

Institute of Population and Public Health
Applied Public Health Chair
Impact Case Study



Dr. Patricia Martens: Mapping out the health of Manitoba's Metis



Research Focus

Manitoba's Metis are a culturally unique population, but a lack of information about this population has made it difficult for regional health authorities to develop strategies that address their most pressing healthcare needs.

Recognizing the need to paint a clearer picture of the situation for planners and decision-makers, Applied Public Health Chair Dr. Patricia Martens, as a senior research scientist and Director of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP), collaborated with Dr. Judith Bartlett and the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) to improve understanding of the health status and healthcare use of the province's Metis.

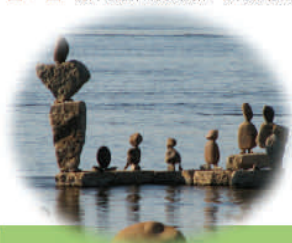
Dr. Martens' ground-breaking three-year project, the *Profile of Metis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-based Study*, combined data from the MCHP repository, the MMF registry, and Statistics Canada surveys to produce the first comprehensive, population-based atlas of Metis health-care use patterns, overall health status, and use of education and family services.

The nearly 400-page Metis Atlas, which was published in June 2010, compares the entire Metis population in the province with all other Manitobans on over 90 indicators—including population health status and mortality, prevalence of physical and mental illnesses, preventive and other services, and child health.

Research Impact: Making a Difference

The MMF has been involved in the study since its inception – identifying, providing context for, and interpreting indicators, assisting with the writing of the report, and planning future directions, programs, and policies based on its findings. Through an approach headed up by Dr. Judith Bartlett, these regional “knowledge networks” are now using the results of the study for five-year planning processes within the mandated provincial community health assessments.

The Atlas not only provides evidence to inform planning but also offers baseline data to track the impact of resulting interventions. It has spawned additional research projects on diabetes and cancer in the Metis population, and has empowered the MMF Health Research Team to examine the “big picture” and consider



where changes are necessary.

One of the surprises the Atlas uncovered has been the finding that the uptake of preventive and screening services among Metis is as high as or higher than the rest of the population. At the same time, the high-risk profile of Metis youth and the extremely poor health status of Winnipeg's inner-city Metis require further attention to develop culturally appropriate responses.

In addition to describing findings, the Atlas identifies geographical regions associated with more positive health outcomes, thereby encouraging the sharing of best practices and further research on "what works". For example, positive outcomes among Metis were strongly associated with the provision of the majority of care by the same physician. Another major accomplishment has been the production and validation of a "Metis identifier" that approximates the entire population of Metis in Manitoba.

The subject of numerous presentations and publications, the Metis Atlas was highlighted at the annual MCHP Rural and Northern Health Care Workshop in October 2010, where the Manitoba Metis Federation and MCHP collaborated to facilitate round-table discussions with high-level planners from every Regional Health Authority and every MMF region of the province. This was funded through a CIHR Meetings and Disseminations grant (Martens 2010). Key to the annual Workshop day is the involvement of *The Need To Know* Team, a collaborative research team headed up by Dr. Martens and Dr. Randy Fransoo, and made up of top-level planners from the RHAs and Manitoba Health, research scientists, and graduate students to ensure that research is generated, understood and applied in Manitoba. This Team was originally funded by CIHR in 2001, and is presently funded by the Applied Chair to generate new knowledge and further the use of MCHP research such as the Metis Atlas.

The Atlas is more than a tool for gauging the healthcare needs of Metis and determining how and where targeted initiatives are most likely to improve health outcomes in this population. It is a resource for researchers, planners, and others to better understand community and cultural viewpoints grounded in the reality of the life of Metis people.

Want to Know More?

The full Métis Atlas is available on line at http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/reference/Metis_Health_Status_Full_Report.pdf. A four-page summary of the Atlas is available at [http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/reference/Metis_4_pager_\(Final\).pdf](http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/reference/Metis_4_pager_(Final).pdf).

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