

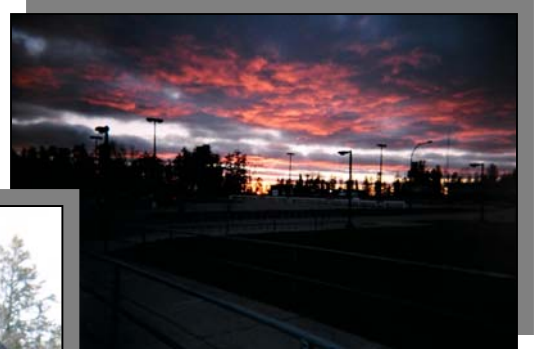
# Leaf Rapids Community Assessment

Spring 2005

This Report was developed by the Leaf Rapids Advisory Committee and the Rural Development Institute, Brandon University, with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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## **Acknowledgements**

### ***Leaf Rapids Community Adjustment Committee***

The Leaf Rapids Community Adjustment Committee (LRCAC) is primarily responsible for coordinating the strategic planning activities for the community in the period of transition from the Ruttan Mine closure. LRCAC consists of a cross section of organizations representing major stakeholders in the community. The major focus of the Committee was to develop and implement adjustment plans to ensure the long-term stabilization of the community. To accomplish this, the Committee intended to analyze various levels of a remaining stabilized population and determine what right-sizing was required to support that population.

### ***Town of Leaf Rapids***

Leaf Rapids is a picturesque park-like community located in a boreal forest, 1000 kilometres north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Deep in the heart of the Canadian Shield, the Town of Leaf Rapids was constructed with a deep respect for the wilderness that is incorporated into every aspect of the community, from construction to infrastructure to recreation. The town is built in a semi-circle of residential bays around a town center complex, which won the coveted Vincent Massey Award for Urban Excellence in 1975.


 For more information on the Town of Leaf Rapids, visit their website at [www.townofleafrapids.ca](http://www.townofleafrapids.ca)

### ***Rural Development Institute, Brandon University***

For more than 100 years Brandon University has been a cornerstone of the City of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba. Throughout this time, Brandon University has maintained its foundation as a rurally-based university with strong national and international links.

The University established the Rural Development Institute (RDI) in 1989 as an academic research center and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere. RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conference.

 For more information on RDI, please visit RDI's website at [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi) or contact (204) 571-8515 or [rdi@brandonu.ca](mailto:rdi@brandonu.ca)

## ***Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada***

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is a federal agency of the government of Canada that supports university-based research and training in the social sciences and humanities. Since 1977, SSHRC has been funding research throughout Canada on issues such as the economy, education, health care, the environment, immigration, globalization, language, ethics, peace, security, human rights, law, poverty, mass communication, politics, addition, literature, pop culture, sexuality, religion and aboriginal rights.

 For more information about SSHRC, visit their website at [www.sshrc.ca](http://www.sshrc.ca).

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## Executive Summary

In 1999, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) of Brandon University was awarded the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* Project as an innovative, interdisciplinary research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The goals of the project were to examine the determinants of population health and community health indicators; to generate and adapt health indicators for application to rural populations and communities; to develop a framework, process and tools with selected rural communities to assist them with assessing their health and sustainability; and to apply and evaluate the resulting framework, process and tools with selected communities. Rural residents, researchers and project partners, developed a framework for rural communities. Participants in fifteen focus groups throughout southwestern Manitoba were asked to share their views of the concepts of ‘rural’, ‘health’ and ‘community’; to describe ways to determine if a community was healthy; and to suggest criteria to assess rural community health and well-being. Following the focus groups, representatives of each focus group participated in a workshop to develop a meaningful framework and indicators for rural community assessment. Ten framework categories were identified and visually represented as a flower. During the same period of time, health care managers throughout western Manitoba were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions of quality of life in rural communities and to obtain their suggestions for indicators of rural health and well-being. The researchers used the resulting information to develop processes and tools, including a workbook *A Rural Community Guide for Assessing Well-Being and Quality of Life* for use by residents of rural communities to assess the health and quality of life of their communities.

Early in 2004, RDI circulated a call for a third community to participate in the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* project. RDI was looking to engage one additional community to participate in the project and provide a rural or northern region the opportunity to learn about the community assessment and capacity building process during the project. The successful community applicant would have the opportunity to: study well-being and quality of life indicators in their community; develop community support and stimulate action; help decision makers and planners set priorities; develop long and short range plans; implement community action on key issues; and build skills and capacity that will remain in the community. This represented an opportunity for a community to undertake an assessment with the assistance of university researchers skilled in community development and community health promotion.

Among the proposals received was one from the Town of Leaf Rapids and the Leaf Rapids Community Adjustment Committee. Three members from Leaf Rapids traveled to Brandon in May 2004 to meet with members of RDI to further discuss the project. Following this meeting, representatives of RDI were invited to the community to meet with the various groups in the community, including the Town Council, members of the Community Adjustment Committee, teachers at the local school, members of the Manitoba Métis Federation, residents of Granville Lake (neighbouring community), and



local community members. Based on these meetings, the Town, the Community Adjustment Committee, and RDI decided to proceed with the project.

A local Advisory Committee, consisting of local knowledgeable residents was established to provide guidance to the project. To assist the project a local project coordinator was hired to, and began collecting information based on indicators in the *Rural Community Health and Well-Being: A Guide to Action* guidebook. Through conversations with local organizations, the local project coordinator collected information on the ‘Safety & Security’, ‘Community Infrastructure’, and ‘Community Processes’ petals. Other components of the project included community meetings, a population count, a photovoice project with local youth, and an assessment of students’ needs and aspirations.

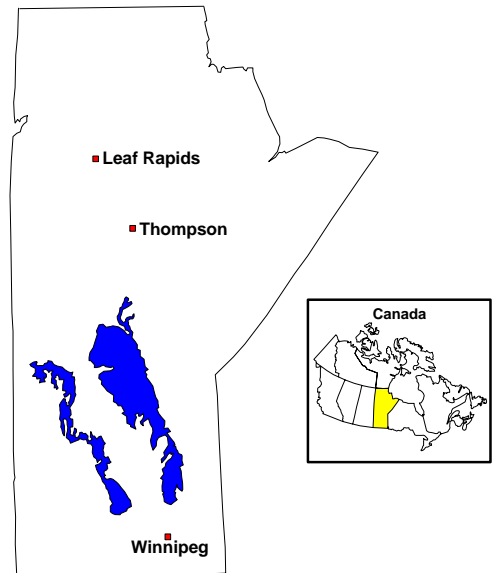
To engage all members of the community, a series of community/town meetings were held. The Advisory Committee indicated that in previous years the community held regular community meetings. During the period of transition from the mine closure, community residents recognized their importance. These meetings gave an opportunity for residents to participate in shaping the future vision/direction of their community, voice their concerns, and build on the opportunities presented. During the three community meetings held, from December 2004 – April 2005, community residents’ participation was essential in mapping the community’s assets, suggesting strategies for action, and providing their vision of the community. Illustrative highlights from the data collection and the community meetings include:

- ☼ Estimated community population is 381.
- ☼ Leaf Rapids has a greater percent of residents between the ages of 0-19 than the province of Manitoba.
- ☼ The largest ethnicities in the community, based on the population survey, were Status Aboriginal (40%), English (25%), and Canadian (18.4%).
- ☼ Concern over the reduction in health services available in the community.
- ☼ Safety concerns in the community include vandalism, drug use, and under-age drinking.
- ☼ Average response time of both fire and ambulance service is 6 minutes.
- ☼ 135 students enrolled and 10 teachers at the local school.
- ☼ Residents concerned with the proposed changes to bus transportation.
- ☼ The uncertainty and the number of homes under the jurisdiction of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is a concern with local residents.

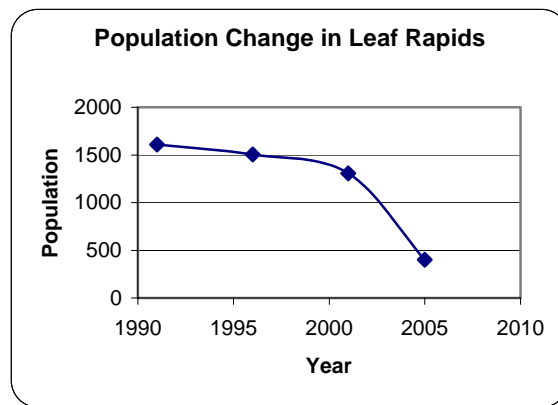
The members of the Advisory Committee are pleased to put this summary forward for discussion and planning by the community. They recognize that residents will identify other information topics to be considered and are encouraged to do so. This summary is seen as a first step in enabling residents to know more about their community. The community members will decide what information should be added in the future and how this information will be used.

## Introduction

The community of Leaf Rapids is located in the northwest region of Manitoba. Situated on the Canadian Shield and south of the Churchill River, the community was constructed during the early 1970s to meet the demands of the newly opened Ruttan Mine. The town has a unique layout, with a semi-circle of residential bays surrounding a multi-purpose town centre. The town centre is home to the school, health centre, recreational facilities (hockey arena, gymnasium, and curling rink), municipal administration, and local businesses. For its unique design, the community was awarded the Vincent Massey Award for Urban Excellence in 1975.



