

**YOUTH MOBILITY IN MANITOBA:  
VOICES FROM THE PARKLAND AND NORTH**

Phase 2 Project Report

December 2008

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

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre 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 conferences.

For more information, please visit [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi).

# **YOUTH MOBILITY IN MANITOBA: VOICES FROM THE PARKLAND AND NORTH**

## **PHASE 2 PROJECT REPORT**

**DECEMBER 2008**

*Submitted to:*

Laurie E. Unrau, Program Manager  
Rural Team, Youth Standing Committee,  
Chair  
Manitoba Education, Citizenship and  
Youth  
310-800 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4  
(204)945-5396

Pat Lachance, Regional Advisor  
Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Canada  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
9th Floor - 275 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2B3  
(204) 789-7405

*Prepared by:*

Alison Moss, Research Affiliate, Rural Development Institute  
Paige Rushton McDougall, Research Assistant, Rural Development Institute  
Lonnie Patterson, Research Assistant, Rural Development Institute

*Submitted by:*

Robert C. Annis, Ph.D.  
Director, Rural Development Institute  
Brandon University  
Brandon, MB R7A 6A9  
Ph: (204) 571-8515  
Fax: (204) 725-0364  
Email: [rdi@brandonu.ca](mailto:rdi@brandonu.ca)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>CASE STUDY APPROACH</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>7</b>
GENDER .....	7
FAMILY & COMMUNITY TIES .....	8
EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES .....	8
OCCUPATIONAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES .....	9
SUMMARY .....	9
<b>SECONDARY DATA REPORT</b> .....	<b>10</b>
METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS .....	10
POPULATION ANALYSIS .....	12
<b>PARKLAND REGION</b> .....	<b>31</b>
DAUPHIN FINDINGS .....	31
GRANDVIEW FINDINGS.....	35
<b>NORTHERN REGION</b> .....	<b>39</b>
WABOWDEN FINDINGS.....	39
THICKET PORTAGE.....	42
THOMPSON.....	45
<b>REFLECTIONS</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>49</b>

## Executive Summary

Many factors contribute to youth migration in Manitoba; their mobility patterns vary widely and change often. A great deal of debate about whether young people should *stay*, *leave*, and/or *return* exists. The desire to understand population and demographic change in rural and northern communities inspired a Manitoba focused youth migration study. The purpose of this project was to develop increased clarity and understanding regarding the nature of and reasons for rural and northern youth migration in Manitoba.

A key goal of this project was to speak with Manitoban youth from a selection of regions to develop a nuanced and multi-perspective understanding of their experiences in rural and northern communities, their intentions to leave or stay, and the motivations for leaving, staying, or returning to these smaller communities. A case study approach was employed focusing on three regions of Manitoba: 1) francophone communities within the jurisdiction of le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM); 2) Parkland communities; and 3) Northern communities.

This report contains findings from the Parkland and Northern regions collected during Phase 2. These findings indicated that youth left rural communities for a variety of reasons, but typically to pursue educational goals and skill development. There appeared to be linkages between perception and migration. Perception and migration patterns often coincided with life changes that transpired along a continuum of age. Rural and northern youth left to fulfill goals and opportunities that were often not available to them in their rural and northern communities. Findings indicated that higher levels of youth mobility occurred recently, often influenced by increased access to knowledge through technology. School, travel and work experience were important aspects of becoming independent.

A number of ‘rural and northern advantages’ were perceived to exist and contribute to the desire to remain in or return to a rural or northern community. Typical responses about the benefit of residing in a rural or northern community included comments about an improved quality of life, increased safety, stronger connections to nature, and a greater sense of community. Findings from the Parkland emphasized the role of community ties and agriculture. Community ties and agriculture strongly contributed to many youth’s desire to move to Dauphin and Grandview. Northern residents highlighted that each community is distinct, with unique challenges and needs. While there were similarities across communities and regions, it was important to acknowledge unique difference and proceed cautiously when making comparisons.

The findings from this project emphasized the need for effective communication. A combination of traditional and new forms of communication technologies were needed to reach residents and potential residents. Access to high speed Internet was not available to all community residents. Communities must offer a vast array of amenities and services to satisfy the needs of residents and appeal to newcomers. Effective means of communication will foster awareness about community assets.

Reflections listed below were based on findings and lessons learned as the research process evolved. The decision to stay, leave or return was personal; challenges and opportunities are unique to each community, however there were general lessons and reflections across the regions and communities studied:

- The overarching theme arising from the project was the role and importance of learning opportunities. Education and learning opportunities were keys to attracting and retaining youth. Whether it was primary, secondary, skills training, or post-secondary education, youth were looking for opportunities to learn.
- Youth need to feel valued by their community to become engaged in their community. Community leaders need to be attentive and receptive to potential contributions and current needs of young people and their families. This could be achieved by formalizing local communication strategies.
- Manitoba's Aboriginal population is young and growing. Particular attention needs to be paid to their unique circumstances and needs.
- The availability of meaningful and diverse employment opportunities were inherent to youth's desire to reside in rural and northern communities.
- Long-term vision for fulfilling personal growth and development was essential to ensure young people and their families choose their 'path' deliberately as opposed to settling or leaving rural and northern communities. Meaningful employment opportunities were essential to leading a fulfilling life.
- Entrepreneurship and small business training and support that actively engage youth would benefit the local population and economy. Resourcefulness and creativity were highlighted as potential ways to enhance income generating opportunities.
- Effective communication within and outside of communities was identified as necessary for local vitality. Efforts to reach the community at large must include a variety of mediums, such as radio, Internet, newspaper, and bulletin boards. Discussions about youth should include youth.
- Participants shared many benefits and opportunities to living in rural and northern communities. A promotional campaign articulating Manitoba's rural and northern advantage should be undertaken.
- It is the responsibility of individual communities to determine their own destinies. Communities could take advantage of this study (i.e. findings; methodologies; interview and focus group guides) to assist planning regarding youth mobility and related matters.
- Census data for small communities, particularly ones located in remote regions cannot be used to analyze population trends and structure. A community-based census tool developed specifically for small populations might help alleviate this problem.

## Introduction

The desire to understand population and demographic changes in rural and northern communities inspired a Manitoba-focused youth migration study undertaken by provincial and federal government representatives, researchers, students, and community participants. The intent of this project was to provide clarity and understanding regarding the nature of and reasons for rural and northern youth migration in Manitoba. This two phase project used a case study approach. It explored youth mobility in three regions: Phase 1 Francophone communities within the jurisdiction of le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM); Phase 2 Parkland and Northern communities. Phase 2 results are presented in this report.

A key goal of this research was to speak with Manitoban rural and northern youth as a way to develop a nuanced and multi-perspective understanding of their experiences. Researchers sought to investigate young people's decisions to leave, stay or return and why. To ensure a collaborative approach, a project steering committee comprised of members of the Youth sub-Committee of Rural Team Manitoba was established to assist research design and implementation.

This research project had three key objectives, to:

1. Investigate the extent of youth migration from rural and northern communities;
2. Explore reasons for youth migration; and
3. Provide data to assist communities, regions, government departments and others to identify opportunities to encourage youth to stay in Manitoba and to attract youth back to rural and northern communities.

Phase 2 included field work in the Parkland and Northern regions of the province, as well as ongoing literature and secondary data review and dissemination. For the purpose of this study youth were defined as those between the ages of 18 and 34 years.

Analysis of population trends and structure was conducted on a provincial level as well as for each region and community studied. At least one focus group discussion was conducted in each of the communities selected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in each community with youth and community participants. Community-based organizations, such as employment centres, community development corporations, schools, and municipal offices assisted in generating participation for both the focus groups and interviews.

Phase 2 of the project was coordinated by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Brandon University. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and the Rural Secretariat provided financial support to the research project. The Youth sub-Committee also includes representatives from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The research team consisted of representatives from RDI. An RDI representative coordinated and guided the research process. Two Brandon University Master of Rural Development students were engaged by RDI to assist in project design, implementation, analysis and reporting. Primary researchers were young women who grew up in rural Manitoba.



## Case Study Approach

A case study approach was chosen to complement the collaborative nature of this project. As a research method, a case study approach encompasses multiple research methodologies. As a result, researchers were able to use many sources and different analytical tools to enhance their understanding of youth migration in rural and northern Manitoba. Existing public data sets were reviewed and analyzed generating a graphic picture of population trends and structure in Manitoba on a provincial, regional and local level. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to generate local information and data.

Three basic philosophies underpin the case study approach. First, that the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of people are determined by their context, at least in part. This provides the basic foundation for the genesis of qualitative inquiry in the 'field,' emphasizing the importance of conducting interviews and focus groups within the communities one wishes to study and understand. Second, it is important to make a concerted effort to understand data in its fullest sense, meaning that efforts should be made to understand data from the perspective of people who experience and live with an issue. Finally, an understanding of how people act and feel is only possible if one seeks to understand the context in which they reside and make decisions (Gillham, 2000).

The importance of 'keeping an open mind' throughout the process is essential. Individuals interpret knowledge through their own frame of reference. Gillham (2000) suggests "[a] basic limitation of human cognition is that we feel compelled to understand, to make sense of what we are experiencing. New knowledge is mainly interpreted in terms of what we already know, until that proves so inadequate that our 'knowledge framework' undergoes a radical reorganization. In research this is sometimes known as a *paradigm* shift – a complete change in the way we understand or theorize about what we are studying" (p. 19).

A case study enables researchers to utilize multiple methods of data collection and analysis. This approach implies that theory and general understanding about an issue was generated through the collection and analysis of evidence, and it validates the process by which information is gathered, understood and disseminated.

# Literature Review<sup>1</sup>

Rural and northern communities are often confronted with the migration, and sometimes exodus, of their youth, as well as the subsequent implications on the community, region and province. In particular, there is a perception that youth from rural and northern areas are migrating to urban areas seeking opportunities and experiences perceived to not exist in their home communities. Glendinning (2003) found that “young people’s experiences of rural life and ambitions for the future are, in part, shaped by where he or she is situated within a rural community” (p.153). Youth’s position within the rural community will influence the opinions that youth have in ultimately determining where they will live, as they become young adults. Youth migration literature suggests that many young adults see their rural and northern hometowns as safe and supportive; however, the opportunities available to them within their home communities are viewed as lacking.

There are many reasons for youth out migration from rural areas. Youth’s decisions about where to make their homes are typically influenced by four fundamental themes: gender differences, community and family ties, educational attainment, and occupational and economic opportunities.

## **Gender**

Traditional gender roles in rural and northern areas have influenced the migration patterns of male and female youth. There was an overwhelming body of literature that illustrated the distinction between males and females, and their subsequent migration patterns to typically more urban areas. With farms traditionally being taken over by males, opportunities for females within rural areas were viewed as minimal. Garakxy (2002) found “women are more likely than men to migrate to urban areas from rural communities to escape the traditional rural lifestyle with its sharp adherence to gender roles” (p.411). Literature pointed to the distinction that females hold more negative feelings toward the idea of ‘everyone knowing everyone’s business’ (a characteristic more often associated with small communities) than males. Malatest and Associates (2001) found that “young rural women in particular had fewer employment opportunities than males in their rural communities, and consequently, most of them relocated to larger centers” (p.24). Those within the community, including community leaders, “felt that some of these women would have been good candidates for trades/technical training but these avenues were not suggested or promoted as options to young women” (p.24).

Gender differences associated with levels of educational attainment appeared to influence patterns of youth migration. Rye (2006) found that “more girls than boys stated preferences for living in cities, with a result that illustrates that rural girls are more likely to choose higher education careers”(p. 204). The connection between migration among females and the desire to pursue post-secondary education was also found by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) who stated that “females tend to have higher educational aspiration than males, and they tend to be more interested in service occupations that can only be pursued in metropolitan areas” (p.291). Kloep, Hendry, Glendinning, Ingerrigtsen, and Espnes (2003) encouraged young

---

<sup>1</sup> Literature Review by Paige Rushton McDougall

males and females to rate possible reasons for moving away from their home communities and found that “young women rate the importance of going to university higher than young men” (p.99). Although Rye (2006) identified a greater interest by females to move to urban centres, there were only a small number of differences between genders, in what he categorized the ‘young adult phase’.

### ***Family & Community Ties***

The relationship that youth have with their parents has had an influence on their decision to leave, return, or stay. Garsky (2002) found that “greater parental resources result in youths moving greater distances” (p.427). Generally, moving greater distances was directly related to the particular educational institutions that youth planned to attend. It was found that families from a higher socio-economic standing, often because the parents, attended university or college, greatly influenced whether their children chose to pursue post-secondary education and consequently migrating away from rural and northern communities. Large studies that broadly examined the propensity of youth migration suggest that children from large families tended to leave home before their counterparts from smaller families. However, family structure had only a minimal effect on migration patterns; the literature suggests that perhaps linkages with family size and structure and migration patterns were noted simply because families tend to be larger in rural and northern areas than in urban areas. Young adults, regardless of family size and structure, often left home at an early age to fulfill educational goals.

Kloep et al (2003) explored differences between *stayers*, *leavers*, and *returners* in an effort to explain youth’s opinions and their connection to rural areas. The *stayers* responded that the “sense of belonging outweighs the disadvantages of continuing to live in a rural setting. Their perceived quality of life would diminish if they had to leave the area, so they are willing to make sacrifices to remain” (Kloep et al, 2003, p.102). *Leavers*, on the other hand, stated that they “do not feel included in their community, rather they see themselves as restrained and oppressed by rurality and hope to find a better realization of themselves somewhere else” (Kloep et al, 2003, p.104). Those who stated that they would return felt that there were positive and negative aspects about their community, but wished to come back at a later time in their life despite perceived negative aspects. Glendinning (2002) found that females possessed a greater tendency to emphasize social aspects of rural communities. There was much greater feedback from females on the connections that they have to their family and community and whether it would affect their decision to stay or leave their hometown. The perceived relationships between youth and their community revealed significant implications for whether youth have a desire to stay in or return to a rural community. Much of the literature regarding youth migration suggested that the disconnection youth sometimes have from their community was due to a lack of voice and representation within their community. Such conclusions were found by Shucksmith who stated that many youth felt that they “lack a voice in their home communities and that they are disengaged from local consultation structures” (Glendinning 2002, p. 131).

### ***Education Opportunities***

Education was a main factor in the mobility of young adults. Youth who were achieving relatively high grades and who were attending “academic classes are more likely to state that

they want to live in cities while in their twenties... This gap is expected, as those in academic courses are more likely to continue their academic educational careers at universities and colleges which are located in the major cities and regional centers” (Rye 2006, p 204). Brain drain occurs when a community’s human capital was attracted to urban centres, leaving the rural areas with little social or human capital to sustain them. The location of academic and trade institutions directly correlated to the desire to move to urban centres. However, this was not the only reason, employment opportunities requiring their level of post-secondary education were more often situated in urban centres. Much of the literature around rural out migration suggests that once educational attainment was complete, “highly educated metropolitan residents are increasingly unlikely to migrate to non-metropolitan areas...the result is a non-metropolitan brain drain that is pronounced” (Domina, 2006, p. 396).

### ***Occupational and Economic Opportunities***

Economic opportunities often drove the decision-making process for rural youth. This was particularly true for youth who were becoming independent and considering personal life goals. Stockdale (2004) stated that many rural areas find “young people obliged to leave permanently due to the absence of employment opportunities and the prevalence of low wage sectors” (p. 169). Those who had a desire to work in non-agricultural and non-resource based occupations found it most difficult to secure employment to suit their needs in rural areas. Domina (2006) found that “educational attainment has become the single most important predictor of migration between American metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas” (p. 385); as youth completed their education, they began to seek greater employment opportunities, opportunities that are in large part associated with metropolitan areas.

### ***Summary***

There were many themes associated with rural and northern youth migration. Gender, family and community ties, educational opportunities, and occupational and economic opportunities seemed to generally influence youth’s decisions to leave rural and northern areas. A more thorough understanding of the issues associated with youth migration will assist future provincial, regional, and local planning efforts. The literature suggest that, community residents and leaders should value the input and views of youth to meaningfully engage youth at a local level and work towards future solutions. It also showed youth needed to feel that their presence within a community was important, and that they can contribute to and influence their community in a manner that enhanced their participation and reflected their needs and wants.

