



Press Release

First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey



One-third of First Nations adults consider their household water unsafe to drink, according to the RHS report

October 28, 2005

Ottawa, ON – Results from the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/03 show that water quality is an important concern for First Nations adults.

“The RHS findings confirm that serious concerns about First Nations water, recently brought to Canada’s attention by the crisis at Kashechewan First Nation, are widespread,” said Jane Gray, RHS National Coordinator.

“Some of our communities look for alternate sources for drinking water because they feel their main water supply is unsafe to drink,” Gray said, “Sadly, it’s a good thing to do because drinking water treatment systems in our communities are at high risk of contamination.”

The RHS results indicate that:

- About one-third (32.2%) of First Nations adults consider their household water unsafe to drink.
- Seven in ten adults (70.8%) resorted to alternative sources for drinking water. The proportion increases to 9 in 10 among those who consider their water unsafe.
- While most (63.2%) get water by pipe from a local source, about one in six get it from a well (16.5%) or delivered by truck (15.9%).
- Despite being their main supply, about one in thirty (3.4%) collect it themselves from rivers, lakes or ponds (0.9%), from the water plant (1.8%) or from a neighbour’s house (0.7%).
- The most common alternate source of drinking water was bottled water, mentioned by 61.7% of all respondents. This compares with 35% of Canadians who report drinking bottled water at least once a week.

“We will be releasing the final national results in the RHS 2002/03 *Peoples’ Report* at our upcoming conference in two weeks. The report will address many more determinants impacting our people, including housing, education, language and the residential school experience. We are optimistic, given the RHS objectives—to collect information about the health of First Nations as a means of improving their own health and living conditions—the *Peoples’ Report* will be promising.”

The survey was conducted in 238 First Nations on-reserve and other communities between August 2002 and November 2003, with more than 22, 000 participants across the country. The RHS includes three questionnaires designed for adults (18 years and over), youth (12 to 17 years), and children (0 to 11 years).

The RHS final national report and regional preliminary reports will be released in Ottawa on November 13–15, 2005 at the upcoming First Nations Research Conference, “Doing Research Our Way–Celebrating 10 Years of RHS.”

http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/regional_health.php

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