Children thrive within healthy families and supportive communities

The Greater Nanaimo and Ladysmith Early Years Partnerships have produced this State of the Child Report on children from newborn to six years old to create an awareness of the importance of the early years and to encourage all to take action when and where they can. This report highlights how young children within the boundaries of Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools are doing and provides a foundation for future comparisons.
Family and Economic Well-being

Demographics

The 2011 Census population for the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area was reported as 113,570, of which 22,975 – or about 20 per cent – of the population are children under 20 years old.

Children under five years old make up 4.6 per cent of the population.

From the 2011 Census, 49.6 per cent of family households have at least one child; one-third of these are led by a lone parent, of which 78 per cent are single mothers.

Family economics

In the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area, the median family income for 2006 was $59,790. Thirty-one per cent of families earned more than $80,000 and 7.7 per cent of families earned less than $20,000, with 11.3 per cent of people living in poverty.

The average female lone-family income was $39,136 in 2006. More than six per cent of children younger than 15 years of age in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area were receiving income assistance in 2011.

Food security

One thousand families per week are served by Loaves and Fishes community food bank. They estimate that 1,400 bags of groceries are handed out every week.

Nanaimo Food Share distributed more than 7,000 lunches during their Summer Lunch Munch Program to local children.

Ladysmith Food Bank hands out 130 bags of groceries per week, which serves about 375 people – 38 per cent being children.

Cost of food for a family of four on Vancouver Island per month amounts to: $873 in 2011, compared to $858 in 2009 and $695 in 2007.

Child protection

Fifteen of every 1,000 children newborn to 18 years old were living in care as of 2001. Furthermore, 12 of every 1,000 children from newborn to 18 years old were reported to be in need of protection.

Housing

The average cost for a house in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area in 2012 was $352,052. Based on the 2006 Census, the average rent was $783 with 48 per cent of renters and 21 per cent of homeowners spending more than 30 per cent of their income on housing.

Education

According to the 2006 Census data, 87 per cent of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith population between ages 25-54 have a high school certificate or equivalent.

Between 2008 and 2011, 68 per cent of 18 year olds graduated. The 2009-11 EDI found that 86 per cent of kindergarten children were rated as not vulnerable for language and cognitive development and 87.4 per cent as not vulnerable in communication and general knowledge skills.

Aboriginal

There are three First Nation communities in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area: Snuneymux’w, Stz’uminus and Snaw-nas. Based on 2006 data, the aboriginal population is at least 6.4 per cent of the total Nanaimo-Ladysmith population. Twenty-seven per cent of the First Nation population is less than six years old.

September 2011 saw a total of 2,040 aboriginal students enrolled in Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools. Currently there are 144 kindergarten students in the system, which is up 26 per cent from the previous year.

While the overall number of children in the school district is dropping, the aboriginal numbers are rising steadily.
Health and Wellness

Prenatal health

More than 44 per cent of first-time mothers and 41 per cent of second or greater time mothers received prenatal education.

More than 86 per cent of pregnant mothers reported being smoke free during their pregnancy in 2011.

Newborn health

In 2001, 1,107 babies were born in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area; 3.8 per cent of those babies were born with a low birth weight (less than 2.5 kilograms), which is lower than 5.7 per cent in 2010.

Eighty per cent of mothers were within the age range of 20-35 where healthiest baby outcomes are expected.

More than 25 per cent of the babies born in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area were born via cesarean section, which was below the provincial average of 31.4 per cent.

More than 83.5 per cent of mothers breastfeed their babies initially after birth. More than 47 per cent were still breastfeeding their babies after six months.

Audiology

Out of 1,280 births at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital in 2011-12, 98.7 per cent received appropriate hearing screening. Of those screened, 23 or 1.8 per cent were referred for further testing and four or 0.3 per cent had a permanent hearing deficit.

Aboriginal health

First Nation communities are currently working with Vancouver Island Health Authority to encourage research and reporting on the health of their communities.