## Secondary Data Report<sup>2</sup>

Analyzing population structure and trends is a way to describe youth migration in Manitoba from a provincial, regional and local level. Basic statistical analysis of population changes over time and population pyramids provide an easily understood graphical representation of the population. This analysis can be used to inform decision making related to youth mobility in rural and northern communities in Manitoba. Population data from Canada's Census of Population is, for the most part, reliable and relatively accessible but, in some instances, problems with data for small communities and the Aboriginal Identity Population rendered these analytical tools useless. The following chapter contains three sections. The methodology used for analysis and limitations with Census data are outlined in the first section. The second section contains analysis of population trends and structure in Manitoba as well as the Parkland and Northern regions from 1981 to 2006. The final section focuses on the population that identified as Aboriginal in the 2006 Census. This section includes a discussion of challenges with the data and an analysis of the Aboriginal Identity Population from the provincial, regional and local level where possible.

### ***Methodology and Limitations***

Population data obtained from the six censuses between 1981 and 2006 were used to analyze trends in population changes over a 25-year period. In addition, population pyramids were created to provide insight into whether population growth is expansive, stable, stationary or declining. Relevant data for the 1996 and 2006 censuses were found online. Data from the 1981, 1986, 1991 and 2001 censuses were obtained from their paper copies. Analysis was conducted on:

- the Manitoba population as a whole;
- the combined population of rural areas;
- the combined population of urban areas (Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Thompson and Winnipeg);
- the population of the three Census Divisions in the Parkland Region (16, 17 and 20) and the four municipalities in the case study sites (City of Dauphin, RM of Dauphin, Town of Grandview and RM of Grandview);
- the population of the four Census Divisions in the Northern Region (19, 21, 22 and 23); the City of Thompson; and the Unorganized population in Census Division 22. Data from the Unorganized population in Census Division 22 was analyzed because population data available for two of the case study sites, Wabowden and Thicket Portage, was included by Statistics Canada in this Census Subdivision.

Population pyramids were utilized by Statistics Canada to analyze rural youth migration trends between 1971 and 1996 (Tremblay, 2001). Population pyramids are bar graphs representing population by gender and age cohort turned horizontally where one gender mirrors the other. This method is commonly used to show the age and gender structure of a

---

<sup>2</sup> Secondary Data Report by Lonnie Patterson

geographic area and allow for comparisons of population structure across time and space. Population pyramids are easily understood and can be used by most communities to conduct a local population analysis. In addition, the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics uses population pyramids as a tool in determining population projections.

There are four types of population pyramid structures that can be derived from long-term analysis of population pyramids (Statistics Canada, 2007). An expansive growth pyramid consists of “a broad base, indicating a high proportion of children, a rapid rate of population growth, and a low proportion of older people” (Statistics Canada, 2008). A stable growth pyramid is “a structure with indentations that even out and reflect slow growth over a period” (Statistics Canada, 2008). A stationary pyramid has “a narrow base and roughly equal numbers in each age group tapering off at the older ages”(Statistics Canada, 2008). Finally, a declining pyramid is depicted by “a high proportion of aged persons and declining numbers” (Statistics Canada, 2008). These four types of population pyramids were used to describe population structure in the analysis.

To provide a provincial context and to allow for comparisons, analysis of Census population data for Manitoba, urban Manitoba and rural Manitoba was conducted. Census data from the cities located in Manitoba’s one Census Metropolitan Area (Winnipeg) and three Census Agglomeration areas (Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Thompson) were combined to make up urban Manitoba. Rather than manually combining the populations of the remaining municipalities in the province, rural Manitoba was determined by taking the difference between the overall provincial population and the urban population.

Population analysis was conducted for three different youth cohorts: 5-14 years of age, 15-24 years of age and 25-34 years of age. This analysis examined how the overall population and the population in each cohort changed over 25 years. Ten-year cohorts were chosen because readily available Statistics Canada population data for the 1981 and 1986 censuses did not provide information in five-year cohorts for the 25-34 years of age range at the census subdivision (municipal) level. However, more in-depth analysis of population trends could be conducted using five-year cohorts.

There were some additional problems with census population data. Age cohorts in the 1986 census were inconsistent with cohorts used in the other censuses. The 25-29 years of age and 30-34 years of age cohorts were collapsed into one cohort at the provincial, census division and census subdivision levels. As a result, population pyramids from 1986 could not be compared with pyramids from the other census years. Also, this cohort collapse at the census subdivision level did not allow for municipal level population pyramid analysis for the 1981 and 1986 census years. Finally, because the upper cohorts also differ from census to census and this study is focused on youth, the top cohort used in population pyramids for this study was 60-64 years of age.

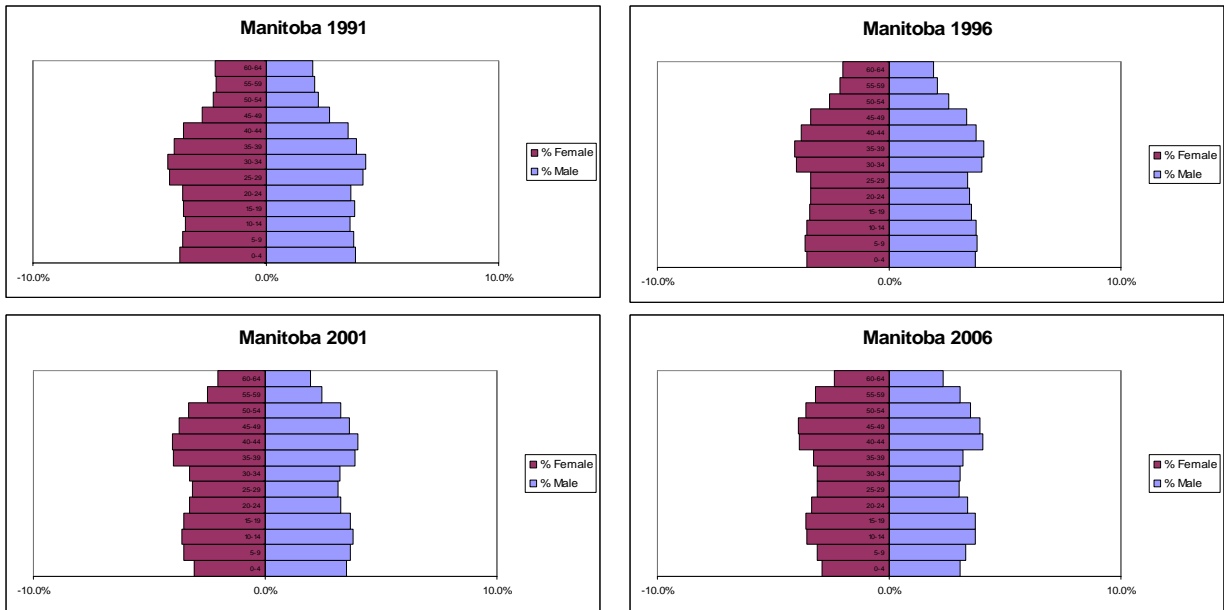
Population data presented in census documents did not reflect the actual number of people recorded, it has been rounded to the nearest multiple of 5. This caused problems when creating population pyramids and when conducting population trend analysis in communities with small populations. Finally, information on population mobility broken down by age was not as easily accessible as population data.

# Population Analysis

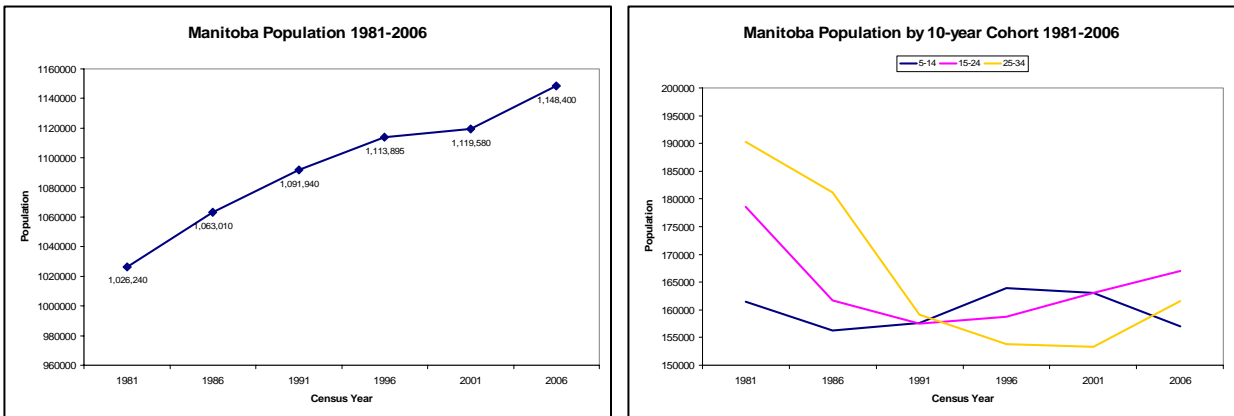
## Manitoba Context

### Manitoba

According to population pyramid analysis, Manitoba's population has been stationary between 1981 and 2006. The pyramids showed generally equal numbers in each cohort that tapered off in the older cohorts.



Manitoba's population steadily increased between 1981 and 2006. It grew from 1,026,240 people to 1,148,400 people or 12% during this time period. However, size of each of the three youth cohorts decreased over the 25-year period. Despite increasing between 1986 and 1996, the 5-14 age cohort showed an overall decline by 3%. Overall, the 15-24 age cohort declined by 6%, however, it increased by 6% since 1996. A more drastic decrease was seen in the 25-34 age cohort with a 15% decline in population; however, this trend may be changing because it increased by 5% between 2001 and 2006.

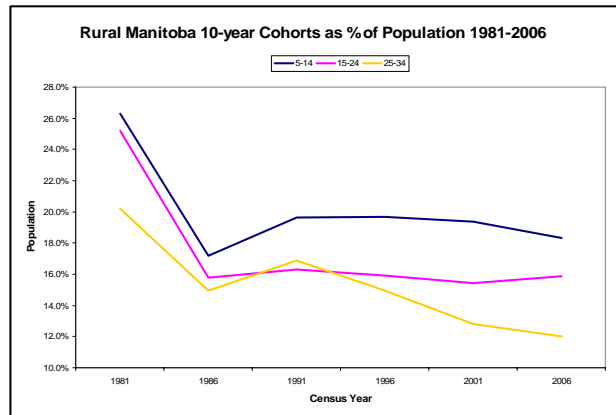
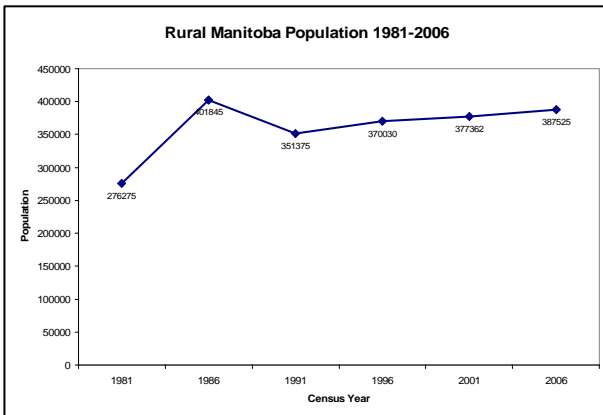


## Rural Manitoba

Population pyramid analysis of the combined population of Manitoba's rural areas indicated stable growth over the 25-year period. This was demonstrated by indentations that even out over time.



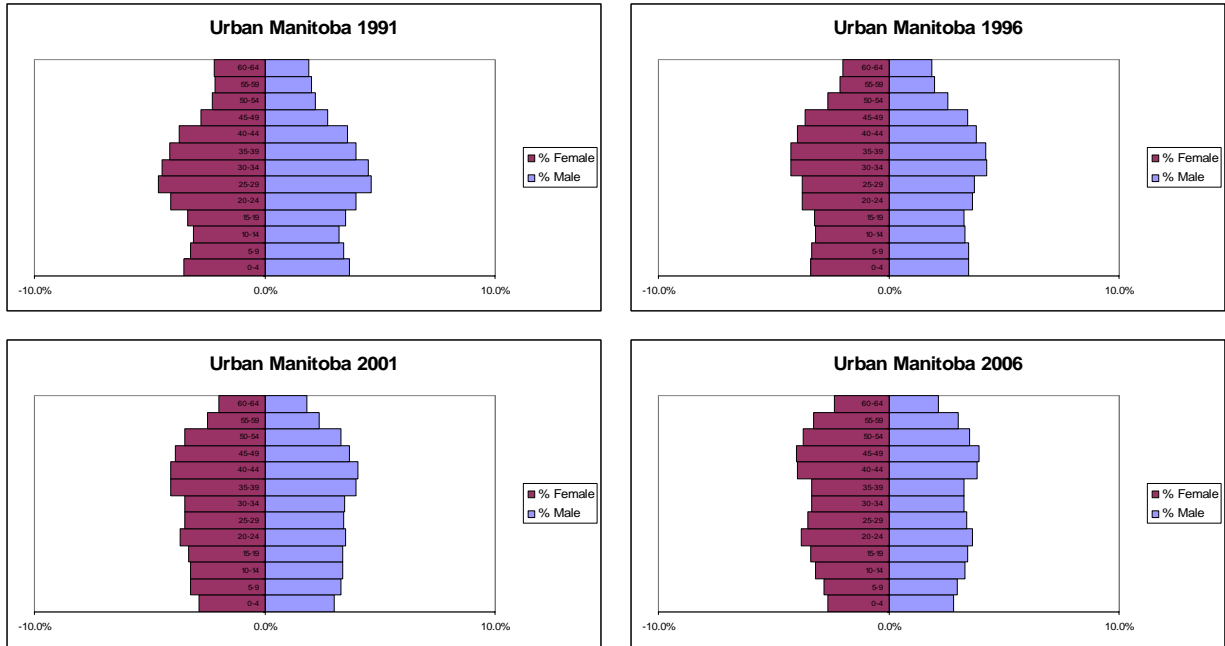
The rural population in Manitoba increased by 40% between 1981 and 2006, or from 276,275 to 387,525 people. The most significant increase occurred between 1981 and 1986 when the population grew by 45%. Following the same pattern as the overall and urban populations, rural areas saw a decline in the population of the three youth cohorts studied. The 5-14 age cohort declined by 2%. Decreases in the population between 1981 and 1991 were essentially balanced out by increases between 1991 and 2001. There was a small decline of 3%, or 2,125 people, between 2001 and 2006. The 15-24 age cohort experienced an overall decline of 12% during the 25-year period. The population of the 15-24 age cohort declined between 1981 and 1991 by 18% and increased between 1991 and 1996 by 3%. It also increased between 2001 and 2006 by 6%. Between 1981 and 2006 the 25-34 age cohort declined by 17%. For this cohort, there was an increase of 7% between 1981 and 1986 but a constant decline between 1986 and 2006 from 60,030 to 43,505 or by 23%.



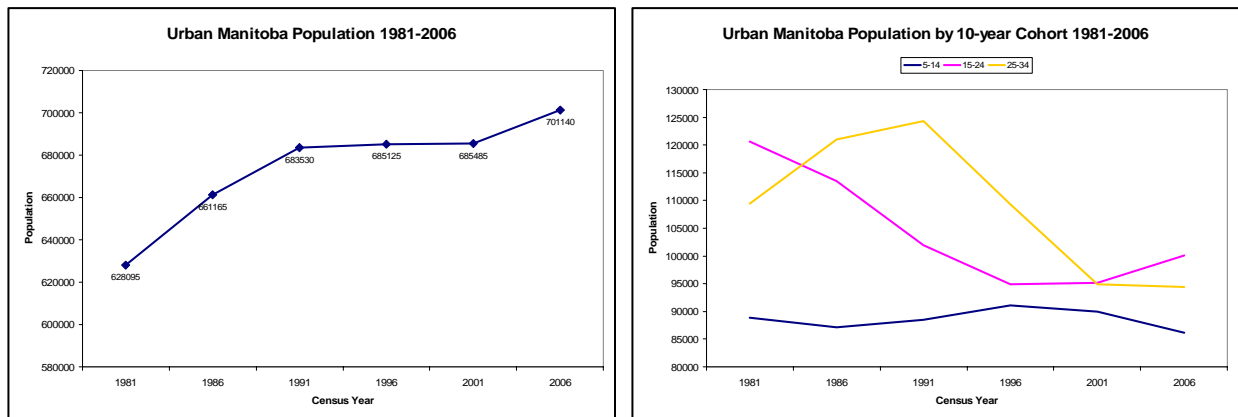


## Urban Manitoba

Population pyramid analysis of the combined population of Manitoba's urban areas – Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Thompson and Winnipeg – indicated a stationary population structure. This was demonstrated in the population pyramids because there were generally equal numbers in each cohort that tapered off in the older cohorts.