The local economy of Leaf Rapids was based on mining activities. Copper and zinc deposits were extracted from the Ruttan Mine until the summer of 2002, when the mine formally closed. Today the economy is largely based on service industries, such as tourism. From 1991 to 1996, the population of the community has declined by over 300 (Statistics Canada, 2004). However with the closure in 2002, the community population was difficult to estimate. In the winter of 2005, a community population census was conducted.

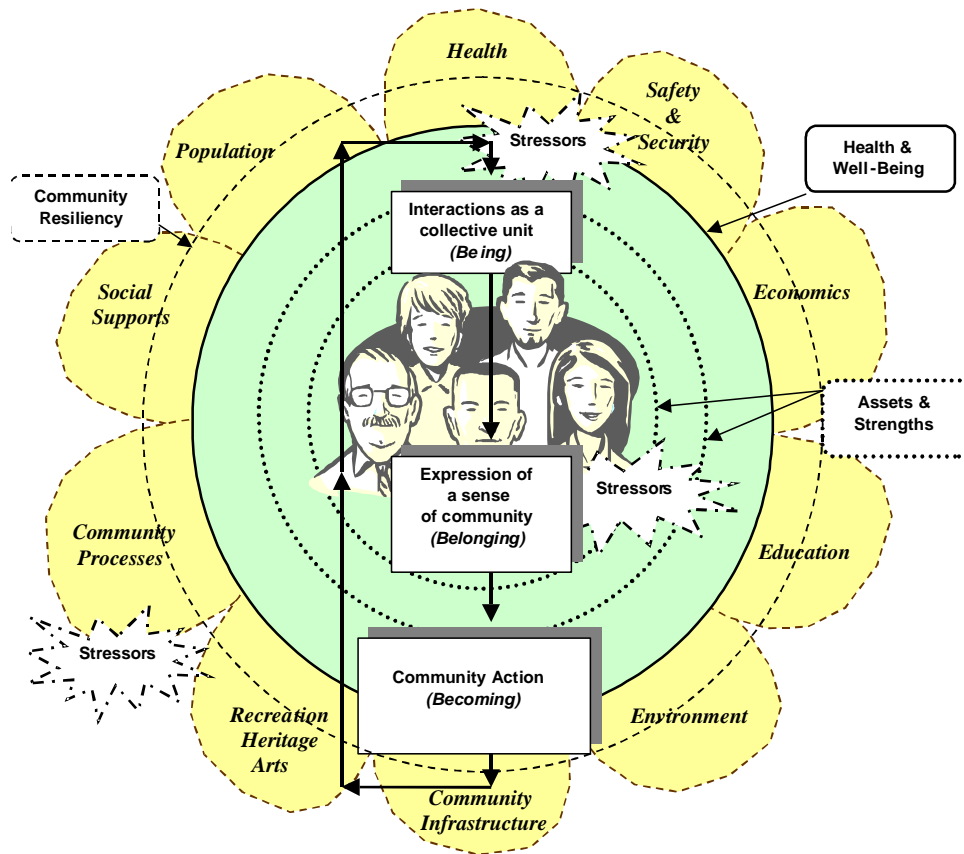


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001

In 1999, the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University was awarded the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* research project as an innovative, interdisciplinary research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The goals of the project were to examine the determinants of health of rural and northern populations using existing data at national, provincial, and regional levels, to generate and adapt health indicators for application to rural and northern populations and communities, to develop a framework, process and tools with selected rural and northern communities to assist them with assessing their health and sustainability.



Rural residents, together with researchers and project partners, developed a framework and indicators to examine the health and well-being of rural communities. Focus groups were conducted with residents of fifteen rural communities from across southwestern Manitoba. They were asked for their views of the concepts of ‘rural’, ‘health’, and ‘community’, to describe ways to determine if a community was healthy, and to suggest criteria to assess rural community health and well-being. Following the focus groups, representatives of each focus group participated in a workshop to develop a meaningful framework for rural community assessment. Ten framework categories were identified from the workshop. Through the piloting of the framework in two southern, agriculture-based communities, the framework was modified and revised. The current framework consists of ten categories; Population, Health, Safety and Security, Economics, Education, Environment, Community Infrastructure, Recreation Heritage and the Arts, Community Processes, Community Processes, and Social Supports (see Community Health Action Model).



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### Community Health Action Model

Early in 2004, RDI circulated a call for a third community to participate in the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* project. RDI was looking to engage one additional community to participate in the project and provide a rural or northern region the opportunity to learn about the community assessment and capacity

building process during the project. The successful community applicant would have the opportunity to: study well-being and quality of life indicators in their community; develop community support and stimulate action; help decision makers and planners set priorities; develop long and short range plans; implement community action on key issues; and build skills and capacity that will remain in the community. This represented an opportunity for a community to undertake an assessment with the assistance of university researchers skilled in community development and community health promotion.

Among the proposals received was one from the Town of Leaf Rapids and the Leaf Rapids Community Adjustment Committee. Three members from Leaf Rapids traveled to Brandon in May 2004 to meet with members of RDI to further discuss the project. Following this meeting, representatives of RDI were invited to the community to meet with the various groups in the community, including the Town Council, members of the Community Adjustment Committee, teachers at the local school, members of the Manitoba Métis Federation, residents of Granville Lake (neighbouring community), and local community members. Based on these meetings, the Town, the Community Adjustment Committee, and RDI decided to proceed with the project.



**Leaf Rapids Advisory Committee Meeting**

In August an Advisory Committee was established to provide guidance to the project. Membership on the Advisory Committee consisted of local business owners, community elders, local youth, educators, town councilors, long-term community residents, new residents to the community, health care professionals, and knowledgeable local community residents. During the meetings in August, it was suggested that a local community coordinator be engaged to assist with the project. An advertisement for this position was circulated through local media and in early October a community project coordinator was engaged. Through in-kind donations by the Town of Leaf Rapids, the local project coordinator was equipped with an office, computer, and telephone in the municipal offices.

Rosemarie (Erickson) Grusska was hired as the local project coordinator. As a newer member of the community, the position gave Rosemarie the opportunity to become more knowledgeable and engaged in her community. Rosemarie provided many valuable skills and capacities that were beneficial to the Leaf Rapids project. As the local project coordinator, Rosemarie served as a resource for the local Advisory Committee gathering data, establishing meetings, and other activities as required. The project provided the opportunity for continued skill set development and capacity building for the local project coordinator.



Rosemarie Grusska

The community project coordinator, with the guidance of the Advisory Committee, began collecting information based on indicators in the *Rural Community Health and Well-Being: A Guide to Action* guidebook. Through conversations with local organizations, she collected information on the ‘Safety & Security’, ‘Community Infrastructure’, and ‘Community Processes’ categories. Other components of the project included community meetings, a population count, a photovoice project with local youth, an assessment of students’ needs and aspirations, and a review of access to health issues in the community.

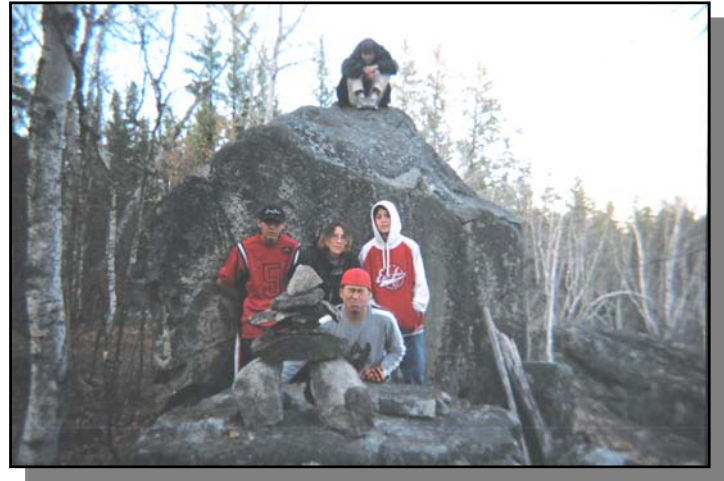
Initially developed in 2002, the *Rural Community Health and Well-Being: A Guide to Action*, was designed to be a tool for rural and northern communities and their residents to look at their health and well-being. After piloting the Guide in two rural communities, Shoal Lake and Virden-Wallace, the content was revised based on the feedback from the communities. With a broad view of health and well-being, the Guide provides both conceptual and applied foundations that a community can utilize in assessing the health and well-being of their community. The Guide consists of a series of indicators to utilize to gauge a community’s health and a set of tools to assist communities in the community development process.

A common concern voiced by residents of Leaf Rapids revolved around who made up the community. Since the period of transition from the mine closure in 2002, the make up of the community has also been in a period of transition. The composition of the community, by number and age of people, seasonality of residence, and ethnicity, was a critical component to understanding the community and in the future planning of the community. The Advisory Committee realized the importance of knowing who constitutes the community and developed a population census tool. The population census was conducted through members of the Advisory Committee, project coordinator and staff of the Amisk Centre from February to May 2005. The one page, double sided survey, which took approximately 5 minutes to complete, was administered door-to-door throughout the community (see Appendix A). A total of 60 households were surveyed, representing approximately 47% of the community’s occupied households. The information gathered through the population survey is useful in determining future planning directions.

To engage all members of the community, a series of community/town meetings were held. The Advisory Committee indicated that in the previous years the community held regular community meetings. During the period of transition from the mine closure, community residents recognized the importance of the meetings. These meetings gave an

opportunity for residents to participate in shaping the future vision/direction of their community, voice their concerns, and build on the opportunities presented. During the three community meetings held, from December 2004 – April 2005, community residents' participation was essential in mapping the community's assets, suggesting strategies for action, and providing their vision of the community.

