and 74.6% of youth it was English and for 40.2% of adults it was a First Nations language. This differed from the previous generation, where over half of adults said that their parents’ mother tongue had been a First Nations language (55.1% of their fathers or male guardians and 53.1% of their mothers or female guardians). Among youth, 65.5% said their mother or female guardian’s first language was English and 63.1% said their father or male guardian’s first language was English; 36.0% said their father or male guardian’s first language was a First Nations language.

When asked how important it is to them that their child speaks and understands a First Nations language, parents responded as follows: very important, 68.1%; somewhat important, 23.9%; and a little important, 6.2%.

In terms of which language the child uses most often at home on a daily basis, most parents (76.5%) said English. Over two out of five parents (42.4%) said their child is exposed to a First Nations language at home some of the time; 19.4% said none of the time. Parents reported that their child’s first language learned at home (mother tongue) is English (72.2%). They also reported that English was the mother tongue of both the child’s mother/female guardian (64.2%) and father/male guardian (65.6%), with none reporting a First Nations language as their mother tongue.

Traditional Teachings:
In relation to learning traditional beliefs and values, about two thirds of adults (64.0%) and 59.9% of youth said this was very important to them and another 18.9% of adults and 16.3% of youth said it was somewhat important. 10.3% of adults and 19.0% of youth said it was a little important; 6.8% of adults said it was not important.
In terms of who helped them learn traditional teachings, 43.7% of adults said Elders; 43.1% of adults said parents or guardians; 37.3% of adults said grandparents; 30.8% of adults said community members; 25.8% of adults said other family members; 24.7% of adults said friends; 18.2% of adults said teachers or other school staff; 16.7% of adults said their spouse or common-law partner; 15.5% of adults said knowledge holders; 11.6% of adults said siblings. For youth it was: parents, 57.0%; teachers, 56.9%; grandparents, 46.4%; other family members, 37.0%; Elders, 34.8%; community members, 21.4%; friends, 13.9%; knowledge holders, 11.8%, and siblings, 9.9%.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with their knowledge of traditional teachings; 30.5% of adults said they were very satisfied; 29.3% of adults and 30.7% of youth were somewhat satisfied with their knowledge of traditional teachings. 28.0% of adults and 27.6% of youth were a little satisfied and 12.2% of adults and 4.6% of youth were not at all satisfied.

In response to what prevents them from learning more traditional teachings, 42.0% of adults and 31.1% of youth said they were too busy; 39.8% of adults and 38.5% of youth said no-one was available to teach them; 29.7% of adults and 42.2% of youth said they were not motivated enough and 13.3% of adults and 13.1% of youth cited transportation difficulties. 9.6% of youth also said they were worried about what others might say or think.

When asked how much they know about the history of their people, 41.6% of adults and 37.7% of youth said they had some knowledge; 30.1% of adults and 47.8% of youth knew a little, and 25.1% of adults and 8.1% of youth knew a lot. In terms of how much they knew about their inherent rights (such as treaty rights), 38.5% of adults and 28.5% of youth knew some; 36.2% of adults and 49.4% of youth knew a little. Another 14.9% of adults and 6.6% of youth knew a lot; and 10.4% of adults said they knew nothing about their inherent rights.

In terms of how much they knew about the history of Indian residential schooling, 39.1% of adults and 20.8% of youth said they had some knowledge; 35.2% of adults and 32.5% of youth knew a little about it; 17.7% of adults knew a lot about it; 8.0% of adults and 32.1% of youth knew nothing about it.

Parents also reported that in terms of how important it was to them that their child learn about the traditional teachings of their people, it was: very important, 66.3%; somewhat important, 25.2%; or a little important, 7.6%. In terms of who helps their child learn about the traditional teachings, parents said: mother/father or male/female guardian, 60.3%; other family members, 57.9%; teachers or school staff, 45.7%; Elders, 24.3%; community members, 20.5%; other Early Childhood educators (preschool or nursery school), 16.1%; knowledge holders, 13.0%; Head Start teacher, 7.3%; no-one, 6.4%.
In terms of how often their child participated in or attended cultural activities, parents responded as follows: one to three times a week, 7.2%; one to three times a month, 30.6%; less than once a month, 35.8%; and never, 20.6%.