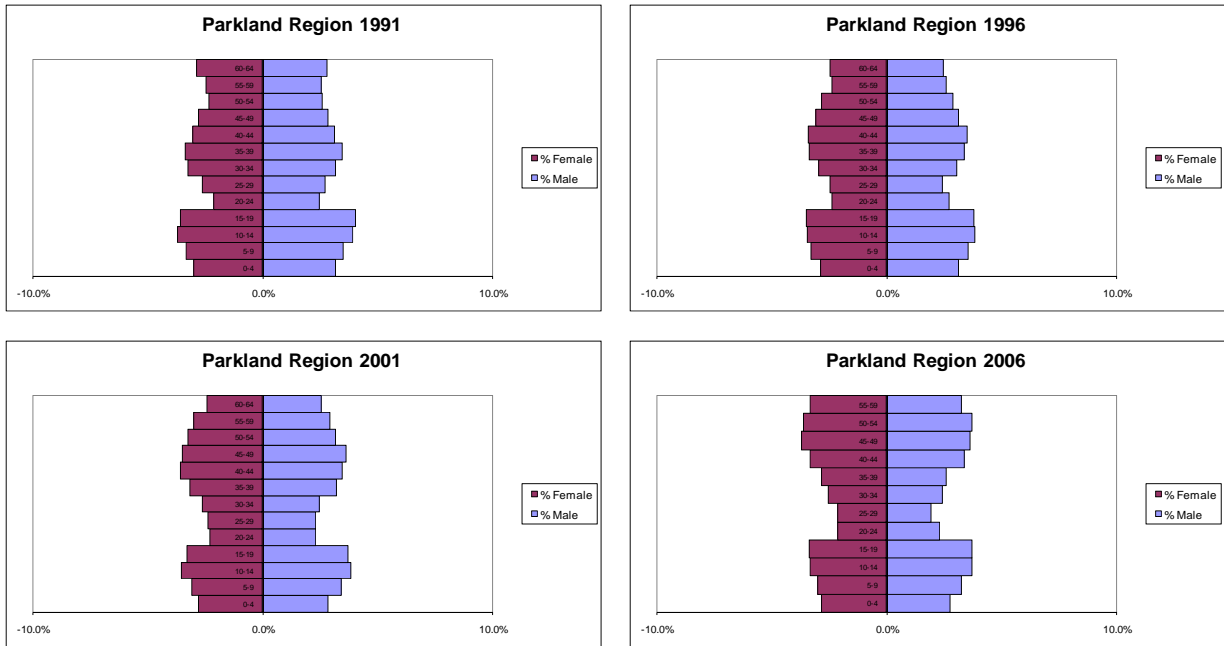
Manitoba's urban population increased by 12% between 1981 and 2006 from 685,485 to 701,140 people. It increased by 9% between 1981 and 1991, was stagnant between 1991 and 2001 and then increased again between 2001 and 2006 by 2%. As with the Manitoba and rural Manitoba populations, all three youth cohorts declined during the 25-year period. The 5-14 age cohort declined by 3%. The 15-24 age cohort declined steadily from 1981 to 1996 by 21%, but there was an increase of 5% between 2001 and 2006. The overall decline for this cohort was 17%. The 25-34 age cohort showed an overall decline of 14%. There was a population increase of 14% between 1981 and 1991 but a steady decline between 1991 and 2001 by 24%, however, the rate of decline between 2001 and 2006 was very low, only .4%. This indicated a possible change in the trend.



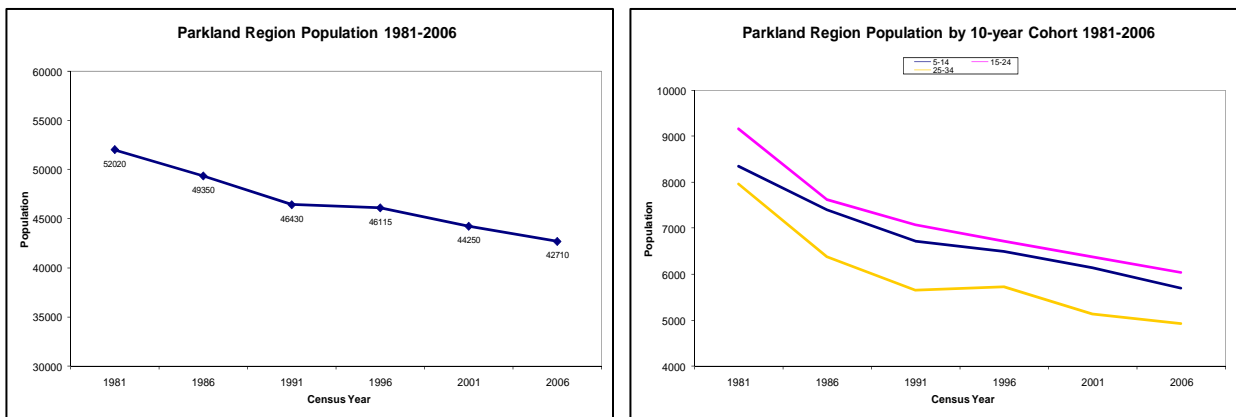
## Regional Context

### *Parkland Region*

Population pyramid analysis indicated that the population in the Parkland Region was stationary between 1981 and 2006. A narrow base and somewhat equal numbers in each age cohort demonstrated this.

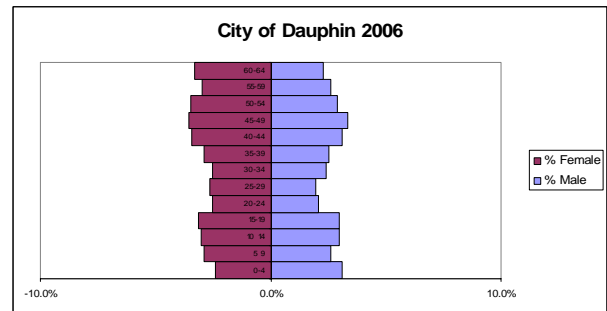
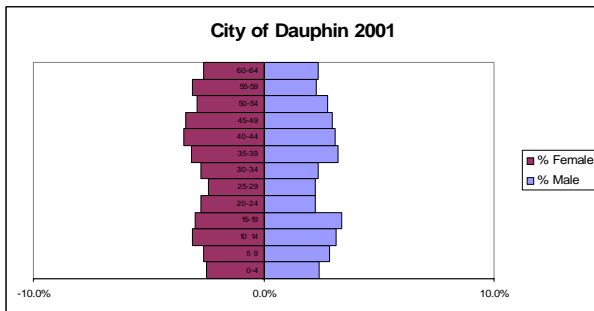
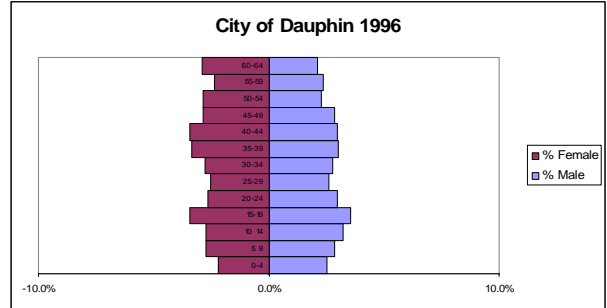
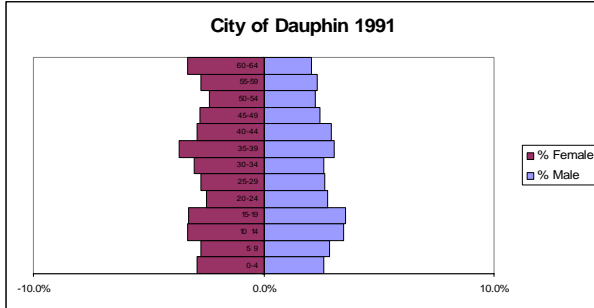


The region's population declined steadily over the 25-year period from 52,020 to 42,710 people or 18%. The population of all three youth cohorts declined significantly between 1981 and 2006. The 5-14 age cohort decreased by 34%, or 3,130 people. The 15-24 age cohort decreased by 32%, or 2,655 people. The 25-34 age cohort decreased by 38% or 3,040 people.

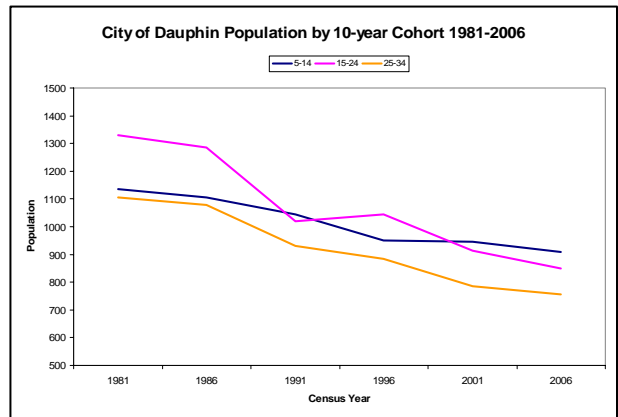
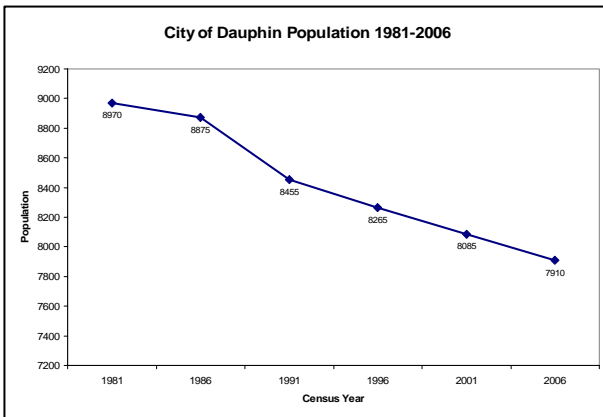


## City of Dauphin

Analysis of population pyramids for the City of Dauphin indicated a stationary population. A narrow base of the pyramid and somewhat equal numbers in each age cohort demonstrated this.

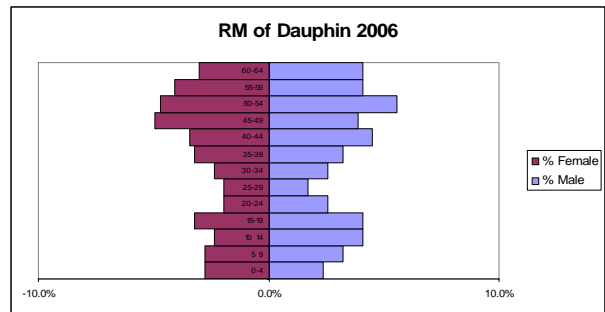
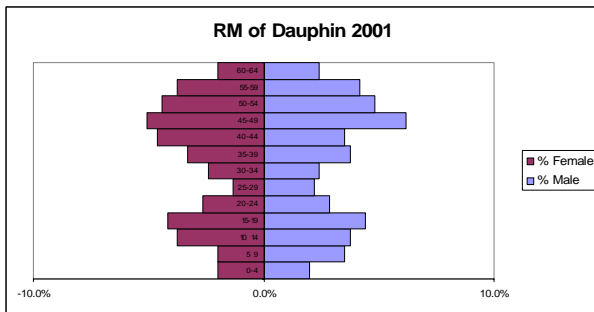
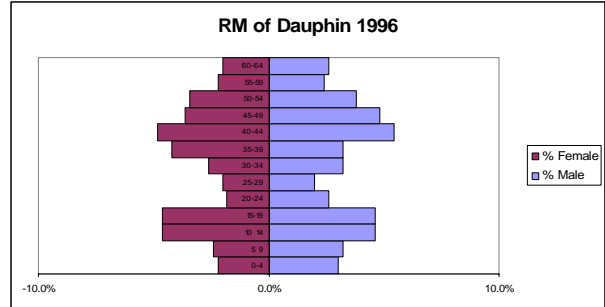
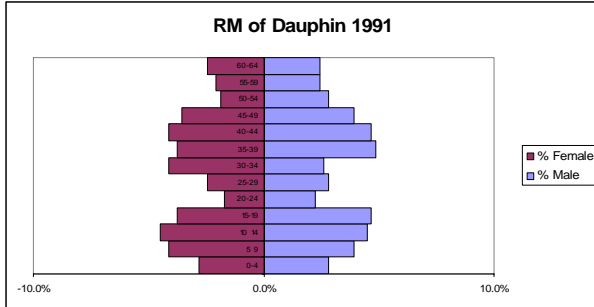


Between 1981 and 2006, the City of Dauphin lost 1,060 people, a population decline of 12%. There was also a significant decline in the population of all three youth cohorts studied over the 25-year period. The 5-14, 15-24 and 25-34 age cohorts decreased by 20%, 36% and 32%, respectively.

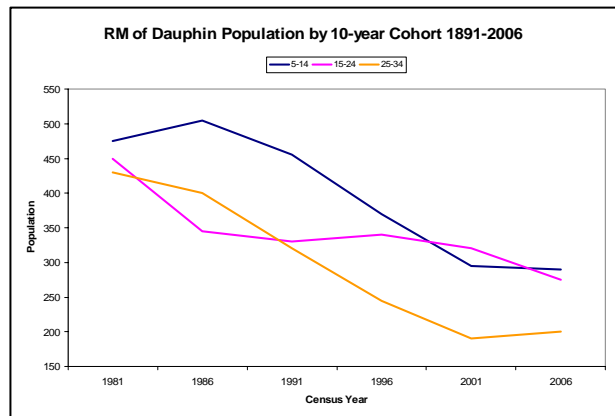
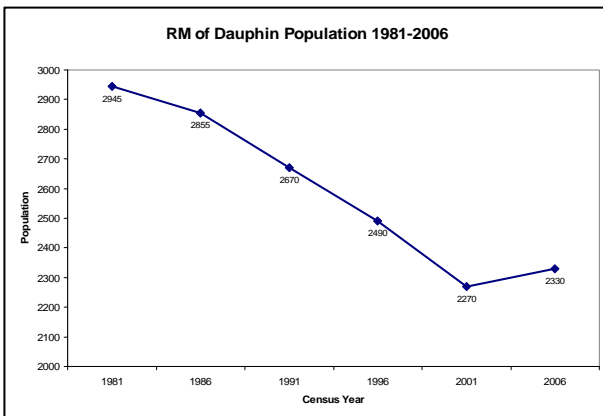


## Rural Municipality of Dauphin

Population pyramids for the Rural Municipality (RM) of Dauphin indicated a declining population. The high proportion of people in the older cohorts and declining numbers in the overall population demonstrated this.

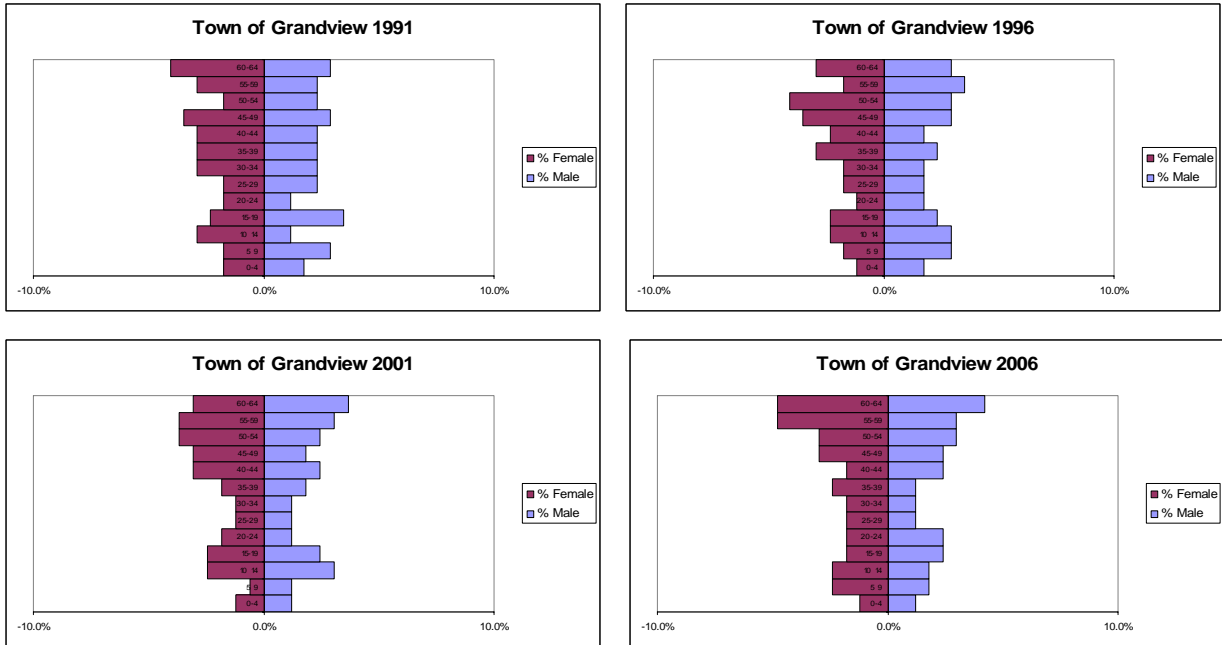


The overall population of the RM of Dauphin decreased by 21% between 1981 and 2006. The population went from 2,945 to 2,330 people. As with the City of Dauphin, the population of the youth cohorts declined significantly over the 25-year period. The 5-14 age cohort increased by 6% between 1981 and 1986, however, it declined for the remainder of the period for an overall decrease of 39%. The 15-24 age cohort declined throughout the period by 39%. The 25-34 age cohort had an overall decline of 53%, from 430 to 200 people, however, there was an increase of 5% between 2001 and 2006.



