

KUNGATSIAJUK

Newsletter (Vol. 1)

SUPPORTING THE HEALTHY SMILES OF NUNATUKAVUT CHILDREN

Introduction

In 2011, an important research project was started in NunatuKavut. The project aimed to collect information about the oral health of children and youth in NunatuKavut. Our project is still ongoing, but we would like to share some of our early research findings with you.

Kungatsiajuk means “healthy smile” in Inuktitut, and ensuring that Nunatukavut youth have good oral health is what this project is about.

Oral health refers to the health of a person’s teeth, gums and whole mouth. Having good oral health is important, because it allows us to eat, speak and talk with each other without pain or embarrassment. Pain and infection in the mouth can cause us to miss time from school, work and other activities. In children, pain and infection can harm their growth and self-confidence. Our eating

habits and food choices are also directly affected by our oral health.

Learning about oral health is important, because it gives us information about the overall health of a community. This is because oral diseases also share many of the same risk factors as other diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Poor nutrition and smoking are related to all of these.

WHAT’S BEEN DONE:

Information was collected from southeast Labrador communities from Cartwright to Lodge Bay.

In 2012, there were 419 children/youth (ages 0-17) living in the area. 290 took part in the clinical dental exam (69.2%).

108 children and caregivers took part in storytelling sessions.

13 in-depth interviews with community members who work with or are familiar with issues affecting youth.

Starting good oral care early in life is important.

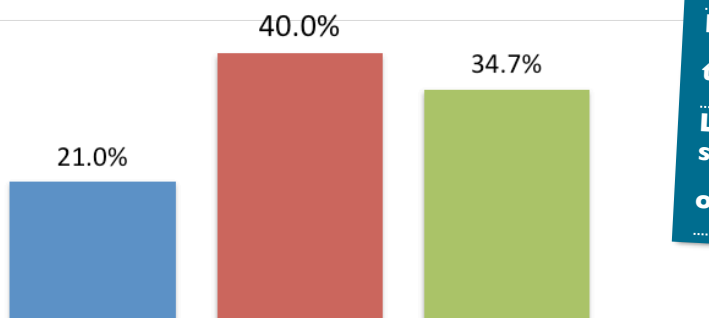


* The people of NunatuKavut identify as Inuit, Inuit descendants and those of mixed Inuit heritage.

Some early results about the smiles of NunatuKavut children....

33.8% of NunatuKavut children and adolescents (birth - 17) have at least one untreated cavity. The cavity rates are highest (40.0%) for 6 to 11 year-olds and lowest (21.0%) for pre-school children aged 0 to 5 years. (See graph below.)

Percentage of NunatuKavut children & adolescents with at least one untreated cavity



■ Children aged 0-5 years ■ Children aged 6-11 years ■ Adolescents aged 12-17 years