**Spirituality and Religion:**
When asked how important traditional spirituality is in their life, a third of adults (33.3%) said it is very important; 36.7% said it is somewhat important, and 16.1% said it is a little important. 28.8% of youth said spirituality is a little important in their life; 30.7% said it is somewhat important; and 26.2% of youth said it is very important.

Parents were also asked how important it is to them that their child learn about traditional spirituality: 53.0% said it was very important; 28.1% said somewhat important; 10.9% said a little important; and 8.0% said it was not important.

When asked how important organized religion is in their life (e.g. Christianity, Catholic, Protestant etc.), 24.8% of adults said it was very important, 20.8% said somewhat important, and 22.0% said a little important; 32.4% said it is not important. A third of youth (33.3%) said it is a little important; 19.8% said it is somewhat important; and 31.8% said it is not important.

**Summary**
The data indicates that while fewer adults have a First Nations language as their mother tongue and daily use is in decline overall, children are being exposed to the language in child care settings and more students are learning the language at school now than in previous generations, including some language immersion at the intermediate level. Immersion programs are seen as an effective method for developing fluent speakers.

Along with language revitalization there is a high level of importance on sharing traditional teachings and cultural practices with children and youth, and spirituality and cultural traditions are seen as a vital aspect of First Nations identity and strength.

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V. Employment and Income

This section outlines the findings and themes that relate to the questions asked within the survey on employment and income.

Employment Status and Climate

Employment Status:
Almost half of adults (44.7%) were currently employed (lower than either the employment rate of 48.7% for First Nations adults reported in the National FNREEES report\(^\text{10}\) or the 55.6% of Ontario First Nations adults employed in 2008/10 RHS Phase 2 data\(^\text{11}\)). 25.6% of adults had more than one job. Most (92.2%) were employees; 7.8% were self-employed.

When youth were asked if their mother or female guardian was employed, almost two thirds (63.5%) said yes, full-time, and 10.8% said yes, part-time; 25.8% said no. In terms of their father or male guardian, 47.3% of youth said they were employed full-time, 11.0% said part-time and 41.7% said no, their father or male guardian was not employed.

Parents reported that about a third of the children’s mothers or female guardians (32.4%) were working full-time; 9.5% of mothers/female guardians were working part-time; and 57.9% of mothers/female guardians were not currently employed. Over half of mothers/female guardians (57.5%) were described as stay-at-home parents; 18.9% were described as looking for work; and 16.4% were students. Parents noted that 43.1% of fathers/male guardians were working full-time; 12.5% worked part-time and 39.8% were not working. 44.2% of fathers/male guardians were described as looking for work; and 29.5% were described as stay-at-home parents.

17.2% of employed adults started working for their current employer in 2013; 14.4% started in 2014; and 7.5% started in 2012.

Type of Employment:
Almost half of employed adults (43.6%) worked for a First Nations government/organization; 7.6% worked in construction; 6.4% worked in educational services; and 11.9% worked in industries not listed.

\(^{10}\) Now is the Time: Our Data, Our Stories, Our Future. FNIGC, 2016, op.cit.

\(^{11}\) First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS) Phase 2, Ontario Region, ibid.
In terms of their occupation, 18.1% of employed adults were managers, administrators or senior staff; 14.8% were clerical or secretarial staff; 10.9% were skilled manual or construction workers; 9.1% were other labourers; 4.2% were professional/technical staff; and 25.9% were in other occupations not listed.

About half of employed adults (49.7%) had no supervisory or management responsibilities; a total of 47.3% had some supervisory or management responsibility.