## Town of Grandview

The population of the Town of Grandview also declined because pyramids show a high proportion of people in the older cohorts and decrease in the overall population.

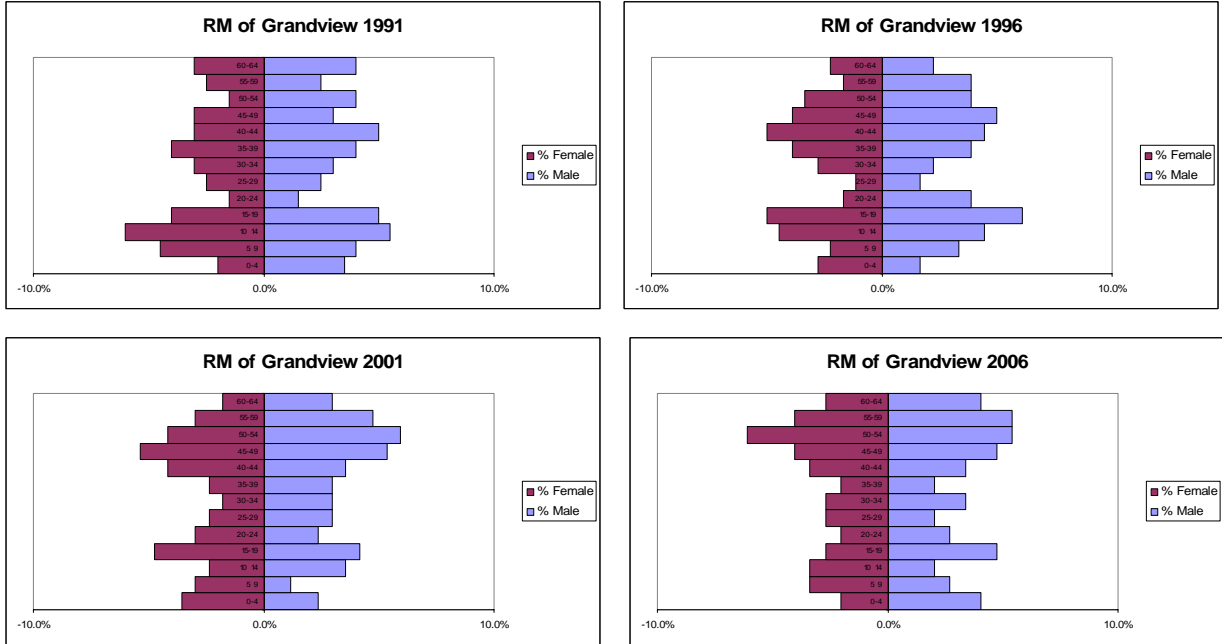


Despite these population trends, between 1981 and 2006, the overall population of the Town of Grandview increased by 25 people, or 3%. The population for the 5-14 age cohort fluctuated during the 25-year period, yet had an overall decline of 13%, or 10 people. The 15-24 age cohort declined by 30 people, or 30%, however, it was stable between 1996 and 2006. The 25-34 age cohort also fluctuated between 1981 and 2006 and experienced an overall decline of 9%, or 5 people. Increases in all three youth cohorts between 2001 and 2006 indicated that this declining trend may be changing.

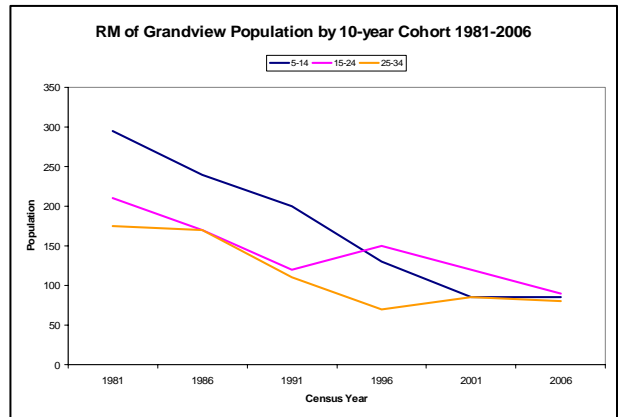
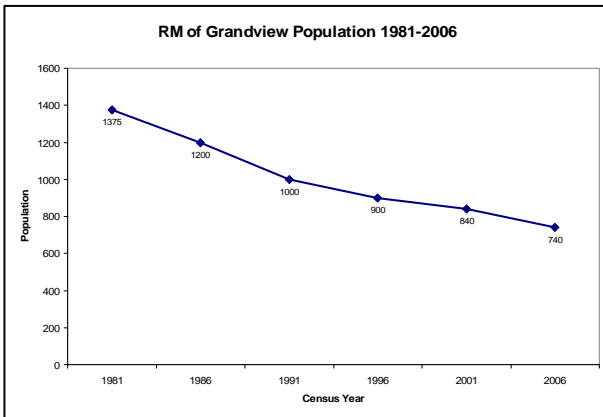


### Rural Municipality of Grandview

The population for the Rural Municipality (RM) of Grandview was also in decline. Again, there was a high proportion of people in the older cohorts and a demonstrated decrease in the overall population.

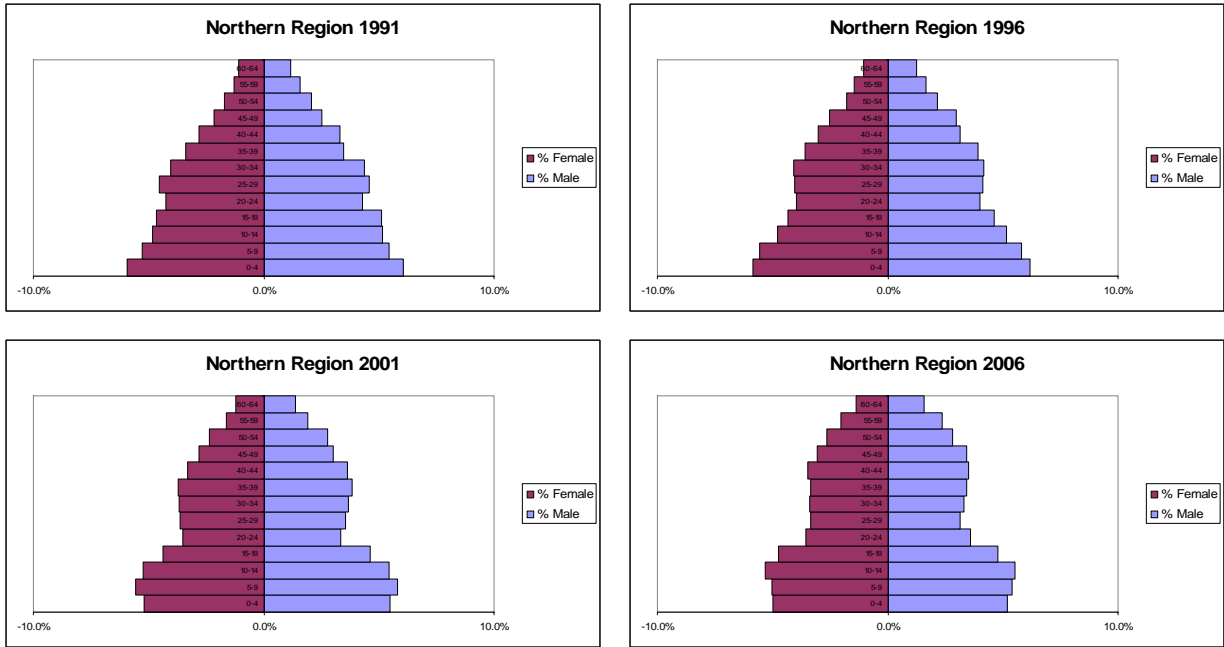


Between 1981 and 2006, the population of the RM of Grandview declined by 46%, or from 1,375 to 740 people. The RM of Grandview posted the largest percentage decrease in each of the three youth cohorts out of all of the municipalities analyzed in the Parkland Region. The 5-14, 15-24 and 25-34 age cohorts declined by 71%, 57% and 54%, respectively.

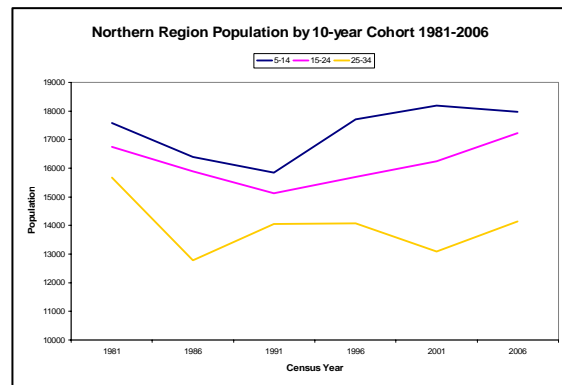
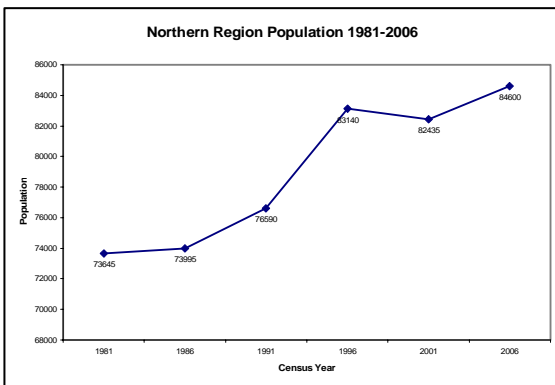


## Northern Region

Population pyramid analysis for the Northern Region indicated expansive growth between 1991 and 2006. A broad base and a narrow top showed this.

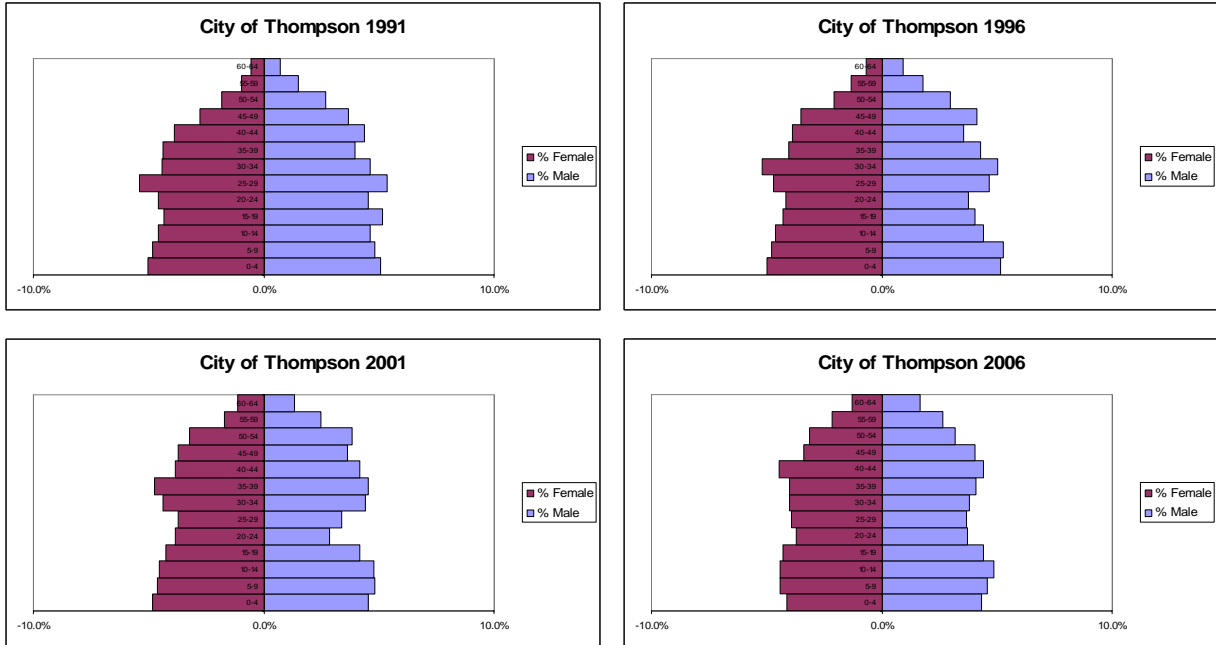


The Northern Region's population increased steadily between 1981 and 2006 from 73,645 to 84,600 people or by 15%. The largest period of growth was the decade between 1986 and 1996 when the population grew by 12%. The 5-14 age cohort showed an overall increase of 2%. Like the trend seen in the rural population, the 10% decrease in this cohort between 1981 and 1996 was balanced off by a 15% increase between 1991 and 2001. The 15-24 age cohort also showed a small increase during the 25 year period. It grew from 16,745 people to 17,235 people or by 3%. Similar to the younger cohort, the decrease between 1981 and 1991 of 9% was balanced off by an increase between 1981 and 2006 of 14%. The 25-34 age cohort decreased between 1981 and 2006 by 10%. This cohort had the most dramatic changes during the 25-year period. It decreased by 19% between 1981 and 1996, increased by 10% between 1986 and 1991, there was another decrease by 7% between 1996 and 2001 and then it increased again between 2001 and 2006 by 8%.

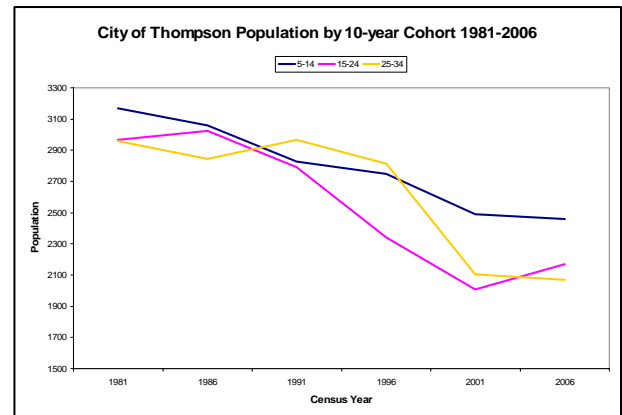
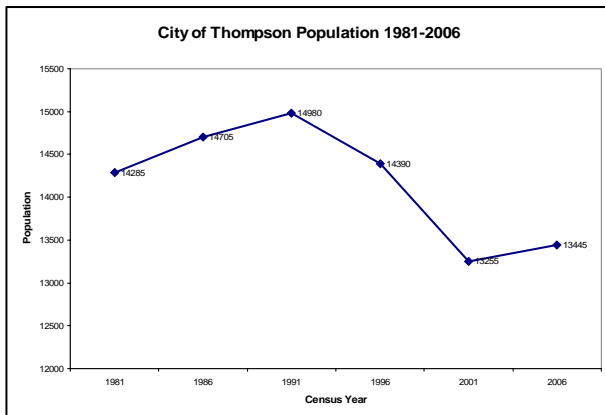


## City of Thompson

Population pyramids for the City of Thompson indicated stable population growth between 1991 and 2006. While the population declined slightly during that period the evened-out indentations indicated that the population was experiencing stable growth.