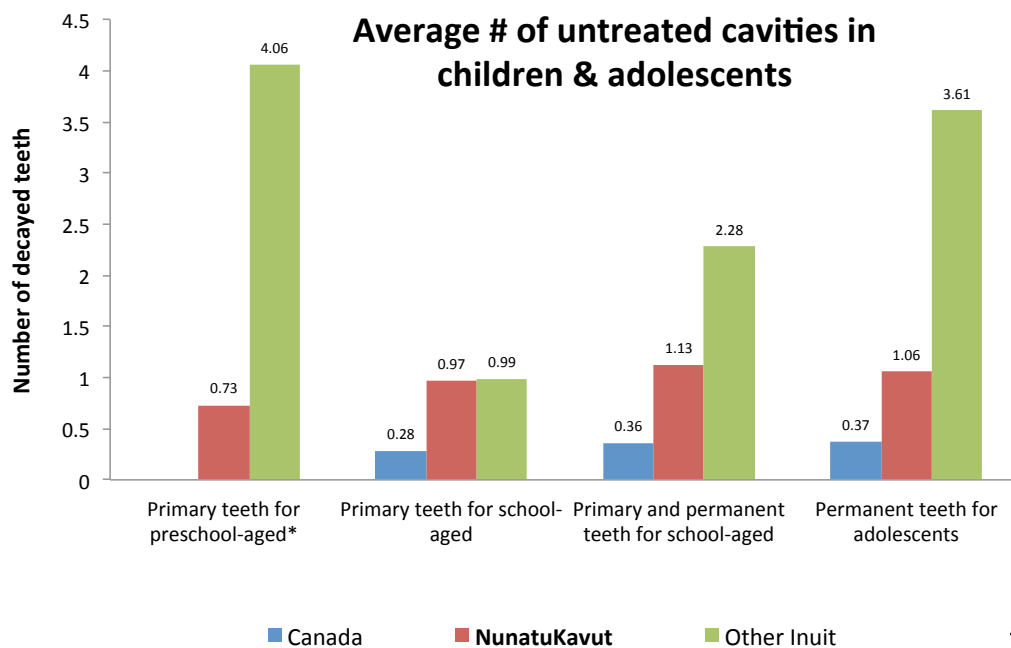
Quality of Life

Percentage of children (ages 0 to 17) who report...

Fair or poor oral health	7.2%
Avoiding food because of problems with their mouth	10.1%
Persistent pain or ongoing pain anywhere in their mouth	10.1%
Losing time from normal activities, work or school activities in the past 12 months because of problems with their mouths	31.2%

Some good news: NunatuKavut children and adolescents have a lower average number of untreated cavities than other Inuit children and adolescents.

But, there's always room for improvement: NunatuKavut children and adolescents have more untreated cavities than non-Aboriginal children and adolescents in Canada. (See graph below.)



*There are no data for preschool-aged Canadian children and adolescents

"One time when the tooth fairy came, it was a couple of years ago, I had this really, it was almost like a fang... it was really sharp and it was sort of pointy. Mom said that I'd get a lot of money for it so I started brushing my teeth like a lot, like extra good and everything and flossing all the time and everything."

- Younger youth, Mary's Harbour

Promoting good dental care

HOW MANY NUNATUKAVUT CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS...

Brush at least twice a day?

86.9%

Floss at least 5 times a week?

19.2%

"I brushes my teeth three times a day, brush them for three minutes, and I flosses, yah, that's it."
- Younger youth, Mary's Harbour

Floss once a day!

Brush teeth at least two times a day!

BRUSH FOR TWO MINUTES EACH TIME

Brush teeth with fluoride toothpaste to help prevent cavities. Fluoride helps protect teeth by preventing the growth of harmful bacteria in the mouth.

ACCESSING DENTAL CARE

72.1% of participants reported having access to insurance or a government program that covers all or part of their child's dental expenses.

227 children/ adolescents visited a dental professional within the last 3 years. Of these, **41.4% (n=94)** had problems accessing dental care.

Common barriers to dental care, identified by survey participants, include:

- ★ waiting list was too long
- ★ dental services were not available when needed/ requested or don't exist in the community
- ★ difficulty getting/booking an appointment

"I don't think we qualify, I don't think, where we don't have insurance, we got to pay but like there's a lot more parents like me probably."

- Caregiver, Port Hope Simpson

"It costs so much money to go see the dentist."

- Caregiver, Black Tickle

DID YOU KNOW?

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Children's Dental Health Program provides free dental coverage for children 12 and under. [The Children's Dental Health Program](http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/mcp/dentalplan.html) offers free dental coverage for youth 13-17 for families receiving income support/eligible families on low income.

<http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/mcp/dentalplan.html>



Dr. Mary McNally completing a quick dental exam

Meet the Research Team



**Healthy Smiles
Co-ordinator,
Michelle Clarke,
talks with youth
from Black Tickle
during a story
telling session.**

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Margaret Rumbolt – Mary's
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*Kungatsiajuk: Supporting the
healthy smiles of
NunatuKavut children*

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND UPDATES, VISIT OUR PROJECT WEBSITE:

[http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/
projects/kungatsiajuk/](http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/projects/kungatsiajuk/)

GET INVOLVED

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