Two thirds of adults (65.8%) said their current workplace was Band-owned.

**Employment Hours and Attendance:**

On average, 28.6% of adults worked 35 hours per week; 24.1% worked 40 hours and 8.1% worked 38 hours per week. Two thirds (66.3%) of employed adults were in permanent jobs; 14.3% were in temporary or contract jobs.

In terms of work absence, 40.4% of adults said they were never absent from work; another 46.7% were absent a few times a year. For half (49.2%), their work absence was due to their own illness or disability; for 41.2% it was due to other personal or family responsibilities; and 18.9% said it was because they were caring for children.

Over half of adults (52.4%) said they were never late for work; 16.3% said they were late a few times a year. For most of these (42.3%), it was because they were caring for children; for 22.5% it was because they had other personal or family responsibilities, and for 21.3% it was because they slept in.

**Employment within the Community:**

Most employed adults (79.7%) said their main job was located within a First Nations community. Their main reasons for working in a First Nations community were to be close to family (29.8%); for financial reasons (21.2%); to give back to the community (17.1%); or to stay connected to their culture, language and traditions (4.2%). These responses are similar to those in the National FNREEES report\(^\textit{12}\) with the caveat that financial reasons were a higher priority for Ontario First Nation adults at 21.1% than the national average of 17.6%, and vice versa for giving back to the community, which was higher nationally at 22.9%. Almost all adults (96.0%) said they had a reliable method of getting to work. It took an average of five minutes for 24.8% of adults to get to work; and ten minutes for 16.7% of adults.

Most adults (79.0%) said they had a valid driver’s license. Three out of five adults (60.7%) would move to another community to improve their job or career opportunities; 39.3% would not move.

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\(^{12}\) Now is the Time: Our Data, Our Stories, Our Future. FNIGC, 2016, op.cit.
Of those who would move, over half (58.3%) would move to another First Nation community and almost all (90.0%) would move off-reserve. For those who would not move, 32.8% said it was because they were happy with their job situation and another 0.4% were still in school.

**Youth Employment:**
In terms of their job experience, no youth were working at the time of the survey, however two thirds (65.9%) said they had had a job and 29.7% were currently looking for work. For those aged 11 to 14, 29.8% did odd jobs such as babysitting or snow shoveling.

**Employment Climate:**
Almost all employed adults (97.0%) said the main language they spoke at work was English; 3.0% said it was a First Nations language.

Employed adults reported being happy at work; 61.9% agreed and 33.7% strongly agreed that overall, they were happy at work. Similarly, they reported feeling valued at work (60.8% agreed and 31.5% strongly agreed).

Over half of adults agreed (50.7%) or strongly agreed (10.9%) that their work was stressful; about a third (32.0%) said their work was not stressful.

About four out of five adults felt that their current job offers opportunities to learn new job-related skills (57.9% agreed and 21.2% strongly agreed); 18.6% disagreed.

Employed adults were highly satisfied with the balance between their work life and home life (69.4% agreed and 21.2% strongly agreed).

They also saw their workplace as being supportive of First Nations culture (56.8% agreed and 27.9% strongly agreed).

When asked if harassment and discrimination were a problem at their workplace, 57.5% of adults disagreed and 21.7% strongly disagreed. 15.3% of adults reported that this was a problem at their workplace and 18.2% of adults said they had personally experienced harassment and discrimination in their main workplace.
Employment & Income

FNREEES data indicate that the percentage of First Nation adults in Ontario with less than $20,000 annual income has increased since 2008/10, and First Nations income levels overall are much lower than the provincial average.

Employment Status

Almost half (44.7%) were currently employed (lower than either the employment rate of 48.7% for First Nation adults reported in the National FNREEES Report or the 55.6% of Ontario First Nations adults employed in 2008/10 RHS Phase II data).

Type of Employment

11.9% worked in industries not listed.

Hours of Employment & Attendance

35 hours 28.6%
40 hours 24.1%
46.7% of adults were absent a few times a year from work.