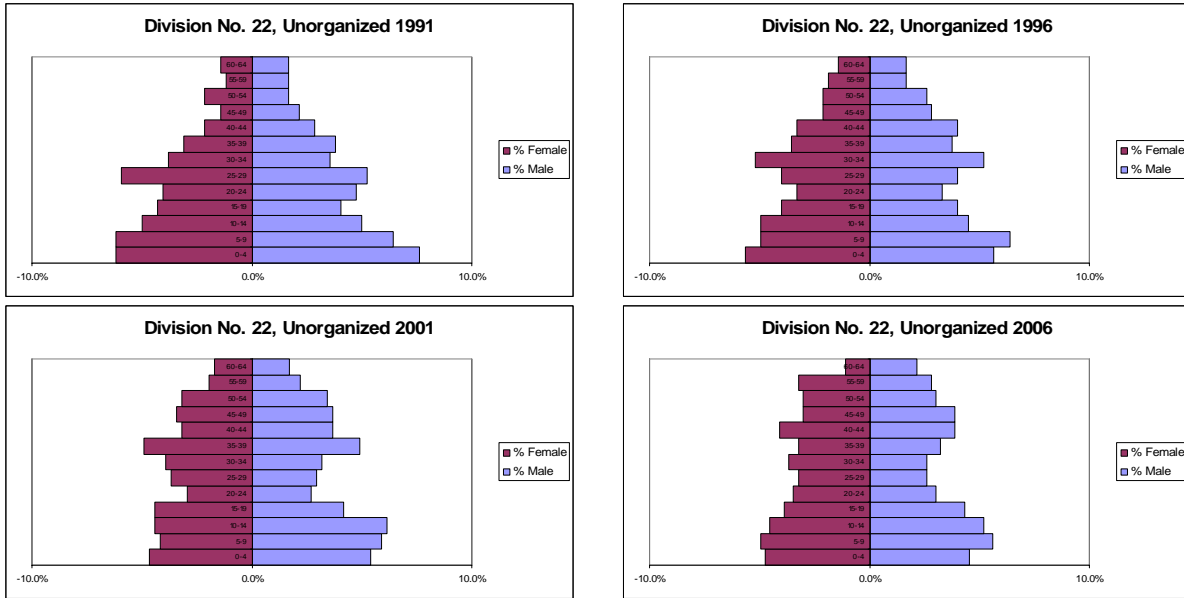
The City of Thompson's population declined by 6% between 1981 and 2006 going from 14,285 people to 13,445 people. The largest decrease occurred between 1991 and 2001. During that period, the population declined by 1,725 people or 12%. The 1% increase between 2001 and 2006 suggested that this trend might be changing. The population of all three youth cohorts decreased during the 25-year period but data from 2001 to 2006 indicated this trend may also be about to change. The 5-14 age cohort decreased steadily during that time with an overall decline of 22%. Between 2001 and 2006, there was a loss of only 40 people in this cohort. The 15-24 age cohort showed an overall decrease of 27%, however there was an 8% increase in population between 2001 and 2006. Finally, the 25-34 age cohort had an overall decline of 30% between 1981 and 2006. It had a sharp decrease between 1996 and 2001 of 25% but increased between 2001 and 2006 by 2%.



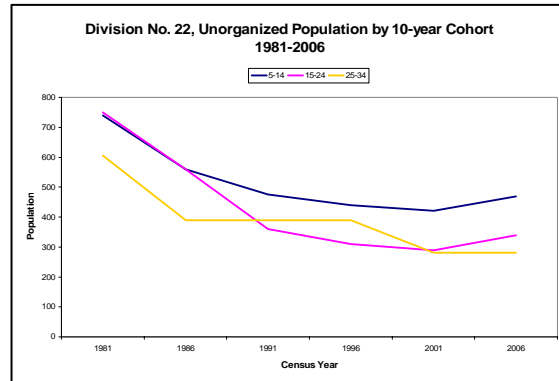
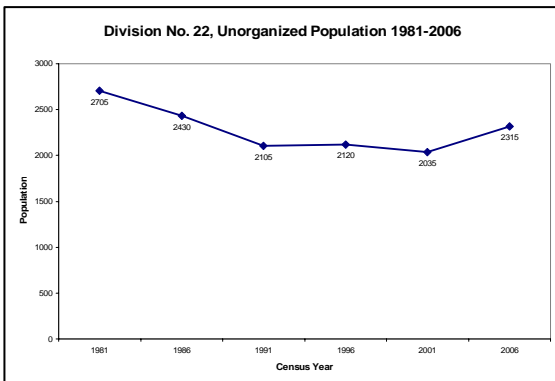


**Division No. 22, Unorganized**

Population pyramids for this Census Subdivision (Division No. 22, Unorganized) indicated that the population moved from expansive to stable growth between 1991 and 2006. Pyramids for 1991 and 1996 had a broad base and narrow top while the pyramids for 2001 and 2006 had indentations that evened out.



The population declined from 2,705 to 2,035 or 14% between 1981 and 2006. The most significant decline occurred between 1981 and 1991 when it decreased by 22%. It remained somewhat the same between 1991 and 2001 and then increased by 14% between 2001 and 2006. Similar to the City of Thompson, all three youth cohorts posted a decline between 1981 and 2006 but these trends may also be changing. The 5-14 age cohort declined by 36% between 1981 and 2006. It decreased by 24% between 1981 and 1986 and by another 25% between 1986 and 2001. It increased by 12% between 2001 and 2006. The 15-24 age cohort decreased by 55% during the 25-year period. It declined by 52% between 1981 and 1991 and by another 19% between 1991 and 2001. However, this cohort showed an increase between 2001 and 2006 of 17%. The overall decline for the 25-34 age cohort between 1981 and 2006 was 54%. It decreased by 26% between 1981 and 1986, stayed the same over the next decade and declined again by 28% between 1996 and 2001. It remained the same between 2001 and 2006.



## **Aboriginal Identity Population**

Census data with regard to Canada's Aboriginal Identity population is, for varied reasons, often incomplete. Under coverage in Census data collection has been considerably higher among Aboriginal Canadians in comparison to other segments of the population. This is often "due to the fact that enumeration was not permitted, or was interrupted before it could be completed" in some First Nations communities (Statistics Canada, 2003 p. 6). However, this has been improving over the past decade; "in 2006, there were 22 incompletely enumerated reserves, down from 30 in 2001 and 77 in 1996" (Statistics Canada, 2008, p. 9). Through the Aboriginal Data Initiative, Statistics Canada is taking a number of steps to improve data collection among Aboriginal people living on and off reserve (Bowlby, Dennis, Langlet, & Malo, 2004). Also, the manner in which Aboriginal Population Census data is presented online differs between 2001 and 2006. In the 2001 data, ages 25-44 are collapsed into one age cohort. As a result of these different factors, comparisons between the Aboriginal Identity and overall populations have been made for only the 2006 Census.

Data from the Aboriginal People's Survey, 2006 Census and the 2006 Census of Population were used to compare the population structure of Manitoba's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. A key point to keep in mind when using data on Canada's aboriginal population from the Census is, citizens are required to self-identify as Aboriginal and indicate so when filling out the census. The non-Aboriginal Identity population was determined by subtracting the Aboriginal-Identity population from the total population. Relevant data from previous Census years was not readily available online and, therefore, a longitudinal analysis of population trends was not conducted.

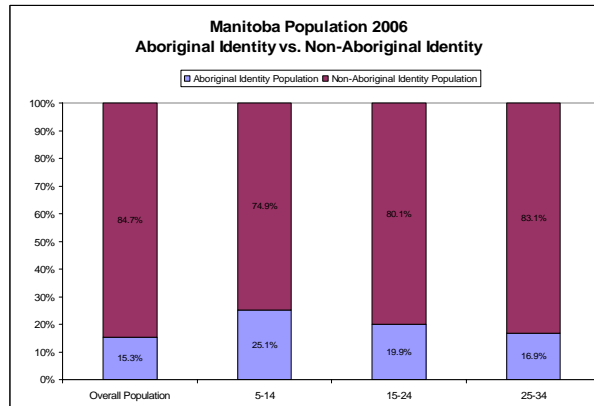
There were two components to the analysis. First, the proportion of Aboriginal-Identity and non-Aboriginal-Identity was determined for the overall population as well as the three youth cohorts – 5-14, 15-24, and 25-34. Second, population pyramids were used to compare the overall population structure with the population structures of the Aboriginal-Identity and non-Aboriginal Identity populations. An attempt was made to conduct analysis for all regions and communities included in the case studies. However, data was unavailable for the Rural Municipality of Dauphin, the Town of Grandview, the Rural Municipality of Grandview, Thicket Portage and Wabowden. Data was available for Division No. 22, Unorganized, but due to small sample size population pyramids were not useful for analysis. Therefore, the regions and communities analyzed were Manitoba, rural Manitoba, urban Manitoba, Parkland Region, Northern Region, City of Dauphin and City of Thompson.

One clear and overarching conclusion was that Manitoba's Aboriginal-Identity population is young and growing. This was true regardless of region, community or what percentage of the population identified as Aboriginal. This finding was indicated in three ways. First, every population pyramid created for the Aboriginal-Identity population had an expansive structure, with a wide base and a narrow top, which demonstrated a rapidly growing population. Second, the data for every area studied showed the Aboriginal-Identity population was a larger percentage of the total population in the 5-14 age cohort than in the total population or the other two youth cohorts. Third, in all but one case, the percentage of the Aboriginal-Identity population was higher in all three youth cohorts than it was in the total population. Rural Manitoba, the Northern region and the City of Thompson had a higher percentage of Aboriginal-Identity population than their regional or community counterparts.

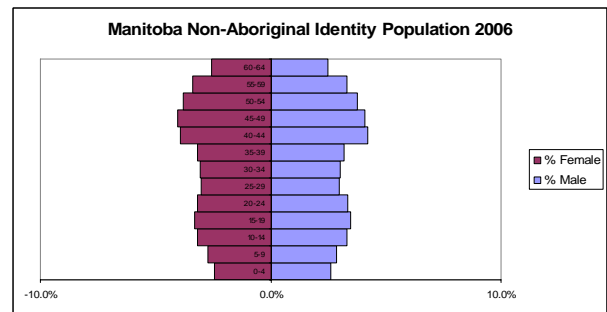
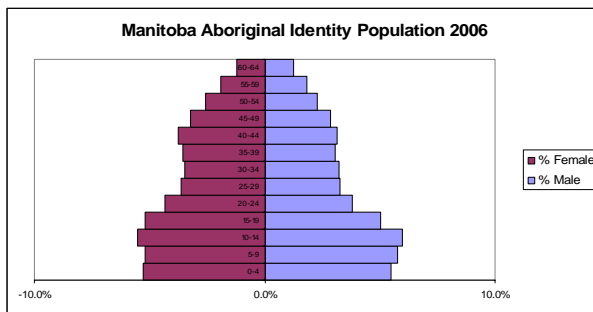
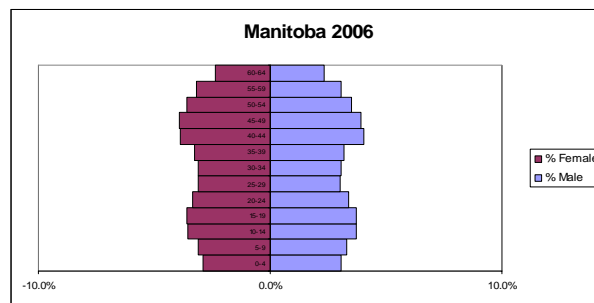
## Manitoba Context

### Manitoba

In 2006, 15% of Manitobans identified as Aboriginal. Twenty five percent of the 5-14 age cohort, 20% of the 15-24 age cohort and 17% of the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.

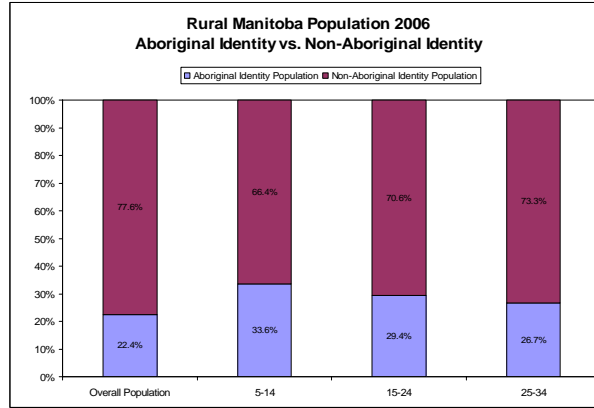


Population pyramid analysis showed that Manitoba's population was stationary. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a stationary/declining population.

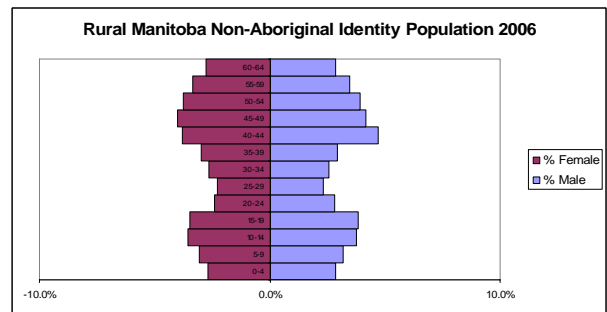
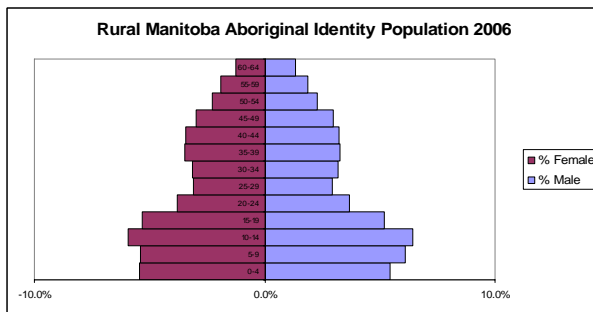
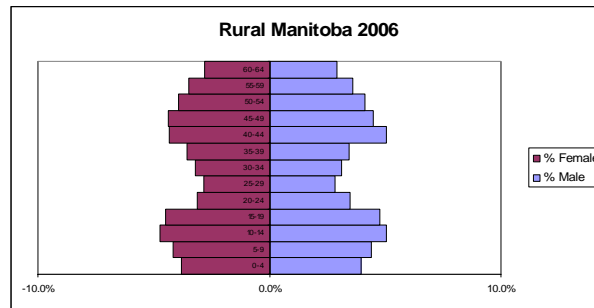


### Rural Manitoba

People who identified as Aboriginal in 2006 made up 22% of rural Manitoba. Thirty four percent of the 5-14 age cohort, 29% of the 15-24 age cohort and 27% of the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.

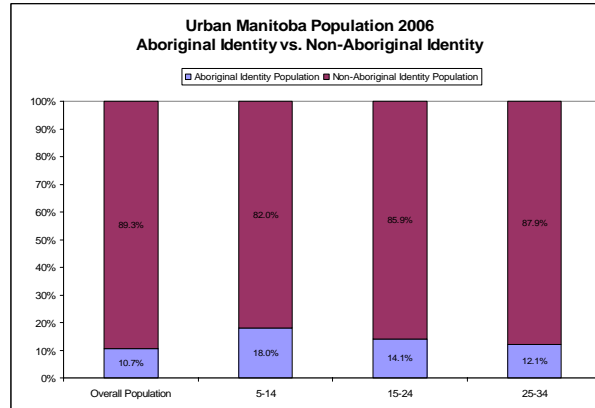


Population pyramid analysis showed that rural Manitoba's population was stable. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a declining population.

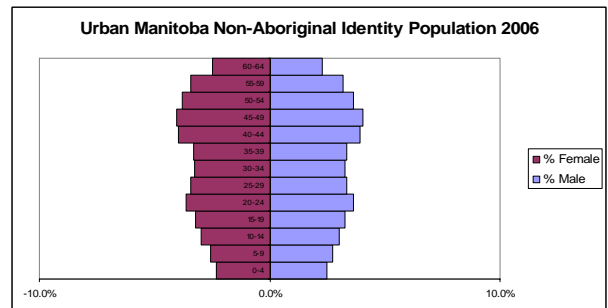
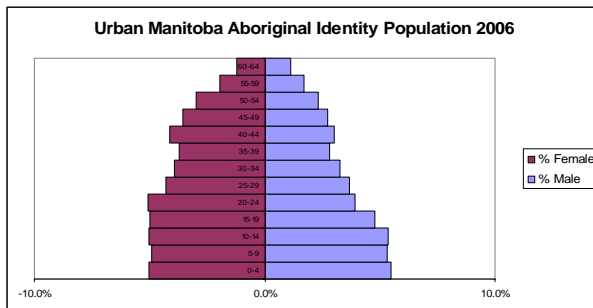
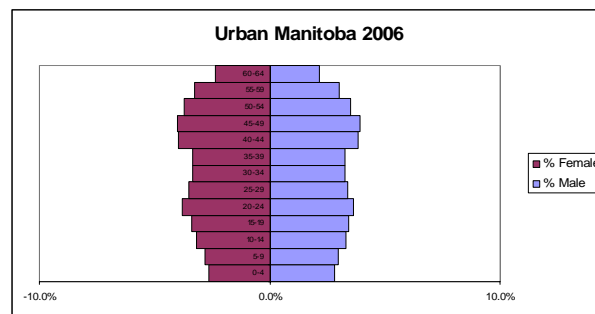


## Urban Manitoba

Eleven percent of Manitoba's urban population identified as Aboriginal in the 2006 census. Eighteen percent of the 5-14 age cohort, 14% of the 15-24 age cohort, and 12% of the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.