Child health

In 2010-11, 1,052 children, newborn to 14 years old, were hospitalized in the nanaimo-Ladysmith area. Thirty-four per cent were less than five years old.

Hospitalization rates for children with respirator disease were 10.1 per 1,000 locally and 4.44 per 1,000 children were hospitalized due to injuries and poisoning in 2010-11.

According to a 2009-10 survey of Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools, 85.4 per cent of kindergarten children had no visible tooth decay.

Immunization rates

More than 61 per cent of two year olds are complete for immunizations; 55.2 per cent of seven year olds are complete for immunizations.

Physical activity

Fifty-four per cent of Canadian children and youth are getting more than three hours of active play each week, including weekend days. Kids are spending 63 per cent of their free time after school and on weekends being sedentary.

The 2008 McCreary Adolescent Survey looked at central Vancouver Island high school students and found that 18 per cent of males and 12 per cent of females were overweight. They also found that eight per cent of males and 10 per cent of females did not exercise.

Ladysmith Parks, Recreation and Culture is joining with Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools to plan current and future school and park sites, joint-use facilities and community use of school facilities, with the goal of increasing physical activity of our children and community.

Acknowledgements

The success of this State of the Child Report is due to our community partners at the Greater Nanaimo and Ladysmith Early Years partnerships.

For more information about this report, please contact Amber Bruner, Children First Early Years community coordinator for Nanaimo-Ladysmith, at mthrgoos@telus.net or 250-816-1699.
Child-friendly Environments

Library statistics

An average of 208 children attend 10 regular weekly programs across four branches in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area. Ladysmith circulated about 33,000 children’s books in 2012. More than 7,000 children’s books were borrowed from Nanaimo Harbourfront Library in January 2013.

Low-cost recreation

Programs and events encouraging exercise and activity that are free and up to $2 per person:
- Ladysmith Parks, Recreation and Culture offers three programs;
- City of Nanaimo offers 17 programs;
- Town of Ladysmith offers a Leisure Access Card to eligible resident entitling them to parks and rec program discounts;
- City of Nanaimo offers Leisure Economic Access Program to eligible residents entitling qualified family members for parks, recreation and culture program discounts.

Parks and playgrounds

Ladysmith offers 13 parks with nine playgrounds and about 26 km of hiking and walking trails. The Town of Ladysmith supports a plan where every household would be within 500 metres of at least one category of park, specifically within 1 km of a neighbourhood park and 2 km of a community park.

Nanaimo offers 60 playgrounds with four water parks and more than 630 park trails, The city supports development and acquisition of a neighbourhood park/ playground within a five-minute walk.

EDI

The Early Development Instrument measures children’s development up to kindergarten using five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills.

Sixty-six per cent of children in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area were not considered vulnerable on any of the development scales in 2011. This was seven per cent better than 2009. The provincial average is 69.1 per cent.

Physical health and wellbeing had the highest level of vulnerable children at 17 per cent, whereas only 12 per cent of children were vulnerable in communication skills.

The provincial goal is to increase children without vulnerabilities to 85 per cent by 2015.

Licensed Child Care

There are currently 1,692 licensed day-care spots available in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area. In addition, there are 100 preschool-only spots, 140 preschool/before and after care, and 632 school age before and after care spots.

The lowest availability is found in infant/ toddler care with 16 centres waitlisted, two closing and one reducing spaces due to recruitment difficulties.

Family Resource Centres

There are currently eight StrongStart Centres and three Family Resource Programs, all free to families with children from newborn to six years old in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area.

Aboriginal communities

The three First Nation communities each provide a wide range of early childhood and aboriginal head start services with more than 80 spots available for childcare.

All of the early childhood programs support Hul’qumi’num language learning. Children learn so quickly and bring the language home to their families, in turn increasing the number of Hul’qumi’num speakers in the community.

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Centre offers ECD programs such as early literacy, building better babies and a new early childhood, kindergarten transision program, which is supported by local partners.

Sources:

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