Reason for being absent:
- 49.2% illness or disability
- 41.2% taking care of family responsibilities
- 18.9% caring for children
- 40.4% never absent

First Nations government/organization 43.6%
Construction 7.6%
Educational Services 6.4%
Those Employed:
Of those adults not currently employed, 15.0% had a job to which they would be returning at some point; 85.0% did not. 29.6% of those not currently employed were retired, and 13.7% were unemployed due to illness or disability. Most (86.4%) had previously been employed; 50.7% had last worked in 2014 and 20.3% in 2013.

Over a third of adults (38.2%) were currently looking for work.

Volunteering:
Almost two thirds of adults (62.0%) volunteered or helped without pay in the community. In terms of frequency, 43.5% said it was one to three times in the last year, for 28.0% it was four to ten times in the past year, 16.2% said it was one to three times a month, and 12.3% volunteered at least one a week.

Over half of youth (52.8%) volunteered in the community. Over half of those youth who volunteered (51.1%) volunteered four to ten times in the past year; one third (33.3%) volunteered one to three times in the past year; and 11.0% volunteered one to three times a month.

Adult and Youth Job Skills

Job Skills and Job Seeking Skills:
Adult respondents were asked to rate their job-related skills. In terms of their ability to use a computer (for using the Internet, email, word processing etc.), seven out of ten adults rated themselves as excellent (26.4%), very good (22.8%) or good (21.3%); 13.8% said they were fair and 15.6% said their computer skills were poor.

Over four out of five adults said their reading skills and reading comprehension were excellent (31.3%), very good (24.5%), or good (26.0%); 11.4% said they were fair and 6.8% said they were poor. In terms of oral communication skills such as explaining ideas to others or speaking to audiences or groups, over four out of five adults rated themselves as excellent (25.4%), very good (26.5%) or good (29.3%); 10.6% said they were fair and 8.2% said they were poor.

Over three quarters of adults also felt their mathematical abilities were excellent (19.4%), very good (22.1%) or good (36.3%); 12.7% thought their mathematical abilities were fair and 9.4% thought they were poor. Almost three quarters of adults rated their writing abilities as excellent (20.0%), very good (25.8%) or good (27.1%); 18.8% rated their writing skills as fair.
In terms of whether they had received any help with job-seeking skills, 70.3% of adults said that someone had taught them how to write a résumé; 65.7% had been taught how to write a cover letter; and 63.7% had been taught how to prepare themselves for a job interview.

**Youth Job Skills:**

Youth were also asked about various job skills. In terms of marketable skills, two out of five youth (39.4%) rated their computer skills as excellent; 22.6% said they were very good and 19.1% said they were good (none rated their skills as fair or poor).

Similarly, in terms of their reading ability 19.9% of youth rated themselves as excellent; 35.2% rated themselves as very good and 29.6% rated themselves as good, with no-one rating themselves as fair or poor.

In terms of oral communication skills, youth rated themselves as follows: excellent, 11.0%; very good, 22.0%; good, 29.0%; fair, 26.3%; and poor, 11.7%.

As far as mathematical abilities, 14.1% of youth rated themselves as excellent; 19.6% said very good; 41.6% said good; and 18.7% said fair (none said poor).

In terms of writing abilities, 9.8% of youth said they were excellent; 25.6% said very good; 41.2% said good; and 19.2% said fair (none said poor).

In terms of job-seeking, over half of youth (51.0%) had been taught to prepare a résumé and 44.6% had been taught how to prepare for a job interview. Almost half (48.5%) had been taught how to find out what kind of jobs are available for their age group.
Household Income

Sources of Income:
First Nations household income is varied; the most common sources of household income are employment earnings, Child Tax Benefit\(^\text{13}\) and social assistance. Over half of adults age 18 and up (56.5%) and 53.6% of parents or guardians of children age 0 to 11 (referred to simply as “parents” in this report) said their total annual household income included employment earnings.