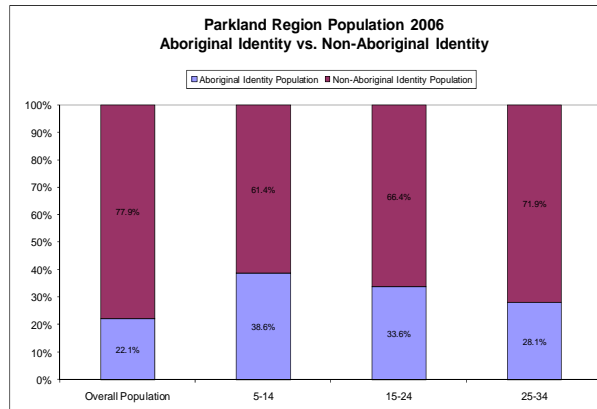
Population pyramid analysis showed that Urban Manitoba had a stationary population. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a stationary population.



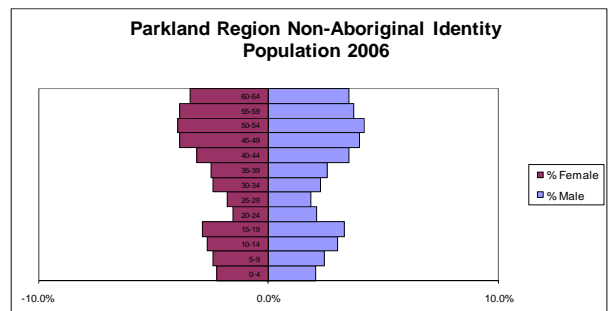
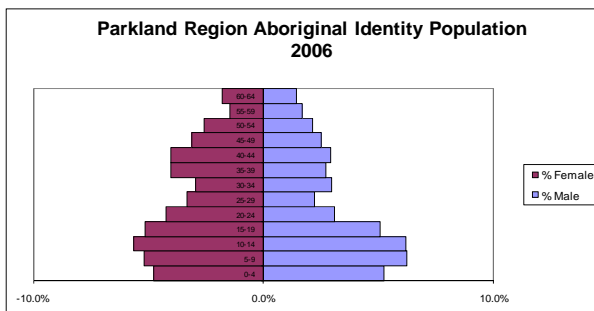
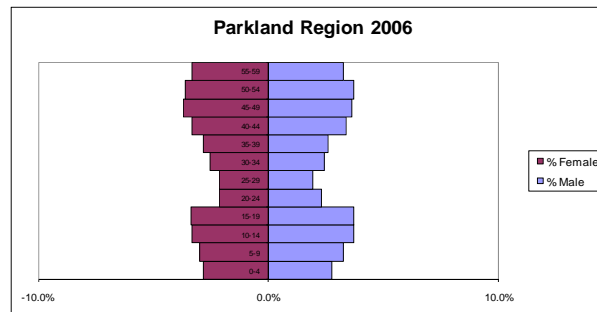
## Regional Context

### *Parkland Region*

Of the total population in the Parkland Region (Census Divisions 16, 17 and 20), 22% identified as Aboriginal. Thirty nine percent in the 5-14 age cohort, 34% in the 15-24 age cohort and 28% in the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.

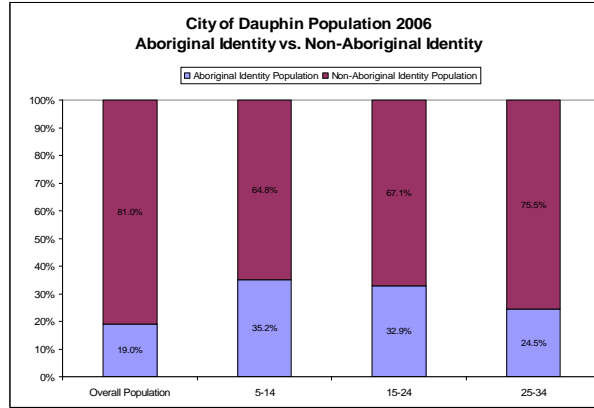


Population pyramid analysis showed that the Parkland Region had a stationary population. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a declining population.

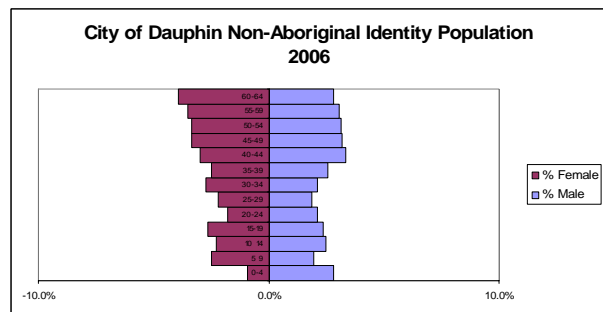
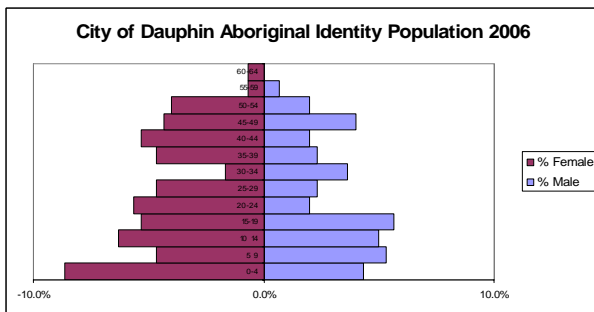
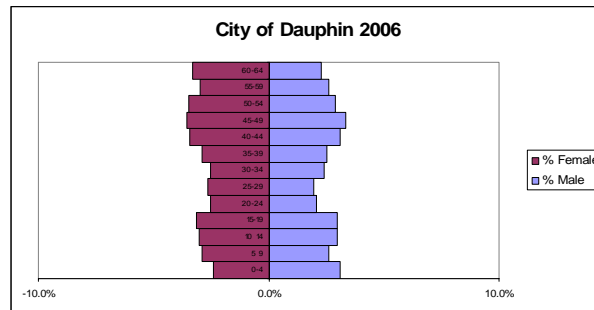


### City of Dauphin

Twenty five percent of the population of the City of Dauphin identified as Aboriginal in 2006. Thirty five percent in the 5-14 age cohort, 33% in the 15-24 age cohort and 25% in the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.

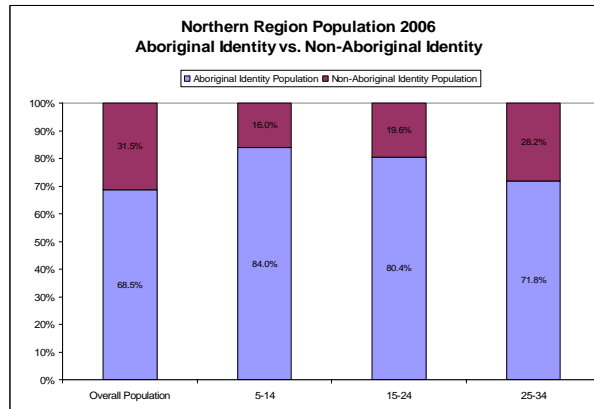


Population pyramid analysis showed that the City of Dauphin had a stationary population. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a declining population.

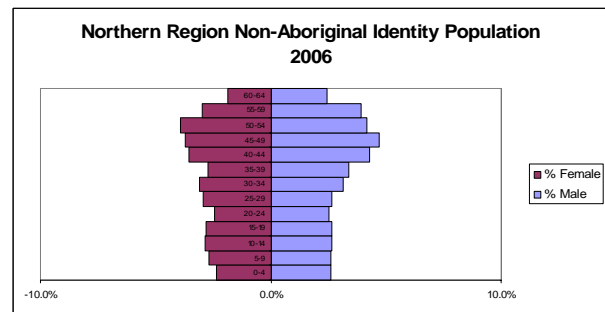
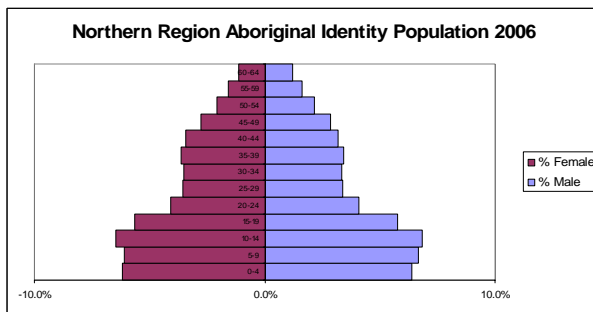
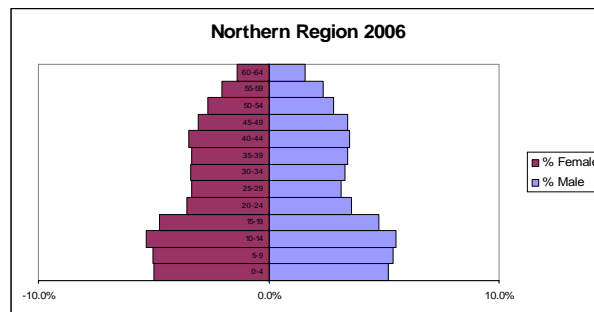


### Northern Region

In 2006, 69% of the Northern Region (Census Divisions 19, 21, 22 and 23) identified as Aboriginal. Eighty four percent of the 5-14 age cohort, 80% of the 15-24 age cohort and 72% of the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.



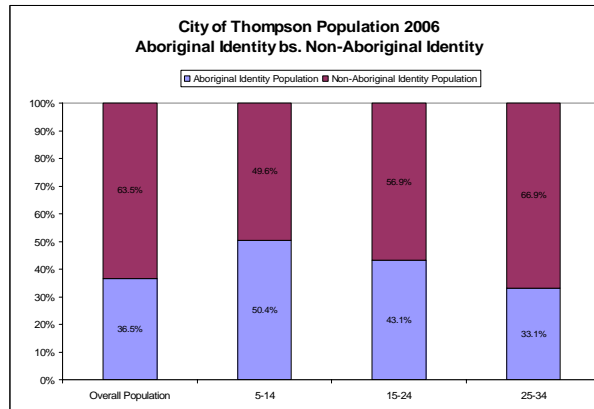
Population pyramid analysis showed that the Northern Region had an expansive population. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a stable/declining population.



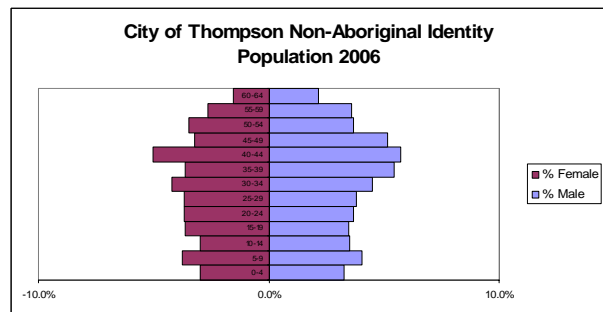
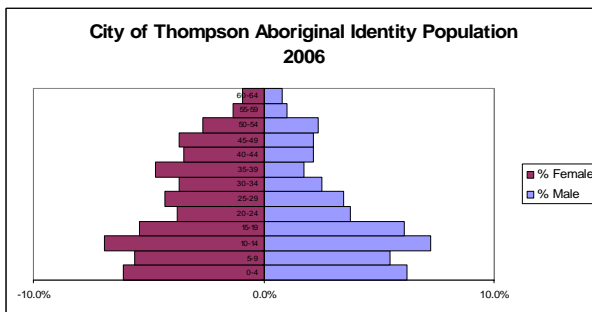
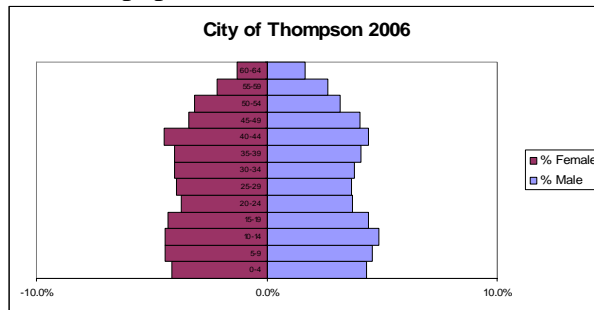


### City of Thompson

People who identified as Aboriginal made up 37% of the population of the City of Thompson in 2006. Fifty percent of the 5-14 age cohort, 43% of the 15-24 age cohort and 33% of the 25-34 age cohort were part of the Aboriginal-Identity population.



Population pyramid analysis showed that the City of Thompson had an expansive population. The Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated an expansive population while the non-Aboriginal-Identity pyramid indicated a stable population.



## **Parkland Region<sup>3</sup>**

A review of the literature contributed to the idea that four general factors often contribute to youth's decisions to migrate: (1) gender, (2) family and community ties, (3) education opportunities and (4) employment/occupational opportunities. Through this research factors that contribute to youth mobility in Manitoba were revealed; however, due to unique differences in landscape, demographics, and culture across the province, fundamental differences in mobility patterns and the factors that influence the decisions and capacity to migrate emerged.

### ***Dauphin Findings***

Dauphin was first settled by people from the British Isles. Later people arrived from Germany, Central Europe and, most notably, Ukraine. Dauphin became known as the main trading centre in central western Manitoba. Development of the railway influenced the establishment of the community. The Village of Dauphin was incorporated in 1898, became the Town of Dauphin in 1901, and has been the City of Dauphin since 1998.

Dauphin is situated between Riding Mountain National Park to the south and Duck Mountains to the west. An abundance of outdoor activities are available in the area. Dauphin Lake, with its beach, fishing and golf course a short drive away. Annually the community hosts the National Ukrainian festival, Jesus Manifest and the Dauphin Country Fest.

The City of Dauphin serves as an agricultural service centre for much of the surrounding area. A large portion of the local economy is agriculturally driven, with producers growing almost everything from grains, oilseeds and livestock to honey bees and industrial hemp ([www.communityprofiles.mb.ca](http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca)).

### **The Community's Youth**

Conversations with 16 Dauphin youth are discussed in the following section. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in May 2008. Ten local youth, predominately female, participated in two focus groups; a total of six local youth were interviewed. Twelve of the participants were originally from Dauphin and four were from other rural Manitoban communities. Eleven were permanent residents, two were students in Winnipeg, and two worked out of province but had a permanent Dauphin residence, and one did not consider Dauphin a permanent residence at this time.

Education was a significant factor for youth moving out of their communities. Many participants left to pursue an education, employment, or life experience. Of the fifteen participants who now reside in Dauphin, six left to attend university or college, three left for work, three for family ties, and one for athletics; two participants have always resided in the community. Findings suggest that educational opportunities contributed largely to young women leaving Dauphin.

Out of province employment in the oil industry was noted to be the strongest contributor to youth out migration among males. Participants in focus groups and interviews raised issues

---

<sup>3</sup> Parkland Region by Paige Rushton McDougall

regarding that type of work and accompanying lifestyle. Experiences in the oil fields and mines were characterized as; working days were very long, as was time spent away from home. Earnings were often considerably higher than could be secured locally, which was part of the lure, but individuals often went for weeks, sometimes months, without respite. Working away could be a disadvantage socially to young people because it was difficult to form lasting relationships. Substance abuse and exposure to substance abuse was a problem associated with working in oil camps and communities. Participants commented that, although the oil fields provided earning opportunities, they were not a good working or living environment. They also expressed a desire for well-paying local employment options.

Participants perceived employment opportunities in the region were to be limited. It was noted individuals needed to have good social contacts to receive a good job; the scarcity of jobs was linked with reputation and social contacts. Reliance on existing personal relationships and informal networks was perceived to be a barrier both to current and potential residents. Those who did not comment on this topic held jobs in other communities or provinces, or were attending college and university and held summer positions within the community.