The *Through the Eyes of Youth* project came about through a partnership between the National Exhibition Centre in Leaf Rapids and RDI. The goal of this project was to gain an understanding of how youth of the community view their community. Youth residing in the town were provided with disposable cameras and over a two-week period took pictures that illustrated what their community was to them. Students kept photography journals noting how they came to take each picture, the content of the picture, and the significance of the picture to them. Each participant chose one picture for



enlargement and display. The photos were displayed at the National Exhibition Centre in Leaf Rapids in December 2004. This exhibit, entitled *Leaf Rapids Through the Eyes of Youth*, provided a unique mechanism for the youth to share their perspectives of the community in a creative manner. The display was popular with the community and comments were overwhelmingly positive. The photographs and journals were analyzed by RDI researchers to understand how the children and youth view their community.



**Through the Eyes of Youth Exhibit at the National Exhibition Centre**

The *Students' Social and Education Needs and Aspirations* project was conducted to gain a better understanding of the issues facing children and youth in the school and community. RDI Researchers interviewed senior students at the Leaf Rapids Education Centre in December 2004. Students were asked to identify any challenges for young people in the community, how the school meets their needs, and their plans for the future. Students also commented on issues such as cultural heritage content within the school

curriculum, how older youth can help children of the community, and suggestions for the community.

## Community Information

In the process of assessing the health and well-being of the community, the Advisory Committee indicated that data collection was required for an accurate assessment of the community and to assist in the decision making and planning processes. The data presented here was collected from October 2004 until May 2005 by the local project coordinator, members of the Advisory Committee, Amisk Centre staff, and RDI.

The community information and data collected is presented in the ten categories of the *Community Health Action Model*: Population, Health, Safety and Security, Economics, Education, Environment, Community Infrastructure, Recreation Heritage and the Arts, Community Processes, and Social Supports. Each of these categories starts with details from the series of community meetings in which community members described Leaf Rapids' concerns, strengths and future goals. It should be noted that not all the indicators contained in the *Rural Community Health and Well-Being: A Guide to Action* were targeted by the Advisory Committee for investigation. Although each of the indicators has relevance to the health and well-being of a community, the Advisory Committee decided to focus on three specific categories: Community Infrastructure, Community Processes, Safety and Security. The remaining seven categories could be investigated in future endeavors.

This section describes the various sources of data and information that was collected and some of the limitations associated with information collection in Leaf Rapids. Where applicable, websites have been provided to link the information/data back to the original organization.

### **Data Sources**

A number of sources were used to gather the information included in this report. These sources include government sources, regional sources, community-based sources and locally conducted community and business surveys.

#### **Government Sources**

Statistics Canada and Manitoba Community Profiles were the two main government sources of information. Statistics Canada is the national data-gathering body that produces statistics to help Canadians better understand the country, its population, resources, economy, society, and culture. Statistics Canada provides objective statistical information about the population and demographics of the community.

 Visit the Statistics Canada website at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

Manitoba Community Profiles is a website providing the most comprehensive listing of information on communities and regions of Manitoba. Each community profile offers information covering everything from location (maps) to quality of life indicators (demographics, population, labour force, education, history, recreational facilities) to economic indicators (utilities, transportation, taxation, land, buildings & development). Staff of Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs maintain the Manitoba Community Profiles website.



- ☀ Visit the Manitoba Community Profiles website,  
[www.communityprofiles.mb.ca](http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca)

### **Regional Sources**

Although some information was not available for the specific Leaf Rapids area, there was some information available for a larger region. The Burntwood Regional Health Authority and the Frontier School Division provided useful regional information to the project.

- ☀ Visit the Burntwood Regional Health Authority website,  
[www.brha.mb.ca](http://www.brha.mb.ca)
- ☀ Visit the Frontier School Division website,  
[www.frontiersd.mb.ca](http://www.frontiersd.mb.ca)

### **Community-Based Data**

Community-based data is information collected locally that was not available through other data sources. The gathering of community-based data was directed by knowledgeable community residents who knew what information was available and could provide contact information to the project coordinator. Community-based data included documents such as local reports and information gathered through interviews with relevant members of the community. This also included a series of three community/town meetings and the population census survey.

### **Data Limitations**

The Leaf Rapids Advisory Committee and RDI have made every attempt to ensure the data in this report is the most current, accurate, complete and comprehensive data at time of publication. Due to the period of transition after the mine closure, locating pertinent data that reflects the community members was difficult. As much of the data collected by agencies such as Statistics Canada was collected prior to the mine closure, this information can be misleading or in some instances irrelevant. Efforts have been made to ensure that data collected prior to the mine closure (June 2002) have not been included. Information collected prior to the mine closure that was pertinent to future community planning is included.

## **Population**

The population characteristics of individuals living in a community can affect the health and well-being of that community. For example, young people staying in or returning to their communities, aging populations who are living longer, and increases or declines in the population of the community are some issues in this regard. The culture, heritage and ethnic diversity of the population is also important when examining the make-up or composition of a population in a rural community.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Concerns

People are not sure who makes up the community

#### Future Goals

To increase the population

### **Community Based Data**

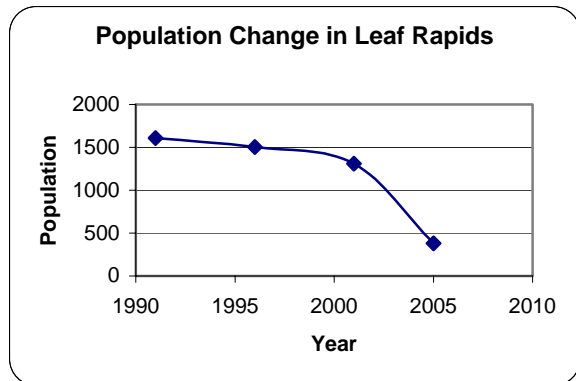
The following information was gathered through the population census survey that was conducted from February to May 2005. The population census contains the information from 60 households, representing approximately 47% of the community's 128 occupied residences. By extrapolating the information collected through the population census, an estimated community population is 381. The collection of the population census data was hindered due to a few factors, such as the change in the local project coordinator and the time of year. A copy of the population census survey is located in Appendix A.

#### Population Growth Rate

The population growth rate is an indication of the change in population over a given period of time. Often this information is taken from Statistics Canada information, however, Statistics Canada only surveys in years ending in either a 1 or 6. The last census of population conducted by Statistics Canada occurred in 2001, one year before the Ruttan Mine closed. The 2001 population numbers for Leaf Rapids, therefore, were an accurate representation of 2001 but are not of 2005 due to the period of transition. The following diagram illustrates the population change that has occurred in Leaf Rapids from 1991 until 2005. The 2005 population number is an estimation based on information collected in the population census. Given the information collected from the 60 households (of a total 128), an approximate population for the community is 381.

$$\text{Population Growth Rate} = \frac{\text{Population 2005} - \text{Population 1991}}{\text{Population 2005}}$$

The population growth rate from 1991 to 2005 is -322.57%.



Year	Population
1991 <sup>†</sup>	1610
1996 <sup>†</sup>	1504
2001 <sup>†</sup>	1309
2005 <sup>‡</sup>	381

<sup>†</sup> Statistics Canada

<sup>‡</sup> Estimation based on the Leaf Rapids Population Census

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001

### Population by Gender Groups (Male/Female)

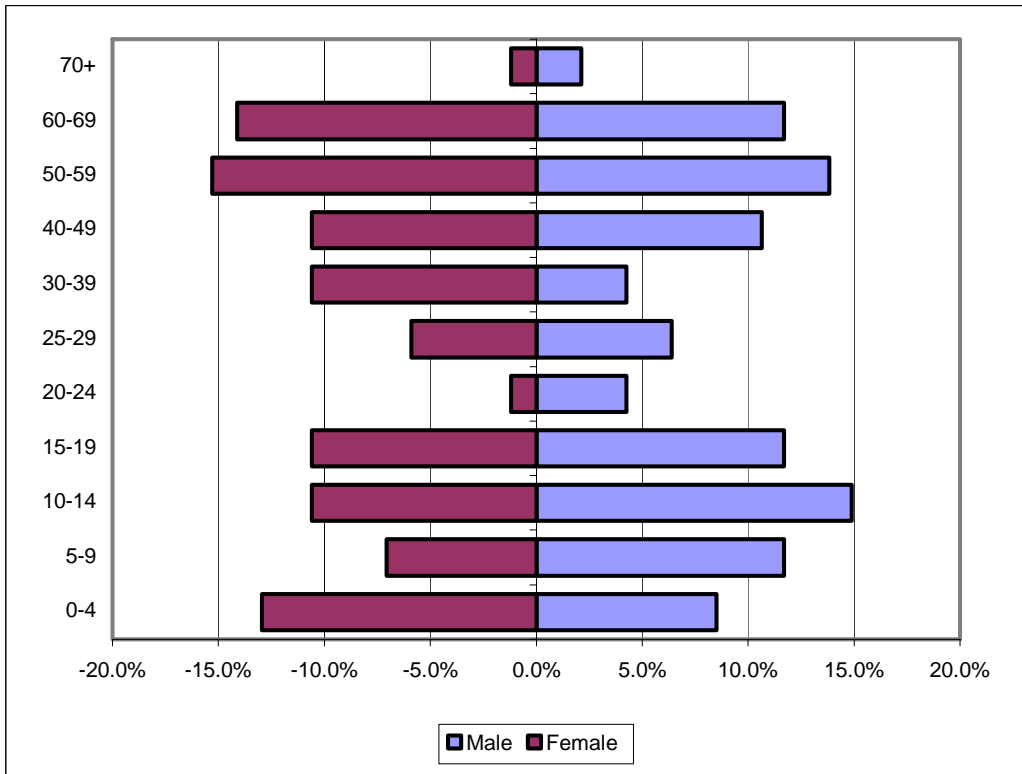
Information on gender is useful in determining future needs for and allocation of resources for health services, social services, and recreational services. It should be noted that the following tables and diagrams are a representation of those 60 households who participated in the population census survey, approximately 47% of the community's occupied houses.