The Child Tax Benefit was another source of household income for four out of five parents (83.1%) and over a third of adults (37.1%). Social assistance was the third most common source of income as reported by a quarter of adults (24.4%) and over a third of parents (36.6%). Other sources of household income included employment insurance, self-employment earnings, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, retirement pensions, and education or training allowance (less than 10% of adults and parents listed each of these sources of income).

In contrast to First Nations income sources, Ontarians’ total household income overall came primarily from employment earnings (74.8%) as of 2010\(^\text{14}\); other income sources such as employment insurance, child benefits, social assistance, workers’ compensation, CPP, OAS and other government transfers combined accounted for only about 12.3% of Ontarians’ total income\(^\text{15}\). As of 2014, about 6.6% of Ontarians received Ontario Works or ODSP\(^\text{16}\).

Total Household Income:
Total household income for over a third of adults (35.2%) and a quarter of parents was under $20,000, broken out as follows: Less than $5,000 for 9.4% of adults; $5,000 to $10,000/year for 9.5% of adults and 5.1% of parents; $10,000 to $15,000/year for 10.2% of adults and 10.6% of parents; and $15,000 to $20,000/year for 6.1% of adults and 8.4% of parents. The number of adults with total annual household income of less than $20,000 has increased since the RHS Phase 2 survey in 2008/10\(^\text{17}\), when 28.0% of adults reported total annual household income of less than $20,000.

\(^{13}\) 2016 the Child Tax Benefit and Universal Child Care Benefits became the new Canada Child Benefit.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
SOURCES OF INCOME

Over half of adults aged 18 and up (56.5%) and 53.6% of parents or guardians of children age 0-11 said their total annual income included employment earnings.

4 OUT OF 5 said, the Child Tax Benefit was another source of income.

In contrast to First Nations income sources, Ontarians’ total household income overall came primarily from employment earnings (74.8%), as of 2010.

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

35.2% OF ADULTS (35.2%) AND A QUARTER OF PARENTS, TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME WAS UNDER $20,000

The number of Adults with a total annual household income less than $20,000 has increased since the RHS Phase II Survey in 2008/10.

28.0% OF ADULTS (28.0%) SAID THEIR TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME WAS UNDER $20,000.

CLOSE TO HALF OF ADULTS (44.3%) AND HALF OF PARENTS (51.9%) IN THE FNREEES, TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME WAS BETWEEN $20,000 TO $50,000.

THE SAME PROPORTION OF ADULTS IN RHS PHASE II (44.1%) ALSO REPORTED TOTAL INCOME WAS BETWEEN $20,000 TO $50,000.
Basic Needs:
Over half of adults (55.4%) report having struggled to meet basic needs. Specific needs they struggled with were as follows: utilities, 27.8%; food, 24.9%; transportation, 16.4%; clothing, 12.8%; shelter, 10.0%; child care, 9.1%; and medical/dental, 8.4%. Parents were also asked if in the past 12 months they ever struggled to meet basic needs (i.e. had to borrow money or missed bill payments to satisfy their basic living needs). 30.2% said they struggled to meet utilities (heat, electricity, water) and 18.1% said they struggled to meet shelter expenses a few times during the year.

Food Security in Households:
Food security is an issue for over a third of adults and parents/guardians. Over a third of adults (36.6%) and parents (34.6%) said the food they bought sometimes did not last and they did not have the money to buy more; this was often true for another 16.3% of adults. These rates are higher than the 29.8% of adults who were sometimes and 11.5% who were often in this situation as reported in RHS Phase 2. Almost a third of adults (30.0%) and parents (31.0%) could sometimes not afford to eat balanced meals and another 18.8% of adults were often unable to do so (again, in RHS Phase 2, 12.7% of adults could often not afford balanced meals).

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19 First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS) Phase 2 (2008/10) Ontario Region, op.cit.