Though employment prospects were considered to be limited in Dauphin, it was suggested that limitless private sector endeavours existed for creative young entrepreneurs. One young business owner suggested that individuals did not realize the scope of possibilities available until they have entered the private sector. There appeared to be room for various businesses within the community; many participants noted that there were limited shopping facilities, no cinema, and a lack of recreational services and amenities in town. Young residents and potential residents could be encouraged to pursue local business and entrepreneurial ventures, fulfilling community, social, economic, and employment needs.

Advanced technology and communication systems enabled youth to maintain personal connections more readily than past generations; the example of social networking sites such as *Facebook* was mentioned often. Advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) were considered an advantage when rural students pursued secondary education. Distance education programs enabled students to pursue certification from various universities and colleges throughout Canada, the United States and even overseas. Usage of distance education programs was perceived to be a growing trend, especially among those just completing high school. Campus Manitoba provided tools and services to rural and northern students enabling individuals to study at home during the early portion of their post-secondary education.

Rural living was perceived to have both positive and negative attributes. The low cost of living in rural Manitoba was its strongest attribute. The land and lifestyle were major advantages to living in a rural community. Privacy and personal space were noted as incentives to return. All participants agreed that the Parkland region was a favourable setting in which to raise children, owed in large part to the quality of life available such as, minimal safety concerns, access to a vast array of recreational opportunities, and an affordable cost of living. Findings suggested that a particular 'rural culture' also influenced a young person's decision to live and work in a small community. Conversations indicated that individuals from rural communities shared commonalities, which may have influenced one's decision to stay or return to the countryside. Participants noted shared rural interests as a significant incentive drawing many residents back to the Dauphin area.

When considering disadvantages related to rural living, participants reiterated a lack of meaningful employment and career opportunities. Though distance education was sighted as an asset, participants felt that educational and training opportunities were needed to fill a local void. The needs and expectations of families and individuals have evolved over time which created a gap between prospective employees and employers. In spite of a demand for employment, some business owners continued to struggle to fulfil their labour needs. This appeared to be true not only for the service sector, but also for local farmers. Local business and farmers were competing with higher wages in other provinces as well as a changing labour pool. Jobs were locally available, however, many were not considered to be attractive or realistic for various reasons, including low wages and low skill levels.

A lack of local housing became a disadvantage in recent years. There appeared to be shortage of both properties for purchase and rental. Families were perceived to have an especially difficult time renting appropriate accommodations in Dauphin. This was also true for individuals and families in need of low income and social housing; long waiting lists exist for homes in desirable locations and close to schools.

Participants agreed that youth played a critical role in a community's future vitality; however, it was noted that on occasion the importance youth was undervalued. Changes associated with value systems have evolved, yet an aging population was often resistant to change. There was a general consensus among participants that many community leaders from previous generations maintained certain rigidity and were often not receptive to innovation and the changing needs and values of the communities' young people. This contributed to a sense that youth had no influence over local decision making processes. However, it was also noted that more youth needed to take on a more active and assertive role, but to do that they needed confidence and community encouragement. A lack of volunteerism in Dauphin was raised as an issue. One participant suggested "the biggest problem is that there are not enough people volunteering. There are many organizations that would like youth to be apart of their boards or volunteer base, but it is a dying breed of people who volunteer."

Young people's outlook towards life and expectations, in conjunction with economic changes, altered the social and economic fabric of rural communities. Agricultural changes dictated that the number of individuals owning and operating family farms has drastically shrunk. "Thirty years ago people would stay because back then everyone had a farm...you practically helped run it from the time you were sixteen and so you would eventually take it over" while today remaining on the farm may not be an option. Dauphin youth findings suggested that the dimensions of modern agriculture have dramatically reduced the number of individuals remaining in the community.

## **The Community**

Interviews were conducted with seven participants, mostly male. Participants ranged from 35 to 50 years of age. Four participants were originally from Dauphin, two were from other rural communities in Manitoba, and one participant was originally from another country. All participants moved to Dauphin for employment and to raise their families.

Opinions regarding the role of youth within the community prompted varied responses. All participants viewed youth as an integral component of community. The role of youth was perceived as vital and the community had a responsibility to ensure their integration and well-being. Several participants felt that the community needed to more actively encourage youth

to get involved. One participant noted that some youth may think that the community was not making an effort to cooperate. Youth were believed to be the future of the community and must have a role in the local decision-making process. Without young people and families the community would “lose its spark and continued growth.” The majority of youth in Dauphin were young parents whose families depend on dual incomes, minimizing the availability of time existing for community work.

Rural advantages were viewed as multi-faceted. An affordable cost of living was perceived to be especially beneficial for youth when repaying debts, such as student loans. The other advantage to living in rural communities was job opportunities. Rural social advantages included a heightened quality of life and increased feelings of safety, as well as familial and community ties and networks. Raising a family where you “know one another and have a positive support system help to make a small community good and positive.” Local social opportunities included annual festivals that drew national audiences, as well as a number of athletic and cultural activities, many of which were aimed towards children and families.

Disadvantages often associated with rural living were common across communities. Services and amenities were perceived to be limited, necessitating either travel or going without. In particular, Dauphin was perceived to be lacking local shopping venues, such as a shoe store, and recreational venues, such as a movie theatre. Residents and local organizations were often required to generate creative solutions to their needs if services were unavailable locally; for example, a movie night was regularly hosted at the local high school.

Decisions influencing migration were viewed as continuously evolving. Perhaps most profound were perceived changes regarding career aspirations and expectations; today individuals tended to change employers more frequently than in the past. Noted changes were perceived to be associated with individual and family requirements, as well as with employers and the provision of benefits. Operational changes and technology, an increasingly skilled and educated workforce, labour shortages, a competitive environment, and modern views regarding appropriate work-life balance has altered the relationship between employees and employers. Mention was made about the need to re-evaluate traditional ways of interpreting behaviour; it was perceived to be particularly important for community leaders and business owners to seek a better understanding of young people’s needs and expectations, balancing ideologies and expectations.

Occupation had a strong influence on youth’s decisions to migrate: “the location that people choose to live in comes down to economics.” Youth were perceived to be more inclined to remain mobile for experience and opportunity. Many participants believed that while youth were a vital aspect of a community, it was important to “encourage young people to leave the rural area, enabling them to better appreciate small town living” and gain skills and knowledge perhaps not available rurally. However, equally important was the provision of local training and education in partnership with career development, a realm that was highly criticised within the community. Young people were perceived to be disadvantaged from the beginning if they wished to pursue and train for a trade locally. Apprenticeship programs were offered locally, but the will of the business community to partner and support students was viewed as lacking. Apprenticeships were difficult to secure; many employers do not want the responsibility. The will to increase wages with increased skill levels was perceived to be a barrier within the community. Potential solutions raised by community residents included the provision of tax incentives, wage sharing, and a coordinator that could foster relationships

between students, the school, and local employers, improving community communication and understanding.

Social structures evolved over the past two decades and this change about the need to reconsider and restructure relationships within the community. Different social supports were needed to assist newcomers and young families. Time constraints impacted levels of volunteerism and community service. The competitive and uncertain nature of society left many “youth uncertain about the future, and are simply enjoying the here and now.” To foster increased cohesion between youth and community, one participant noted that “we need to understand the youth of today” and figure out “how to adapt.”

Community resiliency and vitality hinged upon local willingness to embrace and adapt to change. Some participants noted an increasing flow of young people and families back into rural areas, albeit for different reasons. Today’s youth brought with them different skills, talents, and expectations. In an increasingly mobile and competitive world, it was the responsibility of a community to seek increased understanding and enhanced compatibility with the youth of today. Certain trade-offs were made as individuals balance desires. Rural communities were unique in many ways yet often share common desirable attributes; community welcome and service delivery often dictated whether youth were successfully attracted to a rural area. It was essential that communities promoted themselves and sought ways to become increasingly attractive to current and prospective residents. The rural reach should transcend borders and overcome traditional barriers through communication and marketing to successfully compete in today’s environment. Current and prospective residents should be aware of amenities and services that a community boasts.

## ***Grandview Findings***

The Town of Grandview is located in a picturesque valley between the Duck Mountain Provincial Park and the Riding Mountain National Park. It was founded October 1900 with a population of about 250 persons ([www.grandviewmanitoba.net](http://www.grandviewmanitoba.net)).

Today there are about 835 town residents and 735 Rural Municipality of Grandview residents (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census). There is a hospital, senior complex, school, rink and recreational centre. The community is in the process of building a new hall. During the summer months, there is an influx of travelers stopping in on their way to the Duck Mountains to camp, fish and hunt. The main local employers are the school, hospital and senior facilities, in conjunction with a strong agriculture sector.

## **The Community’s Youth**

Conversations with five Grandview youth were discussed in the following section. Mobility patterns appeared dependent on popular conceptions and trends. Differences were noted and anecdotal evidence suggested that different graduating classes chose different paths. One participant stated that about a third of their classmates stayed, while another participant stated that they were the only one that was in Grandview “although most of them would like to move back to the area at some point in their life. This suggested that changes in perception throughout one’s lifetime influenced mobility patterns.

Participants noted changes in mobility patterns and suggested that the trend of moving westward has diminished over time. There was agreement that, during the 1990s, a larger

portion of young adults migrated west, particularly to Alberta. Participants suggested that there seemed to be a growing number of youth moving to urban areas within Manitoba, to attend college or university or secure employment.

Discussions about what made life in a rural community attractive revealed that rural advantages were often linked to family and community ties. Quality of life was often perceived to be superior in rural communities and was an important reason youth chose to return to the countryside. Social cohesion among community members was highlighted. Trusting local relationships fostered local cohesion and made the community attractive to current and potential residents. Safety concerns were perceived to be minimal in rural settings; feelings of personal safety were more evident in small communities. Personal relationships and acquaintances in the local service sector and business community heightened feelings of trust and satisfaction. The cost of living was typically perceived to be lower and was often mentioned as a major advantage to rural living. There was a general attitude that young people in rural and small communities were more likely to be able to afford to purchase their own homes. Numerous recreational and social opportunities also made the community an attractive place to reside.

Rural communities and regions experienced social and economic transformations over time. The scale of individual farming operations has altered rural economies that traditionally depended upon agriculture, so have technological advancements. Non-conventional skill sets enhanced the success of young residents in modern rural communities. Participants commented that youth must be creative and flexible. Today there were many opportunities for youth in rural communities, but individuals needed to be creative and have the energy to create their own opportunities and employment. One participant suggested that as “society changes you have to be prepared to go with the flow and be a visionary.” In order to do this you must have a creative touch and a diversity of skills. Technology was considered to be increasingly important in the future, as will entrepreneurial traits. Economic development endeavours would likely have to be diverse and timely.

An oft-cited rural disadvantage was the lack of employment and career opportunities. Jobs available were often low skilled and low paying. It was challenging to secure fulltime permanent employment. Youth were discouraged from returning to the countryside because of a lack of opportunity to utilize their education and potential. Rural communities were challenged to move beyond traditional outlooks and embrace change. Conservative attitudes were considered a rural disadvantage. One participant noted that “old way of thinking in the community” and a fear of change hindered youth migration into Grandview. To promote positive change, it was suggested that, young people needed to become more actively engaged in the local decision making process. The community was perceived as aging and it was noted that many local business owners were nearing retirement. There was a critical need to communicate potential opportunity and encourage younger residents to take over existing businesses. There was the sense that the community should look within itself for opportunity in addition to pursuing external development. Economic development initiatives should focus on the needs of the community rather than on those of industry.

There was no disputing that the role of youth within rural communities was of the utmost importance, though it was perceived to be an area requiring improvement. Young people were faced with different pressures than in the past, often impacting the level of civic engagement

of youth. Generational barriers and resistance to change needed to overcome through communication and awareness.

## **The Community**

Three community residents were interviewed in May 2008. They shared their personal reflections on youth migration to and from Grandview and the Parkland region, as well as their personal experiences and desire to live in a rural setting. There was a general feeling that young people left their rural homes for a multitude of reasons. They should be supported and encouraged to pursue opportunities and experiences unavailable in a small community. Most typically youth left after high school to pursue education and employment. The overall perception was that there were not a lot of opportunities for youth, particularly right out of high school. There was the need to leave to attend secondary institutions in order to develop the skills necessary for acquiring jobs available in their home communities or leaving more permanently to find employment elsewhere.

A common theme noted throughout the region was that many young people began to migrate back to rural communities after pursuing educational goals and employment experience, particularly when they started their own families. Personal relationships also fostered migration back into the community, especially with regard to farming and agriculture.

Participants shared advantages associated with living in a rural community. Foremost, the cost of living in a rural setting was perceived to be a major advantage, particularly when compared with urban places. Owning and renovating a home was perceived to be more affordable in small Manitoban communities. Raising a family in a rural setting was perceived to be superior to doing so in an urban setting for a variety of reasons, including quality of life, recreational and social opportunities, social networks, community and familial ties, less commuting time, and safety. It was suggested that families had more time to spend together in rural settings due to less commuting and family oriented social activities. Proximity to extended family in rural areas was to often seen to be an advantage, especially when raising children.

A major disadvantage was the lack of employment and economic opportunities. One of the participants noted that while it is not difficult to find a job, it is a real challenge to secure meaningful, well-paying employment with the potential for career advancement. It was noted that the most common barriers confronting youth when moving into the community were jobs and housing. A lack of local housing was thought to be a by-product of an aging population, particularly within the farming industry, as retirees moved off farms and into town. Housing was available if families are willing to reside in the surrounding rural municipality.

The community residents spoke of the role youth played in a small aging community. Young people needed be encouraged to become involved in their communities, in order to preserve the community spirit. Volunteerism was a vital component of a community's spirit. However, one participant commented that the number who volunteered in their community was declining. Community survival hinged upon youth.

Grandview attracted a few young families to the area. Community residents felt that the community was a safe and quiet place to raise a family. There were many activities children could participate in and they had just as many opportunities living in a rural community as they would in the city. With much less commuting time, it was noted that young parents could spend more time with their children. The desire to live in a rural atmosphere was of



significant importance to participants. A common thread was that participants were happy living in a safe and quiet community where they can bring up their families and enjoy the outdoors. The community had opportunities for youth to either buy an existing business or assist in funding the start up of a new business. The next step for the community was to establish these opportunities and share this information with youth from the area or youth wishing to move there.

## **Summary**

Findings indicated that mobility patterns varied from year to year and from community to community. There appeared to be clear linkages between perception and migration. Importantly, it appeared that perception and migration patterns evolved across time and along a continuum of age.

Project findings from Dauphin and Grandview indicated that there was community support for youth to leave their community to pursue post-secondary education or additional training. Experiencing the world was an important component of growing and learning. Conversations with community participants and youth supported the notion that youth leave for a variety of reasons, generally upon completion of high school, to pursue experiences not available to them within their own rural community. Travel, school, and work experience were important contributors to becoming independent.

## Northern Region<sup>4</sup>

### ***Wabowden Findings***

The community of Wabowden is located just over 100 km southwest of Thompson; it was settled in the early 1900s by families from the Cross Lake and Nelson House First Nations (<http://wabowden.cimnet.ca>). In 1913, residents relocated closer to the Hudson Bay Rail line. Trapping, fishing, forestry and mining have all played a role in the local economy in the past and continue to do so today. Additionally, Wabowden has long been a transportation hub. It is governed by a community council under *The Northern Affairs Act* and is home to a local office of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

The community is accessible by all-weather road, rail and air. In 2001, it had 497 residents ([www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community\\_profiles/pdf/wabowden.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community_profiles/pdf/wabowden.pdf)). The Mel Johnson School operated by the Frontier School Division in Wabowden provides classes from nursery to grade twelve ([www.frontiersd.mb.ca/schools/johnson](http://www.frontiersd.mb.ca/schools/johnson)). Location near the Setting Lake-Grass River watershed provides opportunities for outdoor recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, canoeing and camping ([www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community\\_profiles/pdf/wabowden.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community_profiles/pdf/wabowden.pdf)).

### **The Community**

Researchers from RDI were invited to attend a community meeting, prior to commencing with data collection, to introduce the youth mobility project, develop a sense of community concerns, and meet community residents. The meeting also provided a forum to share project goals and preliminary findings from Francophone and Parkland communities. Forty community residents, six of whom were youth, attended the meeting. Wabowden is a Northern Affairs community; therefore, local government was structured somewhat differently than other municipalities. Most notably, local elections occur every two years as opposed to every four years; community representatives were elected and re-elected on alternating two-year cycles. A number of issues raised at the meeting provided context regarding community successes and concerns about local youth.

