

EFFECTIVE ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES WITH FIRST NATION AND METIS COMMUNITIES IN MANITOBA

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Background:

Early Childhood Caries (ECC) continues to be a problem in Canada with Indigenous children suffering disproportionately. Lack of access to oral healthcare has been shown to be a leading barrier, as is oral health awareness and hygiene behaviours for children under 72 months old.

Objective:

We describe where and how First Nation and Metis parents learn to take care of children's teeth and the best ways to get oral health information across in the communities.

Methods:

Sharing circles and focus groups were used to engage 8 groups of participants in 4 communities in Manitoba, 1 urban and 3 rural. There were 59 participants overall. A grounded theory approach was used for data analysis, open coding determined preliminary themes and additional coding using Nvivo 12™ software.

Results:

Respondents had learned about oral health from their parents and friends, from primary care providers such as nurses, prenatal programs, oral health posters, school, online and social media. Although they did not make immediate connections between culture and oral health, some had used traditional medicines and applied teachings from Knowledge keepers. Respondents in all communities recommended culturally appropriate information to be shared through already existing community health programs, prenatal programs, informative visuals and pamphlets sent by mail, phone calls to parents, through schools and daycare centers, in person workshops and social media. Creative and inviting oral health products were also recommended as they attract children's attention and encourage healthy oral hygiene habits of brushing and flossing.

Conclusion:

A lack of access to dentists and dentist driven oral health information may be leading to parents and community members seeking information from sources that may be presenting limited oral health information. Dentist driven, evidence-based oral health information and resources should be strategically provided in the communities to reach more parents, grandparents and care providers.