20 Ibid.
In the past year, one in five adults (22.0%) and parents (20.6%) said they or another adult in the household had reduced or skipped a meal because of lack of money. A third of adults (33.3%) and three out of five parents (60.2%) said this happened some months but not others and for another 45.3% of adults this happened almost every month.

In comparison, a 2013 report by the Conference Board of Canada\(^\text{21}\) found that about 7.7% of Canadian households reported being “food-insecure”. This report found that people who are food-insecure tend to have a less varied diet, a lower intake of fruit and vegetables. They tend to be deficient in micronutrients and even malnourished, and are more likely to suffer from poor health, chronic diseases and mental health disorders, and to consume higher levels of sodium, trans fat, and sugar in processed foods, which can lead to diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. The report noted that food insecurity can lead to negative psychosocial outcomes in children, while teenagers are at risk of suffering from depression, social anxiety, and suicide.

Food Security Children/Youth

Impacts of Food Security on Children and Youth
FNREES data indicate that over a quarter of youth (28.0%) sometimes go to school hungry because there is not enough food at home. This is much higher than the estimated rate in the 2013 Conference Board of Canada report, which stated that one in seven children in Canada (approximately 14%) will go to school hungry. Other studies by Breakfast for Learning and the Breakfast Club of Canada indicate child hunger is increasing in Canada from one in six (in 2013) to one in five (in 2016) children who will go to school hungry.

Food insecurity puts First Nation children’s physical and mental health, academic performance and behaviour at risk. The research cited above also found that children who go to school hungry are at risk of less developed literacy and numeracy skills and poor health due to a lack of good nutrition, which can impact long term physical and mental health. The Breakfast Club of Canada noted that sixty percent of learning takes place in the morning, thus it is harder for children to succeed if they go to school hungry as they lose on average 132 minutes of learning each day.

Hungry students may experience tiredness, inability to concentrate, lack of energy or motivation, behaviour problems, poor academic performance, and they participate less in class compared to their peers, all of which can have lasting impacts on their future success. Classroom behaviours that may be linked to hunger include students falling asleep at their desk, acting out, stealing food or bullying other students.

Food insecurity is also linked to over-representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system. A 2015 report to Canada’s Premiers on Aboriginal children in care identified food insecurity as a social determinant of health and listed it among the root causes of over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system.

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22 Ibid.
25 Breakfast for Learning, op.cit. and Breakfast Club of Canada, ibid.
Food security

(36.6%) of adults said, food they bought sometimes did not last and they did not have the money to buy more. These rates are higher than what was reported in RHS Phase II (2008/10)

(29.8%) of adults who said, they could sometimes not afford to eat balanced meals. These rates are higher than what was reported in RHS Phase II (2008/10)

36.6% FNREEES

29.8% RHS Phase II (2008/10)

30.0% FNREEES

12.7% RHS Phase II (2008/10)

1 out of 5 (22%) reduced or skipped a meal because a lack of money

28% OF YOUTH SOMETIMES GO TO SCHOOL HUNGRY BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH FOOD AT HOME.

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Classroom behaviours that may be linked to hunger include students falling asleep at their desk, acting out, stealing food or bullying other students.
Summary

The data on basic needs and food insecurity are further indicators of the level of poverty in Ontario First Nations communities. Low income and food insecurity are also of concern in terms of their impact on individuals’ health in relation to proper nutrition and chronic illness, with potential implications for increasing rates of stress and depression. As other studies cited in the report indicate food insecurity also puts the academic performance and behaviour of children and youth at risk. In addition to impacting children’s learning, bullying and other negative behaviours at school may be attributed, in part, to food insecurity.

Youth and adults also expressed a concern that they are not learning the job skills they need in the classroom, and that school is not preparing them for adult life. This could be indicative of a need for more hands-on learning programs at school and/or more liaison between school and local employers to introduce and motivate students to acquire relevant job skills for their region.