#### *Leaf Rapids Age Groups by Gender, 2005*

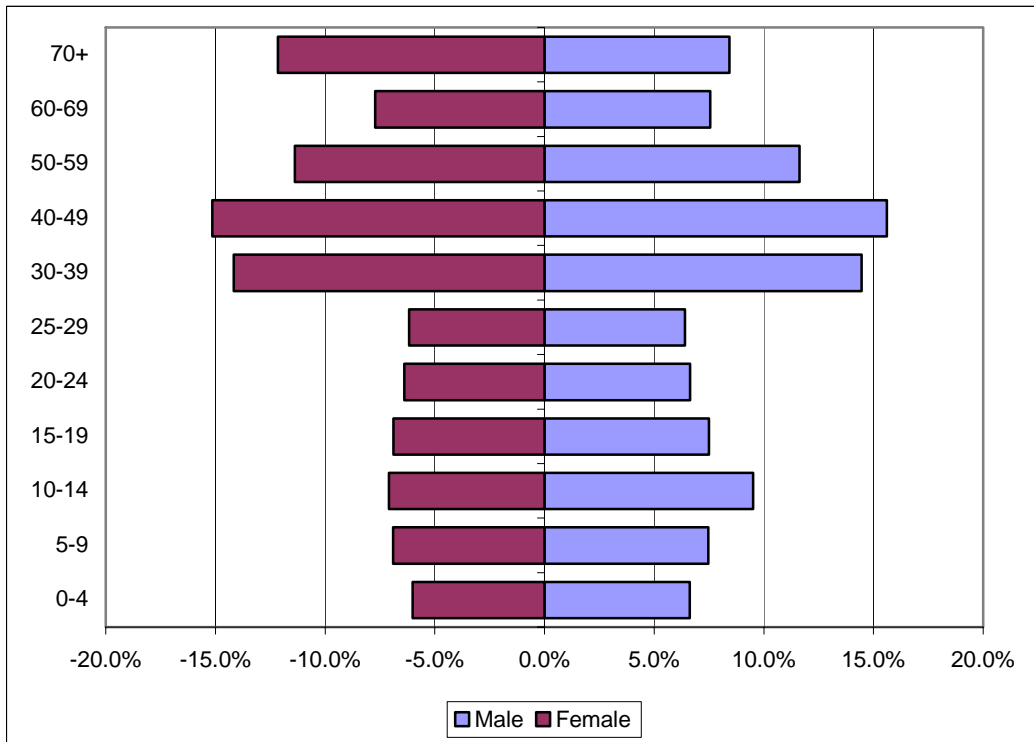
Age Group	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
0-4	7	8.6	8	10.3
5-9	8	9.9	6	7.7
10-14	10	12.3	8	10.3
15-19	6	7.4	8	10.3
20-24	4	4.9	1	1.3
25-29	6	7.4	3	3.8
30-39	4	4.9	9	11.5
40-49	10	12.3	9	11.5
50-59	13	16.0	13	16.6
60-69	11	13.6	12	15.4
70+	2	2.5	1	1.3

Population pyramids are a visual representation of population by gender. The information collected through the population census survey has been placed as a population pyramid along with the population pyramid for the Province of Manitoba. Through examining the two population pyramids it is evident that there are a few differences between Leaf Rapids and Manitoba. In Leaf Rapids, there is a greater percentage of the community in the 0-19 age group and a lower percentage in the 24-49 age group. This information is essential in future planning and initiatives as it illustrates the make-up of the community that allows for programs to be designed to meet the specific needs of community residents.

*Leaf Rapids Population Pyramid, 2005*



*Manitoba Population Pyramid, 2001*



### Ethnicity of Residents

The proportion of residents in the community by ethnicity provides further description on who makes up the community. Furthermore, the ethnicity of residents may also have an influence on future planning events. The community, according to the population census survey, the predominant ethnicities reported were Status Aboriginal (40%), English (25.5%), and Canadian (18.4%).

#### *Community Ethnicities, 2005*

Ethnicity	Community		Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Status Aboriginal	39	40.0	20	40.0	19	39.6
English	25	25.5	13	26.0	12	25.0
Canadian	18	18.4	13	26.0	5	10.4
Irish	9	9.2	1	2.0	8	16.6
Scottish	9	9.2	5	10.0	4	8.4
Other	7	7.1	2	4.0	5	10.4
French	5	5.1	3	6.0	2	4.2
Dutch	3	3.1	1	2.0	2	4.2
Inuit	3	3.1	2	4.0	1	2.1
Swedish	3	3.1	3	6.0	0	0
Non-Status Aboriginal	2	2.0	2	4.0	0	0
Métis	2	2.0	1	2.0	1	2.1
German	1	1.0	1	2.0	0	0
Icelandic	1	1.0	0	0	1	2.1

*\* It should be noted that only male and female head of households were asked to identify their ethnicity, and that each head of household was able to indicate up to five ethnicities.*

### People Living Alone

This indicator can be used as an indirect measurement of social isolation. Isolation may imply that the individual has limited access to information, emotional support, or material assistance. According to the population census survey conducted, eight households reported that only one individual occupied the household. Of these eight households, five had lone male occupants and three were lone female occupants.

### Labour Force Replacement Ratio

The labour force replacement ratio is an indication of future available labour in a community. The labour force replacement ratio is calculated by taking the total number of people between the ages of 0-14 divided by the total number of people between the ages of 45-64 (see below). The ratio indicates the number of people who will be entering the work force as compared to the number of people who will be existing the work force.

$$\frac{\text{Population 0-14}}{\text{Population 45-64}}$$

The closer the labour force replacement ratio is to one the more stable community is at being able to support members of the community not employed by those that are employed. Based on the information collected through the population census, the labour

force replacement ratio is 1.0217. This ratio indicates that there are an adequate number of young people in the community to replace those individuals entering retirement age provided all the young people remain in the community.

#### Population Dependency Ratio

The population dependency ratio is an indication of future dependency in a community. The population dependency ratio is calculated by taking the total number of people between the ages of 0-14 and over 65 divided by the total number of people between the ages of 15-64 (see below).

$$\frac{(\text{Population 0-14}) + (\text{Population 65+})}{\text{Population (15-64)}}$$

A population dependency ratio of 1.00 would indicate that the community has an equal number of people in the working ages (15-64) as in the dependent ages (0-14 and over 65). A population dependency ratio of 0.50 indicates that for every person in the working ages (15-64) there are two people in the dependent ages (0-14 and over 65). Based on information collected from the population census, the population dependency ratio for Leaf Rapids is 0.6224. This ratio indicates that there are more 'dependent' community residents than in the working ages. This may have implications when considering the future needs of the community, particularly items such as daycare and social supports.



## **Health**

Health services, particularly those designed to maintain and promote health, to prevent disease, and to restore and/or manage health and function contribute to health and well-being. Residents of rural and northern communities are concerned about access to and level of services, availability of services and gaps in these services, as well as health staff recruitment and retention. Rural and northern residents recognize the importance of health resource allocation and the processes used to make these decisions. Social support services such as affordable housing, day care, social support groups and crisis intervention systems are important supports to rural residents.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- There is opportunity for change
- Physician and nurses are dedicated to the health of the community
- Good quality of life
- Infrastructure of the health center
- Dentist visits the community on a regular basis

#### Concerns

- Reduction in health services
- Lots of young children in the community with specialized needs
- People are worried about the future services that will be available at the health center

#### Future Goals

- To improve the pharmacy services in the community
- To attract a permanent dentist
- To increase the presence of mental health workers and social workers in the community
- To have a public health nurse in the community
- To have a healing center
- To increase the health services available in Leaf Rapids
- To make better use of the health center
- To have a moms and tots program
- To have parent support group

### **Regional Based Data**

The following regional based data has been collected from the Burntwood Regional Health Authority ([www.brha.mb.ca](http://www.brha.mb.ca)), unless otherwise noted. The information describes the health services available to community residents in Leaf Rapids, where Leaf Rapids residents are accessing health services, and who is accessing health services from the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. This information is fundamental when determining the future needs and resources for the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. This regional based information can allow the community to determine what resources and assets the community has and, consequently, what resources they would like to have.

### Health Services Availability

Within the community, a variety of health professionals are present. There is a full-time family physician in the community, 2 part-time nurses, and a laboratory/x-ray technician. The community also receives itinerant services from a dentist out of Thompson. The table below documents which health services are available and the details regarding the frequency of service.

