

## DROWNING INJURY PREVENTION RESOURCES

- Northern and Remote Water Safety Community Resource**  
 The resource takes into consideration the variety of activities that take place 'in on and around water from boat travel to fishing, snowmobiling or driving on winter roads'. The resource addresses 4 main topic areas: **BOAT SAFETY, WATERFRONT SAFETY, KEEP CHILDREN SAFE NEAR WATER, AND ICE SAFETY.** It also contains a section on resources and a contact list. This resource uses a 3 ring binder format. This makes it easy to reproduce, update, and add information. The language is kept at a basic level and the images used are simple and clear. A copy of the resource binder (available in English only) can be obtained by contacting The Canadian Red Cross at 1800-661-9055
- BoatSmart Canada**  
[www.boatsmartcanada.com](http://www.boatsmartcanada.com)
- Aboriginal Head Start**  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/ahs\\_main\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/ahs_main_e.html)
- Kids Safety Site**  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/injury/en/index.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/injury/en/index.html)
- Your Health Authority:**  
 Northern Health Authority [www.northernhealth.ca](http://www.northernhealth.ca)  
 Interior Health Authority [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)  
 Vancouver Island Health Authority [www.viha.ca](http://www.viha.ca)  
 Vancouver Coastal Health Authority [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)  
 Fraser Health Authority [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)



## References

Drowning in British Columbia. What we have learned: 10 years of pertinent facts about Drownings and other water-related injuries in Canada 1991-2000. The Canadian Red Cross. 2003



## Injury is the leading cause of death for First Nations people in BC.

- 2,068 deaths or over 25% of First Nations deaths were injuries
- 47,268 hospitalizations among First Nations were injuries
- Average death rate from injury of 813.6 per 10,000 people a year from 1992 to 2003

**P**reventing injuries can save lives, reduce unnecessary pain and suffering, and cut down on health care costs.

This series of Fact Sheets are an initiative of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada and the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit to increase awareness of the serious injury problem among the Aboriginal population in BC and to provide information on how individuals and communities can prevent injuries. The Fact sheets cover the following topics:

- Aboriginal Injury Prevention in BC
- Motor Vehicle Crashes
- Falls
- Poisoning
- Drowning
- Fire & Burns
- Alcohol & Unintentional Injuries
- Suicide
- Violence
- Injury Among Elders
- Injury Among Children & Youth
- Injury Surveillance in the Community
- Injury Prevention in the Community

Remember that you can take the proper measures to ensure your well-being and the safety of those around you and

**Prevent injuries.**

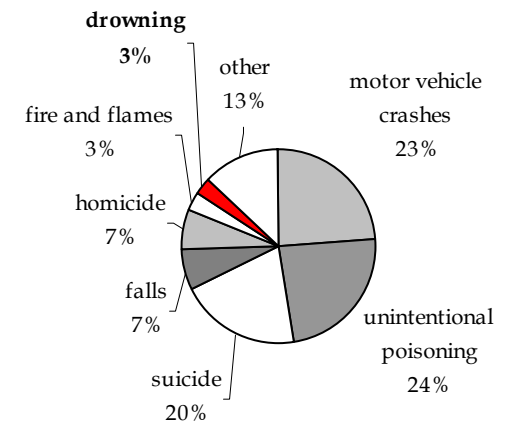
## DROWNING AMONG ABORIGINALS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 2000, 105 water related deaths occurred in BC.

9% of water related fatalities were of Aboriginal people, of which 87% were male.

Drowning is the second most important cause of death in many Aboriginal communities in Canada. (The Red Cross)

## FIRST NATIONS DEATHS IN BC FROM DROWNING



In some communities in Canada, the number of drownings including snowmobile drownings is greater than the number of motor vehicle related injuries.

At a national level, in 1996, Aboriginal people had a drowning rate 6 times higher than other Canadians and Aboriginal toddlers had a drowning rate 15 times higher than other Canadians. This is partly because the Aboriginal population has a higher proportion of children than the overall Canadian population.

## WHY ARE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE AT RISK FOR DROWNING?

Many First Nations communities are close to rivers, oceans and lakes. This makes travelling by boats and snowmobiles a part of daily life and recreation.

Many important services, such as stores and health clinics are located across bodies of water

First Nations children, age 1 to 4 years are a high risk group for drowning. A lack of continuous supervision around water allows opportunities for drownings to occur.

In Northern areas, the risk of drowning is higher because cold water temperatures increase the risk of hypothermia and death

Northern area also have fewer resources for swimming lessons and lifesaving training

## SNOWMOBILES

Drowning can occur while snowmobiling. Often snowmobile related drownings occur late in the day or at night and in January to March when people assume the ice is strongest.



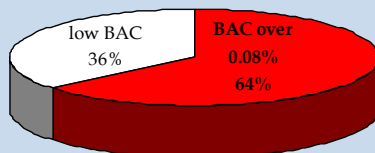
Snowmobilers are often unprepared for cold water submersion. While being prepared by wearing a Personal Flotation Device or PFD can help you, special hypothermia flotation suits are better.

## Alcohol and Drowning

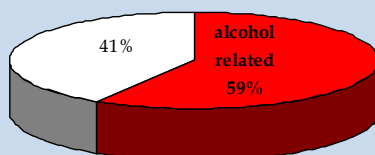
From 1991 to 2000, alcohol was known to be involved in:

- 34% of drownings
- 33% of boating-related deaths
- 50% of the cases where individuals fell into the water. (The Red Cross)

64% of drowning victims 15 years and older had a blood alcohol level above the legal limit in 1996 (BAC over 0.08%)



Alcohol was associated with at least 59% of snowmobile drownings from 1991 to 2000.



The high speed that snowmobiles can reach as well as darkness and blowing snow make it difficult to avoid thin ice or holes covered in snow.

Alcohol and drugs can affect swimming ability and can lead to confusion and drowning.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT DROWNING?

### WHILE BOATING AND SNOWMOBILING

- Always wear your life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD). Canadian Regulations require you to have a Canadian approved PFD or lifejacket of appropriate size for each person on board. By making sure your PFD fits you and is comfortable for you to do your activities while boating, it is more likely that you will be wearing your PFD when a boating incident happens.
- Don't drink alcohol while swimming or boating. Drowning often happens falling from a boat. Alcohol and boating do not mix!
- Check the weather before you head out in a boat and be prepared to head to shore if the weather turns bad.
- Wearing a hypothermia flotation suit when near cold water can help save your life if you fall through the ice.
- Get your Pleasure Craft Operator Card if you operate a boat, and know how to respond in an emergency by taking first aid lessons. Learn the basic rules of navigation.

### WHILE SWIMMING OR BATHING

- Be sure home pools are fenced and the gate access is fitted with a self-closing self-latching mechanism.
- Supervise children at all times, especially in and around water including the bathtub, swimming pool or lake.
- Be cautious about swimming in currents
- Be extra careful before you dive into water. Head and spinal injury can happen in shallow water.
- Take swimming and water safety lessons.

### IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Identify water related hazards and try to eliminate them. Teach your family and friends how to avoid water hazards
- Encourage your local decision makers to enforce and encourage safe water practices. This could mean enforcement of PFD wearing among boaters or discouraging the use of alcohol in or near water.
- Provide resources for swimming lessons, lifeguard training and boat and water safety.