While First Nations employment is low in comparison to mainstream employment levels, the employment rate in Ontario First Nations is also lower than the national average First Nations employment rate for FNREES reported by FNIGC (a reflection of mainstream unemployment rates for Ontario as compared to other provinces and the national average27).

The FNREEES national report found that the number one reason employed adults want to work in the First Nations community is to be close to their family; this was also true for Ontario First Nations. However, in Ontario First Nations the second most common reason for working in the First Nation community is for financial reasons, more so than the FNIGC national average. This could indicate that First Nations working adults in Ontario are facing bigger financial burdens associated with out-migration for employment in terms of living expenses.

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VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The FNREEES survey has generated a wealth of information that will be extremely helpful for future planning and development purposes. An extensive list of topics has been examined, some for the first time from a regional First Nations perspective. While data counts were low for some questions, the overall response has provided a sound basis for analysis of issues.

Several key findings can be noted. In terms of income levels, the increase in low-income households since 2008/10 and the extreme reliance on social assistance and child benefits relative to employment earnings signify impoverished communities.

In contrast to the over-representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system, FNREEES data are indicative of effective parenting as shown by parents’ warm nurturance, physical affection, praise and guidance of their children and encouragement of their learning – attributes which promote resilience in children, allowing them to bounce back from the many challenges they face.

Given that parents are obtaining information on child development and parenting mainly from family and friends, a family physician or the internet more than community health nurses, specialists, parenting programs or resource materials, there may be a need for more online, user-friendly, up to date, culturally-based resources on parenting for First Nations families.

The data indicates that academic performance of Ontario First Nations students is above average in comparison to First Nations in other regions. Along with improved overall academic performance, FNREEES data indicate that youth feel a strong sense of belonging at school and perceive education to be important. There are some youth, however, who feel pressured to achieve and live up to expectations. Despite their positive attitudes towards graduation and anticipation of enjoying and doing well at the post-secondary level, many youth have not decided on or thought about a career. For some, their motivation to succeed on a career path might be downplayed by the likelihood that they would have to leave their family and community behind for employment.

Youth and adults also expressed a concern that they are not learning the job skills they need in the classroom, and that school is not preparing them for adult life. This could be indicative of a need for more hands-on learning programs at school and/or more liaison between school and local employers to introduce and motivate students to acquire relevant job skills for their region.

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While First Nations employment is low in comparison to mainstream employment levels, the employment rate in Ontario First Nations is also lower than the national average First Nations employment rate for FNREES reported by FNIGC (a reflection of mainstream unemployment rates for Ontario as compared to other provinces and the national average\(^\text{29}\)).

The FNREEES national report found that the number one reason employed adults want to work in the First Nations community is to be close to their family; this was also true for Ontario First Nations. However, in Ontario First Nations the second most common reason for working in the First Nation community is for financial reasons, more so than the FNIGC national average. This could indicate that First Nations working adults in Ontario are facing bigger financial burdens associated with out-migration for employment in terms of living expenses.

The data on basic needs and food insecurity are further indicators of the level of poverty in Ontario First Nations communities. Low income and food insecurity are also of concern in terms of their impact on individuals’ health in relation to proper nutrition and chronic illness, with potential implications for increasing rates of stress and depression. As noted in the data, food insecurity also puts the academic performance and behaviour of children and youth at risk. In addition to impacting children’s learning, bullying and other negative behaviours at school may be attributed, in part, to food insecurity.

The data also indicate that while fewer adults have a First Nations language as their mother tongue and daily use is in decline overall, children are being exposed to the language in child care settings and more students are learning the language at school now than in previous generations, including some language immersion at the intermediate level. Immersion programs are seen as an effective method for developing fluent speakers\(^\text{30}\).

Along with language revitalization there is a high level of importance on sharing traditional teachings and cultural practices with children and youth, and spirituality and cultural traditions are seen as an aspect of First Nations identity and strength.