<b>Health Services</b>	<b># In the Community</b>	<b>Details</b>
Family Physician	1	The physician is located at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. The physician is available for appointments Monday to Friday and during the evenings and weekends for emergencies. During periods when the local physician is out of the community for extend periods, locums regularly provide physician services.
Registered Nurses	2	The registered nurses are located at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre.
Laboratory and X-ray Technician	1	There is one Laboratory and X-ray technician is located in the community.
Dentists	1	A dentist from Thompson has an office in the community which is open one or two weeks per month.
Itinerant health services		Various itinerant services are available in the community, such as mental health services, social work services, and child and family services.
Public Health		Community residents have expressed a need for the availability of public health services, such as vaccinations. During the period of this project, community members were investigating ways to have access to public health services at the local health centre.

Source: Leaf Rapids Health Centre, 2004

### Hospital Services Utilization

Residents of Leaf Rapids often sought services from hospitals other than the local Health Centre. This can be due to a number of factors such as specialized medical services not available in Leaf Rapids or community residents falling ill during a vacation or holiday. In 2002/2003 the most frequently visited hospitals outside of the community were Thompson General Hospital, Health Sciences Centre (Winnipeg), and the St. Boniface General (Winnipeg). These three hospitals have been the most frequently visited health centres for residents of Leaf Rapids since 1999/2000.

Where Residents of Leaf Rapids Received Hospital Services

Hospital	2002/2003		2001/2002		1999/2000	
	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days
Thompson General Hospital	47	179	63	182	62	162
Leaf Rapids	29	64	79	210	87	396
Health Sciences Centre	13	79	20	334	15	78
St. Boniface General	8	132	9	80	13	86
Seven Oaks General	3	13	2	7	2	2
Nelson House Nursing Station	3	3	-	-*	-	-
Maritimes Hospitals	3	6	-	-	-	-
Lynn Lake Hospital	2	3	3	4	4	4
Concordia Hospital	2	10			-	-
Saskatchewan Hospitals	2	2	2	5	-	-
British Columbia Hospitals	2	3	1	1	-	-
Victoria General	1	1			5	47
Flin Flon General	1	3	2	4	3	17
Dauphin General	1	2	-	-	2	2
Killarney & District	1	5	-	-	-	-
Selkirk & District	1	4	-	-	-	-
Pukatawagan Nursing Station	1	1	-	-	-	-
Salvation Army Grace General	-	-	5	179	3	12
Russell District	-	-			3	6
South Indian Lake Nursing Station	-	-	-	-	1	1
Brandon General	-	-	1	52	1	2
Bethesda Hospital	-	-			1	2
Ontario Hospitals	-	-	1	9	1	1
Pine Falls General	-	-			1	1
The Pas Health Complex	-	-	-	-	1	1
Churchill Health Centre	-	-	1	1	-	-
Split Lake Nursing Station	-	-	1	1	-	-

Source: Burntwood Regional Health Authority

### Use of Local Health Centre

Just as community members of Leaf Rapids utilize hospitals other than the local Leaf Rapids Health Centre, residents of other communities utilize the local health centre. As surroundings communities such as Granville Lake and South Indian Lake do not have a full-time physician in the community, often members of these communities will commute to Leaf Rapids to visit the physician. In 2002/2003 the communities having the most hospital cases were unorganized communities within the Burntwood Regional Health Authority, Nelson House First Nation, and Winnipeg-West Central. The table below describes the number of hospital cases and the number of hospital days for the Leaf Rapids Health Center from 1999 – 2003.

Patient Municipality	2002/2003		2001/2002		1999/2000	
	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days	Hospital Cases	Hospital Days
Town of Leaf Rapids	29	64	79	210	87	396
Unorganized territories of Burntwood RHA	5	8	13	28	6	84
Nelson House First Nation	4	356	8	182	10	31
Winnipeg – West Central	4	1,466	3	10	2	336
City of Thompson	3	5	2	2	2	3
Spilt Lake First Nation	1	2	-	-	-	-
Oxford House First Nation	1	3	-	-	-	-
Cross Lake First Nation	1	2	1	3	-	-
Town of The Pas	1	2	2	2	-	-
Mathias Colomb First Nation	-	-	-	-	1	4
Town of Lynn Lake	-	-	7	17	2	6
Winnipeg – St James North	-	-	3	8	2	2
RM of Rockwood	-	-	-	-	1	1
City of Flin Flon	-	-	-	-	1	1
Winnipeg – Fort Gary	-	-	-	-	1	1
Winnipeg – St. Vital	-	-	-	-	1	1
Winnipeg – West Kildonan	-	-	-	-	1	1
The Pas First Nation	-	-	2	7	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>1,908</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>867</b>

Source: Burntwood Regional Health Authority

## ***Safety and Security***

Personal safety, crime and vandalism rates, available and reliable emergency services and community support programs can be measured to determine the health and well-being of people within rural communities and the quality of life in the community. For example, the number and type of emergency service responses may have an impact on emergency services planning, paid and volunteer emergency service personnel can show the level of resources and community involvement with emergency services and the existence of a town or municipal disaster plan that is tested on a regular basis shows that a community is prepared for disasters that may occur. Involvement of participants in community safety and security programs indicates a sharing of safety and security responsibilities.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- RCMP are good with youth outside the realm of duty
- Fire department
- Ambulance service

#### Concerns

- Vandalism
- Drug use
- Under age drinking
- High crime rate

#### Future Goals

- To increase police service for community and surrounding area
- To increase consequences for youth
- To help young children learn how to deal with the traffic

### **Community Based Data**

Through the work of the local project coordinator, Safety and Security information was collected from various organizations and knowledgeable community residents. The following information highlights the various programs related to safety and security that exist in the community.

#### Emergency Plans &/or Programs

The presence of emergency plans and/or programs demonstrates the degree to which a community is prepared for disasters that may occur. Regular training of emergency personnel, testing and adjusting of the plan indicates that municipal, town, and regional health authority leaders are practicing a proactive approach to disaster preparedness. In past years, the community of Leaf Rapids has had to make use of emergency plans, particular forest fire evacuation plans.

Within the community the following organizations have emergency plans/programs:

- Leaf Rapids Health Centre
- Leaf Rapids Education Centre
- Leaf Rapids Fire Department

- The Fire Department has emergency plans for chemical spills, bush fires, and major car accidents. Each of these plans is reviewed annually.

### Emergency Service Response Time

Emergency service response times are a measure of, over time, whether response times are increasing or decreasing for each emergency services. In 2003, the average response time for fire services and ambulance services was six minutes.

### Responses to Transport Calls

The number of responses to transport calls measures the activity of the ambulance service that may have an impact on emergency service planning. The type of response has been broken down into three categories:

- Emergent – transport calls requiring the utmost attention and time sensitivity.
- Urgent – transport calls of moderate importance.
- Non-urgent – transport calls that usually related to patient transfer that is not time sensitive.

Within the community the number of emergent and urgent transport calls has gone down, however the number of non-urgent transport calls has increased from 8 to 19. One factor that will contribute to the increase in non-urgent transport calls will be the closure of in-patient beds at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. As a result of this service closure, patients requiring overnight monitoring in a hospital would be transported to a hospital or health centre with in-patient services.

Type of Response	2003		2002		2001	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Emergent	18	37.5	20	31.3	12	20.0
Urgent	11	22.9	36	56.3	40	66.7
Non-urgent	19	39.6	8	12.5	8	13.3
Total	48	100	64	100.1	60	100

Source: Town of Leaf Rapids, 2004

### Emergency Personnel

The human resources and community involvement in the emergency personnel has remained constant in Leaf Rapids. All emergency personnel within the community are volunteers receiving the various training courses and programs.

Type of Personnel	2003		2002		2001	
	# of Volunteers	# of Professionals	# of Volunteers	# of Professionals	# of Volunteers	# of Professionals
Fire	19	0	19	0	20	0
Ambulance	9	0	9	0	9	0

Source: Town of Leaf Rapids, 2004

### Financial Contributions for Fire Services

The fire services in Leaf Rapids is funded through two main sources: Town of Leaf Rapids and the District Fire Commission Training Grants. The Town of Leaf Rapids



contributes \$54,000 annually to cover costs associated with the building, equipment maintenance, and remuneration for on call volunteers. The fire service has received funding at this level in 2001, 2002, 2003. The District Fire Commission contributes \$100 per volunteer to cover the costs associated with annual training.

## **Economics**

The number, types and diversity of businesses within communities, the skill of the labour force, the employment and training opportunities and the cost of living are all indicators of the health and well-being of communities. The unemployment rate can indicate the proportion of people who do not have employment and who are likely to have unfavourable living conditions, decrease in household income and reduction in social activities. The net unemployment growth can indicate whether fewer or more economic impacts of employment are seen from year to year within a community. The major employers in a community show the distribution of the labour force and diversity of business/industry. The number and types of businesses within the Town of Leaf Rapids can help indicate the number of employment opportunities within the community, the business taxation base and the resources available to the residents of the community and the catchment area.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Industrial park in the community
- Available labour in the community

#### Concerns

- Lack of services available in the community

#### Future Goals

- To maintain the current economic services
- Promote the development of small businesses
- Investigate ways to attract businesses to the community

### **Community Based Data**

#### Employers in the Community

The major employers in a community is an indication of distribution of the labour forces and the diversity of labour force in the community. As of 2004, the largest employers in the community are documented in the chart below.

Employer	Sector
Leaf Rapids Co-operative	Retail
Town of Leaf Rapids	Local Government
Leaf Rapids Health Centre	Health Services
Leaf Rapids Community Development Corporation	Local Government
Leaf Rapids Education Center	Education Services

Source: Leaf Rapids Community Development Corporation, 2004

## **Education**

Effective education for children and lifelong learning for adults are key contributors to health and prosperity for individuals and for their communities. Education contributes to health and prosperity by equipping people with knowledge and skills for problem solving helping provide a sense of control and mastery over life circumstances. It increases opportunities for job and income security and job satisfaction. Early childhood education, basic and post-secondary education, literacy, continuing and life-long learning all contribute to health and well-being.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Spaces in the school are under-used
- Lots of youth in the community

#### Concerns

- Uncertainty regarding the school enrollments, teachers and programs
- Limited course selection for students
- Lack of parental involvement in school activities

#### Future Goals

- To increase the training and education for young people in the community
- To have all students currently in Grade 10 graduate
- To have a life skills program
- To have a center for Aboriginal studies
- To have a traditional skills program
- To get parents more involved with children and youth
- To fill the space in the school

### **Community Based Information**

#### School Enrollment

The school enrollment in a community is important to consider as this indicates the future resources in a community. The number of students also has implications on the resources required to educate them. The number of students and staff for the Leaf Rapids Education Centre is documented in the table below.

	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
Number of Students	135	159 <sup>‡</sup>
Number of Staff (Teachers & Resource)	10	9

Source: Leaf Rapids Education Center, 2004

<sup>‡</sup> Frontier School Division, 2004

The distribution of students by level of school for the 2004-2005 year is documented below.

Type	Level	Number of Students
Elementary School	Kindergarten	9
	Grade One	14
	Grade Two	12
	Grade Three	10
	Grade Four	10
	Grade Five	6
	Grade Six	16
Middle School	Grade Seven	19
	Grade Eight	6
	Grade Nine	15
High School	Grade Ten	6
	Grade Eleven	4
	Grade Twelve	8

Source: Leaf Rapids Education Centre, 2004

#### Academic Upgrading and Continuing Education

Through the Amisk Centre, a centre of excellence dedicated to sustainable development in the community, academic upgrading and continuing education will be offered in the fall of 2005 through the University of Manitoba. Offering a two-year program in environment assessment, the University of Manitoba program will be admitting up to 40 students into the two-year program. The program will be conducted out of vacant classrooms in the Leaf Rapids Education Centre. For more information on this program, please contact the Amisk Centre.

## ***Environment***

The natural environment is an important determinant of health. A healthy natural and built environment promotes health while at certain levels of exposure, contaminants in air, water and soil can cause a variety of adverse health effects. Environmental policies such as water, air and soil testing and waste management policies indicate the degree to which people have taken responsibility for their environment. Community beautification planning indicates community commitment to the quality of life of its residents

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Quiet
- Peaceful
- Friendly
- Pristine beauty of the area
- Good quality of water
- Walking trails throughout the community
- Golf course
- Opportunities for fishing, camping, and canoeing
- There is more to do in Leaf Rapids than in other communities

#### Future Goals

- To maintain the pristine beauty of the community

### **Community Based Information**

#### Recycled Material

In 2005, the community of Leaf Rapids initiated a recycling program. The recycling program is based out of the Town Centre and information on the program can be located there.

## **Community Infrastructure**

Accessible and affordable transportation to and from rural communities, formal and informal communication systems, housing, industrial infrastructure, availability and access to public services are all important to rural residents. Community infrastructure including roads, water and sewer services and effective municipal services such as waste management are increasingly important to rural communities. The availability of affordable housing has an impact on the health and well-being of the population. Infrastructure such as high-speed Internet service can provide communication, business and education options to residents. Accessible and available public meeting places can facilitate community communication and social/recreational opportunities. Existing industrial infrastructure can be an indicating factor in the community's ability to attract new or expanding industries.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Town Center (rink, curling rink, gymnasium, theatre, etc)
- Good community infrastructure
- Some good recreational activities
- Layout of the Town

#### Concerns

- Proposed cutbacks to bus services
- No commercial flights to the community
- Decrease usage of the Town Center
- The number of empty houses in town

#### Future Goals

- To have a basic set of community services
- To have effective public transportation
- To have scheduled air service
- To expand garbage collection services within the community
- To improve the highway to Thompson
- To make better use of recreational facilities in the community
- To increase the occupancy of empty houses
- To increase technological capabilities, such as satellite and Internet

### **Community Based Information**

#### Availability of Scheduled Transportation

Availability of public transportation has an impact on residents' ability to access employment, education, health services, and social or recreational opportunities. Currently, Leaf Rapids receives two daily scheduled Grey Goose buses which travel to Thompson and Lynn Lake. Grey Goose has proposed to reduce the frequency of buses to Leaf Rapids from daily service to three days a week. During the spring of 2005 community members submitted their opposition to these proposed changes and the Manitoba Motor Transportation Board is in the process of reviewing Grey Goose's proposal.

### Availability of Sidewalks & Walking/Bicycle Paths

The physical layout of the community lends itself to the use of paths. With a semi-circle layout centered on the Town Centre the residential bays are connected by a series of walking paths.

### Public Internet Access Sites

The Internet provides additional communication, business, and education opportunities for residents of their community. Manitoba Telecom Services provides Leaf Rapids with dial-up internet. Discussions among local residents regarding upgrading the Internet service from dial-up to high speed have been on-going, especially through the Northern Vision Regional Round Table.

### Home Ownership

One concern that was frequently mentioned at the series of community meetings was the future of homes under the jurisdiction of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). After the mine closure CMHC, a federal government agency responsible for housing, took over the ownership on numerous properties within the community. Currently CMHC has jurisdiction over 88 homes in Leaf Rapids. These homes are located on the following bays: Utik Crescent, Utik Bay, Nisku Bay, Nepin Bay, Wapoo Bay, Mukasew Bay, Keyask Road, Mikinak Bay, Suwanee Bay, and Minago Bay. Prior to the fall of 2004, the Leaf Rapids Community Development Corporation was showing and assisting in the sales of the CMHC homes. In the fall of 2004, The 88 CMHC homes were taken off the market. Since this time the community has received little information on the status of these homes, which is a concern of many residents.

### Subsidized Housing Units

According to Manitoba Housing Authority (MHA), there are 154 subsidized housing units in Leaf Rapids. These include both single-family homes and apartment units. The Northern Region of Manitoba Housing Authority indicated that not all of the 154 units are currently occupied.

☀️ Manitoba Housing Authority, [www.gov.mb.ca/fs/org/eih/mha.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/org/eih/mha.html)

### Outdoor Skating Rink

In the winter of 2004/05, the local indoor skating arena and curling rink were not opened due to financial constraints. Through community meetings many local residents indicated that youth and adults in the community wished to have a skating rink. Based on this information, members of the Advisory Committee were able to put together a plan to create an outdoor skating rink using local knowledge and resources. Between Christmas and New Year's community residents were able to clear and flood an area adjacent to the school. The Leaf Rapids Youth Centre sold used ice skates that were donated by the Town as a fundraiser.

## ***Recreation, Heritage and the Arts***

Recreation and leisure opportunities and options, access to the arts, libraries, museums, churches, activities for all ages and links to neighbouring communities all are important to rural and northern residents. As physical activity is increasingly recognized as contributing to health, the importance of services and programs for sports and recreation grows. Opportunities for recreational and cultural activities have an impact on the quality of life for residents of the community. Preservation of historical items provides residents with the opportunity to learn about their community's past.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Youth Center
- Free gym programs
- Small town atmosphere
- Many people in the community possess traditional knowledge

#### Concern

- Cutting back on arena and curling rink

#### Future Goals

- To increase family involvement in the Youth Center
- To create an outdoor skating arena
- To host more community events
- To open closed recreational facilities, such as the curling rink and arena
- To ensure maintenance of the Youth Center is kept up

### **Community Based Information**

#### Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities within a community provide the opportunity for activities and socializing. Within Leaf Rapids there are numerous recreational facilities. These include:

- Ice arena †
- Curling Rink †
- Gymnasium
- Baseball diamond
- Tennis court
- Golf course
- Cross-country skiing
- Playground structures
- Soccer field

† Indicates that the facility was not opened in 2004/05

#### Public Library

The Leaf Rapids Public Library was founded in 1972. Since this time the library has been able to provide community members access to literature and educational material. The Leaf Rapids Public Library provides many services today. The library works in conjunction with the Leaf Rapids Education Centre library, has two Internet access computers, movies, and a wide selection of books.

☼ Leaf Rapids Public Library, <http://leafrapidslibrary.tripod.com>



## **Community Processes**

Leadership, volunteerism, opportunities for participation in decision making and community spirit all contribute to the health and well-being of rural communities. Who the leaders are, the roles they play and their ability to lead and mentor others in the community has a far-reaching impact. The numbers of younger adults undertaking leadership positions in the community demonstrates interest by younger residents and builds future community capacity. The percentage of positions that were filled by acclamation as well as the percentage of residents voting in civic and school board elections shows the degree of participation of community residents in selecting representation to lead them and may be an indicator of active involvement or apathy. Leadership in a community is provided by more than just elected positions; service clubs, volunteer organizations and religious establishments also provide community leadership.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- RCMP are good with youth outside the realm of duty
- Two churches in the community

#### Concerns

- Feelings of abandonment

#### Future Goals

- To have the churches used more
- To secure supports for small businesses in the community

### **Community Based Information**

#### Community Vision, Goals and Action Plans

In November 2001, the Mayor and Council established a five-year strategic plan to manage the affairs of the community during and after the permanent closure of the mine. A copy of this document can be retrieved from the Town Offices. In the 2001 strategic plan illustrative goals include: a vision to make Leaf Rapids a vibrant community, a thriving business centre, an active retirement centre, have an exceptional health care facilities, improved infrastructure and enhanced recreational/leisure facilities, a multi-cultural population, and a highway system second to none. This document was revised in May 2004 to reflect new opportunities and challenges.

## ***Social Supports***

Support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health. The caring and respect that occurs in social relationships and the resulting sense of satisfaction and well-being act as buffers against stressors. Social stability, recognition of diversity, good working relationships and cohesive communities provide a supportive society that reduces or avoids many potential risks to good health. Investing in the social capital of the community will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of the community.

### **Comments from Community Meetings**

#### Strengths

- Friendly people in the community
- Diversity of culture
- Growth of spirit
- Sense of belonging in the community
- People are embracing change

#### Concerns

- Friends are leaving or have left the community
- There are fewer activities and events to participate in

#### Future Goals

- To increase the number of meeting places in the community
- To create a daycare
- To have resident health workers
- To maintain the strengths
- To create a cultural camp
- To promote Leaf Rapids as a retirement community

## Community Through the Eyes of Youth

As youth are a part of the community that are often not actively involved in the community development process, this project gave the youth of Leaf Rapids the opportunity to become engaged in community development through an innovative approach using photography. In partnership with the Leaf Rapids National Exhibition Centre and members of the community, youth in grades 5-12 at the Leaf Rapids Education Centre were able to take photographs of their community.



In October 2004, youth in the community were invited to participate in this community research project. The goal of the project was to give youth living in the community of an opportunity to look at their community through the use of photography. After a brief introduction to cameras by Larry Peters, youth were provided with disposable cameras to take their photographs. Over a two-week period youth took pictures that illustrated what their community was to them and things that they would like to change. Students were also given journals to note how they came to take each picture, the content of the picture, and the significance of the picture to them.



Pictures were developed by RDI and each youth met with researchers from RDI to discuss their photographs and the reasons why they choose their pictures. Participants in the project received a copy of the photographs that they had taken. To showcase the achievements of the youth, a photograph from each participant was selected to be displayed in an exhibit entitled *Community Through the Eyes of Youth*. The exhibit was displayed at the Leaf Rapids National Exhibition Centre in the Fall 2004 and will also be displayed in Brandon, Manitoba at a later date.

Of the photographs taken, 18 themes/categories were identified. These themes were: family (parents, sisters, brothers, cousins), the Town Centre, the grocery store, the school, community services, transportation, residential areas, trails, the rock gardens, friends, pets, nature, friends in nature, the surrounding areas, culture, culture and history, and areas to improve.

The photographs taken in this project will encourage discussion about how youth see their community and how they would like their community to be in the future.



## **Student/School Assessment**

This project focused on how the school is meeting the needs of children and youth in the community. As with the community at large, closure of the mine and the resulting community devolution led to dramatic changes in the school. The school population dropped in size from over 800 to approximately 130 students in K to Senior 4. The student body shifted from predominantly white middle and working class to Aboriginal in family background with a ratio of approximately 16:1 native to non-native students. Few jobs are available in the community with transience pervasive. Along with these changes in student demographics the school receded in size and occupancy, the balance of teachers left, and former resources and supports ceased to be available.

In this study we interviewed high school students, the principal, counselor, teachers, members of the Parent Council and several local resources (health center nurse, youth center workers). The objective of this project was to examine constituents' perceptions of the major challenges for children and adolescents attending school in an attempt to gain some insight about how these issues might be addressed.

Data was collected by means of structured and semi-structured interviews with all school constituents. High school students were visited in their classrooms and most were interviewed individually with interviews audio-recorded for subsequent analysis. Findings were summarized by themes in response to specific questions.

Senior students described the challenges for young people in the community as a lack of activities after school especially sports (and hockey), drinking and drugs among youth and adults, and few part-time job opportunities. They reported challenges at school as poor attendance, many students leaving before grade 9, loss of course selection, loss of activities, and difficulties facing younger students.

Students itemized the "best" things about living in the community as its size, closeness and proximity of family and friends, nature and the environment. The "worst" things included a lack of things to do and community social problems. Differences were evident between long-term residents with emphasis on closures and losses (such as stores, activities, friends) whereas recent relocators focused on positives in terms of what was available in comparison with their prior residence. Students described what they did in their free time, what they would like to learn at school as well as their plans and expectations for the future. Senior students wanted variety in course offerings at school and to be involved in the planning and organizing of interesting school activities such as dances and sports events as well as physical changes to the school. In terms of planning for the future, all wanted to graduate and proceed on to a variety of programs or look for employment and move to be with family. Most felt they would like to or have to leave the community, and often leaving was viewed with mixed feelings and anxiety. Some felt they wouldn't return as nothing would be left and others indicated they would like to return and open a business or contribute to the community in some way.

Older students commented on the difficulties facing younger students and how they could help children in the community. Another series of questions addressed students' awareness of culture, the extent of its presence in students' lives, and how important it was regarded. Most students said greater emphasis should be placed on cultural diversity

given the high concentration of Aboriginal students in the school. Many students would like a Cree language program along with some focus on their culture in courses and activities. A number of students indicated they would like to learn about their cultural background.

Senior students were asked about their involvement at the Youth Centre, Most said that younger students attended, they were too busy with sports, and about a third attended only for dances or special events. Most felt the center could do more for teens but there was not much interest from the community.

The School identified student attendance as the most significant problem followed by lack of parent support and cooperation. The principal is very goal-directed in dealing with this challenge, and engages students in productive activities including extra-curricular sports as well as monitoring, supervision and maintains a visible presence in the school. The disciplinary policy for conduct and attendance has shown promising results for the benefit of students.

The challenges faced by the school include a lack of resources for academic programs and teacher's aides as well as school-related events and activities. There is extensive time involvement and volunteering by support staff and teachers for basic and extracurricular activities with committed staff dedicated to meeting the needs of the students.

The counselor works closely with the principal but with greater focus on younger students. Special efforts are evident in terms of organizing and motivating students in fund raising, soliciting donations and monies for special events, workshops and excursions including dances, preventive programs and other venues. Tangible and affordable activities are being developed within the school and these encourage student involvement. Such directives have increased students' attachment and sense of belonging to the school.

The school has developed reading programs for children as well as parents and their children, with noted improvement in reading by as much as two levels. Native literature is being used and Aboriginal posters are predominantly displayed to provide an awareness and appreciation of culture and heritage.

A greater range of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural problems including bullying and teasing are seen among younger students. These challenges are accentuated by the lack of teacher's aides and high student to teacher ratios at the lower grades. A major challenge with younger students is dealing with attitudes and values from home. Indeed, teachers are over-taxed in meeting the diverse range of academic and behavioural difficulties of students.

Many teachers reported spending increased and additional time for extra involvement in academics as well as volunteering for extra-curricular sports and other school-related activities. Some felt that a few parents appreciated their efforts but there was little overall support from parents. In addition to their work at school many teachers were heavily involved in volunteerism within the community. Concerns were expressed on how to attract new teachers, the lack of resources and services, and the need for a physical education teacher.



Members of the Parent Council felt that at school things were good with an “excellent principal doing everything he can within his authority... it’s others who have to pull their weight such as social services.” Parents underscored the lack of resources in meeting the special needs of students in the school as well as the lack of supports available to families in the community. They indicated problems with young teens outside of school and lack of concern of parents indicative of a need to deal with social issues in the community.

The clinic nurse reported on health and social issues pertinent to children and adolescents, and how these were being met, future planning as well as barriers encountered.

The Youth Centre, an independent community resource, is attempting to meet some of the needs of children, youth, young families and others in the community. Located in proximity to the school it offers a place for students to gather, play games, do homework, and participate in informal and organized activities. The staff recently reduced from two to a single worker has negligible resources yet endeavours to provide a meeting place for various community group-gatherings and maintains a focus on culturally-related activities.

Findings show that the school is making major strides tackling challenges from the bottom up within the school yet basic resources are essential for the school to progress with momentum. At the same time there are substantial issues related to families and the community in need of attention. Some important supports are available within the community such as the clinic and Youth Centre, which have the potential to coordinate with the school to address some of the needs of students and their families; others such as the Exhibition Centre, have programs in place to engage students. Several community initiatives and partnerships including the Amisk Centre, the Northern Regional Roundtable, our current community project and community applications to other government-sponsored programs offer support and new directions in community restructuring and development. Nevertheless, there is a glaring gap in the scarcity of expected external supports (services within the community) available that could be of assistance to the school and the community.

🌟 Extracted from: Gfellner, B.M. (2005). *Leaf Rapids Student/School Assessment*. RDI Working Paper. Brandon, MB: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

# Community Initiatives

## ***Community Meetings***

### **December 2004**

To ensure that all members of the community could have an active role in the *Determinants of Health* project, the Advisory Committee indicated a community meeting should be held. Members of the Advisory Committee suggested that based on previous experiences in the community, a community meeting would be an appropriate venue to gather input. The local project coordinator placed notices of the meeting throughout the community on local bulletin boards, the local access television channel, and in each mailbox at the post office. In addition to this publicity, each member of the Advisory Committee suggested that they could personally invite 6-8 people to the meeting.

Held at the Youth Centre, the community meeting was attended by 46 residents. Upon arrival at the meeting community members were divided into four groups. The Advisory Committee indicated that it would be beneficial to many small groups for discussion rather than one large group. Prior to holding the small group discussions, a brief review of the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* was delivered. Select members of the Advisory Committee also spoke briefly on the importance of the community assessment process and their hopes for the next steps.

### **January 2005**

Building on the initial community meeting in December 2004, 37 community members gathered in the Leaf Rapids Youth Centre to continue discussions on the short-term future direction for the community. Comments from the December community meeting were categorized into the ten components of the framework (population, health, safety & security, economics, education, environment, community infrastructure, community processes, social supports, and recreation heritage & the arts).

To take the comments that were provided at the December community meeting and chart suggestions for action on three issues: social supports, health, youth, and recreation heritage and the arts. Out of the small group discussions, each group identified a goal, a recommendation, and strategies to achieve their goal. The description of each of these groups is listed under 'Programs, Activities and Initiatives'.

### **April 2005**

The final community meeting was held in April 2005 with an attendance of 27 community members. The meeting provided an opportunity for members of the community to review the discussions from the two previous community meetings and further discussion strategies to achieve community goals. A large number of local youth were in attendance, which provided the opportunity for youth to meet and discuss their ideas for future youth programs and opportunities.



## ***Programs, Activities and Initiatives***

### **Social Supports**

#### **Goal**

To improve the health and quality of life of seniors in the community

#### **Recommendation**

A seniors support program with a drop in meeting place and activities and an outreach to people shut in their homes.

#### **Strategies**

Information needed: Learn more about the program at South Indian Lake and other communities.

Who: Inform people by word of mouth, posters or flyers, community access channel and through the health center.

When: Start with once a week (Wednesday afternoon) at the Youth Centre, with another option at the Legion or the Family Resource Centre.

### **Health**

#### **Goal**

To improve the health and well-being of children, youth, and parents.

#### **Recommendation**

To develop a parental support program to provide parental information and support in parenting.

#### **Strategies**

Information needed: Population count of children, parent, grandparents/elders

Who: Elders, RHA Public Health, local nurses, young parents, and role models.

Space: Moms & Tots at the Youth Centre, small library at the Health Centre, old portion of the school.

Advertise to gather interest and hold a planning session.

What: Classes in parenting and life skills. Mutual support of one another as a self-help group. Daycare for parental respite. Moms and Tots program.

### **Recreation, Heritage and the Arts**

#### **Goal**

To improve the physical and mental health of adults in the community through activities and social programs.

#### **Recommendation**

Have an adult fitness/activity/leisure program.

#### **Strategies**

What: A variety of different activities based on need of participants, such as a ladies night, mixed night, etc. Activities may include exercise classes, planned sports, or skill classes.

How: Advertise and determine interests. Sign up at the Town Centre. A meeting will be held to do further planning.

Who: Local service clubs, Community Development Corporation, Leaf Rapids National Exhibition Centre, variety of users.

## **Economics**

### **Goal**

To improve the economic standing of the community and attract/maintain core services.

### **Recommendations**

To hold small business development seminars in the community, investigate the possibility of a prison located in the community, and take action to provide information to people who are at risk or seeking accommodations in the community.

### **Strategies**

To contact the Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation about delivering seminars on small business development in the community.

To approach Town Council to further investigate the possibilities of locating a prison in the community.

Request of Town Council to investigate creating signage and a process for new people coming to the community to access accommodations or general emergency assistance.

## **Youth**

### **Goal**

To create a supportive, active, healthy youth community.

### **Recommendations/Strategies**

More recreational activities (gym, indoor skating, winter carnival, camping) and activities at the Youth Centre (games, painting, art) and social events (ladies night, potluck dinners).

Awareness and educational programs, such as sharing circles, suicide prevention, motivation, drug awareness, skills training (cosmetology, heavy equipment), life skills and team building, respect for people and the land and a youth conference.

Cultural awareness such as teaching Cree, elders story telling, healing gatherings.

Build the Youth Centre community by involving more adults in the Centre, more elders in the Centre, increase the number of volunteers, have the Youth Centre better used, provide access to counseling at the Youth Centre, seek funding with the goal of independence.

## Moving Forward

The members of the Advisory Committee are pleased to put this summary forward for discussion and planning by the community. They recognize that residents will identify other information topics to be considered and are encouraged to do so. This summary is seen as a first step in enabling residents to know more about their community. The community members will decide what information should be added in the future and how this information will be used.

The process of moving forward on some of the suggestions provided at the community meeting has already been started. The Advisory Committee, based on the suggestion that the community should have an outdoor ice rink for skating, pulled together knowledgeable community residents and local volunteers to construct an outdoor skating rink. An important component of this process will be to maintain the participation of local community members. To ensure that community members are engaged in this process six R's to maintain participation are:

- **Recognition** – of the community of individuals' contribution to these efforts
- **Respect** for the values, traditions and knowledge of the community
- **Role** – ensure that they everyone has a valuable role
- **Relationship** – continue building sustainable relationships with members and organizations within the community
- **Reward** – Individuals are motivated by different factors and each member needs to perceive their participation as rewarding
- **Results** – results are what drives members to continue their participation (Frank & Smith, 2000).

The process of moving forward will be a dynamic process and will involve various individuals and organizations in the community. As community residents assess their community's quality of life they discover not only the current state of their community within the broader environment, but what is required to achieve community goals, hopes, and aspirations.

## References

- Annis, R., Racher, F., & Beattie, M. (Eds.) (2004). *Rural community health and well-being: A guide to action*. Brandon, MB: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.
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- Frank, F., & Smith, A. (2000). *The partnership handbook*. Ottawa, ON: Human Resources Development Canada.
- Gfellner, B.M. (*forthcoming*). Leaf Rapids Student/School Assessment. RDI Working Paper. Brandon, MB: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.
- Statistics Canada (2001). *National census of population 2001*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply.

## **Appendix A: Community Population Survey**

## Leaf Rapids Population Count

Male head of household not applicable

1. How long have you lived in Leaf Rapids?

Male head of household  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Years**

Female Head of Household  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Years**

Female head of household not applicable

2. Where did you live prior to moving to Leaf Rapids? (*Just the last community prior to moving to Leaf Rapids*)

Male head of household:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Female Head of Household:  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. During the past twelve months, which months did you reside at your current address?

**MALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD**

- (1)  All 12 months
- (2)  January
- (3)  February
- (4)  March
- (5)  April
- (6)  May
- (7)  June
- (8)  July
- (9)  August
- (10)  September
- (11)  October
- (12)  November
- (13)  December

**FEMALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD**

- (1)  All 12 months
- (2)  January
- (3)  February
- (4)  March
- (5)  April
- (6)  May
- (7)  June
- (8)  July
- (9)  August
- (10)  September
- (11)  October
- (12)  November
- (13)  December

4. Please indicate the ethnic origin(s) of the male and female head of household (*please check **all** that apply*):

**MALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD**

- (1)  Dutch
- (2)  English
- (3)  French
- (4)  German
- (5)  Aboriginal
  - (51)  Status
  - (52)  Non-status
  - (53)  Inuit
  - (54)  Métis
- (6)  Irish
- (7)  Swedish
- (8)  Scottish
- (9)  Polish
- (10)  Icelandic
- (11)  Canadian
- (12)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**FEMALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD**

- (1)  Dutch
- (2)  English
- (3)  French
- (4)  German
- (5)  Aboriginal
  - (51)  Status
  - (52)  Non-status
  - (53)  Inuit
  - (54)  Métis
- (6)  Irish
- (7)  Swedish
- (8)  Scottish
- (9)  Polish
- (10)  Icelandic
- (11)  Canadian
- (12)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please indicate the employment status of the male and female head of household.

Male head of Household

Female Head of Household

- (1)  Employed
  - (11)  Full-time
  - (12)  Part-time
  - (13)  Casual

- (1)  Employed
  - (11)  Full-time
  - (12)  Part-time
  - (13)  Casual

- (2)  Unemployed
  - (21)  Seeking Employment

- (2)  Unemployed
  - (21)  Seeking Employment

6. What are the ages and genders of all people living at this residence? *(Place the numbers in the corresponding boxes)*

	Male	Female
0 – 4 years old		
5 – 9 years old		
10 – 14 years old		
15 – 19 years old		
20 – 24 years old		
25 – 29 years old		
30 – 39 years old		
40 – 49 years old		
50 – 59 years old		
60 – 69 years old		
70 – 79 years old		
80 years and older		

The information being collected will be used for planning initiatives in Leaf Rapids.

7. What do you like best about the community?

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8. What are two suggestions for improving the quality of life in the community?

(1) 

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(2) 

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No Answer     Refusal     Return later: \_\_\_\_\_

## Online Resources

Burntwood Regional Health Authority

 [www.brha.mb.ca](http://www.brha.mb.ca)

Brandon University

 [www.brandonu.ca](http://www.brandonu.ca)

Manitoba Community Profiles

 [www.communityprofiles.mb.ca](http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca)

Manitoba Housing Authority

 [www.gov.mb.ca/fs/org/eih/mha.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/org/eih/mha.html)

Rural Development Institute

 [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi)

Statistics Canada

 [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

Town of Leaf Rapids

 [www.townofleafrapids.ca](http://www.townofleafrapids.ca)

Northern Vision Regional Round Table

 <http://northernvision.cimnet.ca>