Community resident and youth findings were shared together differences were highlighted when applicable. Due to the small nature of the community and sample size, findings were aggregated. A total of 12 individuals, predominately female, from youth to elders, shared their perspective and stories related to youth mobility in Wabowden over time. Though overarching research questions probed the nature of, factors for, and consequences of mobility of individuals between 18 and 34 years of age, much of the information collected illuminates the need to clearly understand the role and experience of children and youth much younger than those interviewed, and how that impacts the decision of youth to stay, leave or return.

In Wabowden, like other communities, changes in mobility patterns have been noted over time. Factors contributing to changes, such as an increase in out-migration, evolving social networks, and demographic shifts, were similarly observed across the province. However, conversations with northern residents have highlighted that each community is distinct, with unique challenges and needs. It was difficult, if not impossible and perhaps detrimental, to

---

<sup>4</sup> Northern Region by Alison Moss

compare communities, even within a specific geographic region such as the North, with the intent of discovering common needs and overarching solutions. Evidence gathered in Wabowden and two other sites in northern Manitoba indicate how history, culture, and geography fundamentally set communities apart.

Two of the participating communities that participated in this project belong to the Bayline Regional Round Table (BRRT), a regional organization that embrace local differences while working together to meet common needs. There was the understanding that power was generated through critical mass. The BRRT is comprised of six communities along the Bayline rail system connecting Winnipeg and Churchill; the regional office and animator was located in Wabowden. Part of the BRRT's success materializes from a respect for differences but a willingness to cooperate.

Demographic profiles have changed over time. Wabowden was thought to be somewhat split, with a large cohort of aging individuals and a large cohort of young dependents. Some participants noted that the middle cohort was underrepresented. Population dynamics dictate service needs; a split, such as those noted in Wabowden, comes with challenges. Participants said that there were difficulties with the provision of basic services in small communities. These difficulties were compounded by the considerably different needs of the aging and very young. It was also noted that service provision challenges sometimes result in individuals and families simply going without the services that they require. For example, participants said that increased social supports for parents and families were needed. New Beginnings, a program aimed at supporting parents and children from 0-6 years of age, provided the opportunity for families to socialize and learn fundamental parenting skills. Participants suggested that sometimes fear of reprisal held individuals and families back from seeking assistance and support. The opportunity to enhance parenting and coping skills through education and awareness was raised as a strategy to support current and future generations.

In the past, like many other communities, a higher portion of youth remained within their home communities upon reaching adulthood. Many factors contributed to a higher degree of mobility among young people. Technology was perceived to make the transition to urban centres easier than in the past because individuals have more access and knowledge about what lies beyond their hometown. In addition, more emphasis and value has been placed on post-secondary education and training than in the past. These motivations tend to be more accessible in urban centres.

Education was thought to be the key to many successes. Until the mid 1970s, students wishing to complete high school had to do so outside of Wabowden, today students can remain in their community to complete their high school education. However, many participants pointed to weaknesses within the school system, primarily, concerns regarding "social passes" or the resistance to holding students back even when they may not be ready for the next grade. Subsequent expectations and a sense of entitlement were perceived to be ultimately damaging to students. Inadequate preparation, and repeated failure, destroys self-esteem. Participants suggested that youth pursuing college and university encounter major barriers arising from inadequate preparation.

Local representatives sit on the University College of the North (UCN) board fostering connectivity between the community and educational hubs as well as ensuring that communication channels increase understanding and awareness locally and regionally. Most

of local teaching staff was originally from Wabowden. A key goal of the school was to partner in creative ways, within and beyond the community, to support students and ensure their needs were met. An understanding of education related challenges and how those challenges translate into other larger social issues was noted; however, solution-oriented strategies should focus on positive goals and change. Participants said it was important that the community seek ways to support adult learners, many of which return to complete their educations when their children begin school. The availability of daycare and social supports for young people wishing to pursue educational goals should be prioritized. The role of colleges and universities, such as UCN, should be to help ensure that individuals have the skills and training they need to excel.

The community was undergoing significant economic development because of recent mining developments. Local employment opportunities were perceived to exist, particularly within the industrial sector. Certain challenges related to seasonal employment were raised; the importance of continuing to seek ways to generate year-round employment opportunities was recognized. It was suggested that council and the province work with private companies and developers to ensure northern residents benefit from economic growth. Concern about bringing in workers from outside the community was discussed; there was also concern that local workers may be exploited if municipal and provincial safeguards were not established and maintained.

Participants shared concerns that jobs requiring post-secondary education and training may not be plentiful enough to support the number of young people and families that wish to return to Wabowden. However, proximity to Thompson was thought to provide numerous opportunities if individuals were willing to commute. As noted in other communities and regions, systemic discrimination can be a barrier for certain individuals and groups pursuing employment and other opportunities. That can be related back to large companies moving in and importing staff, but it also occurs on a much smaller scale at the local level. Many benefits to building a life in a small community were perceived; however, lack of privacy and difficulties associated with stereotyping may arise. Fragmentation within the community was noted; geography, history and personality can become an issue in even the smallest community. Enhanced communication and cooperation through partnerships within and external to communities will foster understanding and the alleviation of discrimination.

## **Thicket Portage**

Thicket Portage is located 50 km south of Thompson. The location of the community has long served as a portage connecting Wintering Lake and the Nelson River system. The community was originally called Franklin Portage after the Franklin expedition of the mid 1800s ([www.gov.mb.ca/ana/communityprofiles/pdf/thicketportage.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/communityprofiles/pdf/thicketportage.pdf)). The local economy is seasonally based on forestry, mining, trapping and fishing, as well as employment in the local service sector. A community council under *The Northern Affairs Act* governs the community.

The community is accessible by rail all-year round and can be accessed by winter road during a few weeks of the year. In 2001, there were 137 residents in Thicket Portage ([www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community\\_profiles/pdf/thicketportage.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/community_profiles/pdf/thicketportage.pdf)). The Thicket Portage School is operated by the Frontier School Division provides classes from nursery to Grade 8 ([www.frontiersd.mb.ca/schools/thicket](http://www.frontiersd.mb.ca/schools/thicket)). In addition, there is an Aboriginal Headstart Program for children ages 1 to 6.

## **The Community**

Thicket Portage is a Northern Affairs community, just like Wabowden. Community and youth findings presented in the following section are an aggregate form to protect participants' identity; research conducted in very small communities necessitates additional precautions. Researchers spoke with 11 residents from late teens to elders. Two of the 11 participants were male.

Thicket Portage provided a unique opportunity to enhance understanding about small, remote, isolated communities, and how challenges, much like communities, diverge. Comparability and replicability were problematic due to unique local circumstances. Research questions employed in six other Manitoba communities were found to be less useful in Thicket Portage. Therefore, conversations were based more loosely on issues pertaining to youth raised by participants. The interview guide was used to probe discussions when appropriate. Conversations illuminated different challenges and needs for the entire population base, but children and youth most profoundly experienced these challenges.

Thicket Portage changed significantly over time. Historically, the community was perceived to have thrived because of the absence of dependence on external factors. Changes and modernization were perceived by some participants to have had a negative effect on the community. Expectations heightened by observable changes in other communities and regions were exacerbated through isolation. Modernization and regulation, such as 'home insurance clauses discouraging wood burning stoves', generated a cycle of dependency and was perceived to have fostered a sense of despondency. Challenges residents confronted were not new; however, expectations regarding solutions were. One elder spoke of a much different, easier past, citing examples of locally produced and harvested food and basic necessities, abating reliance on retail goods and monetary factors. Thicket Portage does not have all weather road access or a local store, residents must travel by train, or pay heavily to be taken by water and overland, to Thompson to purchase groceries and basic necessities.

Thicket Portage, like many other small communities experienced demographic and structural changes over time. The community once had ample recreation opportunities and social activities. The community used to come together to create what was needed and ensured that

all residents' basic needs were met. At one time lumber was locally harvested and finished at a local sawmill.

Housing was an issue. Additional structures and large-scale renovations to existing homes were required. Participants spoke of concerns with housing regulations and insurance changes that required the removal of wood burning stoves. There was worry that if the electricity supply were interrupted, a large portion of the community would be at risk, particularly single mothers and children.

The concept of youth mobility was fundamentally different in Thicket Portage than in the other participant communities. Children and youth can attend school only until the eighth grade in Thicket Portage. Attendance and completion of secondary school requires that children relocate to another school in a different community, usually in Thompson or Cranberry Portage. Children board with extended family or in home placements with a host family. Confusion and ambiguity regarding where children may complete their studies was noted. Common belief in Thicket Portage was that students' families can choose to send them anywhere in Manitoba to complete their education.

Participants expressed frustration and anger regarding their children's education. The local school was charged with being ill-prepared to adequately meet the needs of the student population. A remote, northern school was viewed as often being a brief placement for young inexperienced teachers. The lack of consistency generated through staff turnover and inexperienced teachers were perceived to contribute to a negative cycle detrimental to students and frustrating for staff. Multi-grade classrooms were employed because of the small student population and teaching staff. Classrooms with learners at varying levels were perceived to contribute to problematic behaviour arising from boredom or a lack of attention. Participants spoke about creating an environment in which disruptive students could be removed from their peers, without costing them their educations. One suggestion was that a special classroom be designed to accommodate students having difficulties in a regular classroom. Teachers should be adequately prepared to work in a challenging environment and must come with an understanding of northern circumstances and differences.

Participants spoke of the importance of nurturing and supporting local and northern residents with a desire to become educators and teach in the north. It was widely believed that educators from a northern environment would have a better understanding of the needs of northern students and communities and will positively benefit the northern education system. Teachers and school administration must seek ways to work with northern students and communities, rather than against them. Communication and trust should be fostered between the school division and communities. The school division was perceived to be distanced and sometimes uninterested in seeking solutions to local problems.

A key suggestion arising from conversations was the critical need to re-evaluate the current system of relocating children at a very young age to pursue secondary schooling. Even an extra year or two at home was perceived to be fundamental to rectifying some of the challenges youth and communities face. The current system fosters a negative cycle, of youth leaving and failing and returning home. Without adequate family and community support, young people found themselves leaving home before they were mature enough to deal with many of the challenges and situations they were sure to encounter in an urban centre away from home. For example, peer pressure and bullying, which were perceived to be on the rise.

Youth placed in unfamiliar environments without adequate adult supervision and guidance were at risk of isolation, loneliness and becoming involved in unhealthy situations.

Youth from outlying communities often relocate to Thompson, The Pas, Cranberry Portage, and Winnipeg. Youth who got into trouble while away were often sent home where there was no local mechanisms to support their return get into trouble. Youth returning to the community often had a sense of failure and low self-esteem. Young people came back without the ability to continue their studies or skills to find local employment. They ultimately returned to a place that had little to offer and limited ways to meet their needs. Some participants felt that given the circumstances it was difficult to blame youth when they got into trouble.

Creative and innovative solutions to generate educational opportunities in a remote community were perceived to be vital. Community health and well-being was considered fundamentally interrelated to education and the capacity to adequately prepare youth for positive futures. Participants talked about how new modes of delivering distance education and learning could be developed utilizing technology. It is worth mentioning again that many participants firmly believed that even remaining at home for an additional year, until completion of the ninth grade, would better equip youth to face inevitable challenges and hardships.

The community was perceived to have more difficulties surrounding youth issues today than in the past. Illegal drugs have taken their toll on the community; illegal substances were perceived to be far less abundant and available 15 years ago. Television was perceived to also negatively contribute to the development of children and youth; inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour was often viewed on television and sometimes was mimicked. Recreational and social activities for teenagers and young adults were viewed as sorely lacking and a possible solution to some youth issues. Ways to generate interest and alleviate boredom will assist in fostering positive behaviour among youth.

Participants spoke of the need for activities aimed at mentoring youth and teaching them about culture and history. Community elders secured a grant to take children and youth out on the land and teach them survival skills and about a traditional way of life. Some participants viewed trapping and traditional activities as a mechanism to bring people together; however, a lack of cohesiveness and willingness to come together was noted on occasion. Some participants shared the desire to build a youth centre or meeting place for young people, a place of their own where they could meet socially and take part in activities more aligned with their age group. The school gymnasium was open in the evening, but that option was viewed as more fitting for younger children and families, rather than teenagers and young adults. One participant spoke eloquently about the need to engage parents in providing more guidance and attention to children, youth and young adults.

Concern regarding a decline in community cohesiveness was raised. Fragmentation within the community was perceived to be both a contributor and symptomatic of some of the challenges associated with youth related issues. Youth and children's needs were not being sufficiently met in their formative years; many young people endured emotional and physical ordeals related to separation from their families. Ongoing local challenges regarding youth and young adults were inherently linked to difficulties emerging while in or removed from the education system and their homes. The lack of educational attainment cultivated feelings of

worthlessness and failure. Many participants emphasized that it was critical to support children, youth and young adults in achieving necessary skills and confidence to carry them through life as they become the next generation of parents and community members.

Educational opportunities for elementary, and secondary students were perceived to be of vast importance to fostering and maintaining a healthy and vibrant community. However, a lack of adult education in the community was also discussed. At one point, there was an adult educator and classes were held in the local school to work towards high school equivalency. This is no longer delivered in the community, again regulations not designed to meet the unique needs of a northern population were viewed as a barrier that ultimately resulted in the demise of local adult education opportunities. Potential candidates wishing to return to school as adults required criminal record and child abuse registry checks, which were costly and difficult to obtain. Without these checks, individuals were not allowed into the school to attend classes. Attendance, or the lack thereof, also contributed to the elimination of the program. For some, a lack of childcare contributed to parents being unable to attend classes. Participants wanted to become part of the solution and assist in the generation of alternative options to provide necessary services, such as adult education, in locally appropriate and appealing ways.

The Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program was an example of a successful local service that also provided a meeting place for residents and their young children. The facility was linked to the community council offices situated at the heart of the community. There was local respect for staff and the program. This was owed to the positive nature of the program and contributed to fostering community health and wellness. AHS provided a comfortable space for parents and children, which was geared towards enhancing parenting skills as well as providing social and recreational opportunities for families. The AHS facility was often emptied out and used for other types of community meetings and events; however, participants noted that even though it is a good place to come together, more needs to be done to foster community spirit and alleviate apathy.

Participants noted that local difficulties in partnering and working together needed to be addressed. The importance of communication was emphasized. Local leadership was considered a critical component of seeking solutions and positive change. Reliance on volunteerism was viewed as part of the problem; the lack of volunteerism was perceived to be symptomatic of challenges experienced locally. Volunteer burnout and a lack of commitment hindered forward momentum; therefore, it was necessary to have a local champion step forward and lead the community toward positive change.

## ***Thompson***

Thompson is located about 750 km north of Winnipeg and is the third largest city in Manitoba. Its genesis as a community began in 1956 when INCO, Ltd., a mining company, discovered a large body of nickel ore in the area. It reached an agreement with the Province of Manitoba to establish a “mine, mill, smelter, and refinery, and town site services” ([www.thompson.ca](http://www.thompson.ca)). INCO, Ltd. continues to be the largest employer; however, the public service sector also employs many members of the community. Thompson was officially incorporated as a town in 1967 and later as a city in 1970. It is governed by a mayor and council under *The Thompson Charter* and *The Municipal Act*.



Thompson is accessible by all-weather road, rail and air. According to the 2006 Census, the city has approximately 13, 445 residents. The School District of Mystery Lake administers Thompson's six elementary schools and one high school. The city is also home to one of the main campuses of the newly created University College of the North. Thompson serves as a regional service centre for the majority of communities in the northern region. The Burntwood Regional Health Authority provides health services to Wabowden and Thicket Portage; the Frontier School Division administers schools in both communities. Residents from outlying communities around Thompson often have strong ties to the regional centre that were reflected in mobility and transportation patterns. For example, Thicket Portage residents were likely to travel regularly to Thompson by train to obtain basic services and necessities, such as groceries.

## **The Community**

Thompson was undergoing an 'economic boom' at the time of data collection. Residents and community leaders raised concerns related to housing and illicit activity, viewed in part as a consequence of the economic growth. Low income families in the region were perceived to be "taking the brunt of economic growth" owed largely to an influx of newcomers to meet industrial labour needs. Campgrounds had no vacancy because individuals were living fulltime there owed to a lack of accommodations. Housing developments were unable to meet the demand; families were being evicted so units could be renovated and re-vamped for a specific type of resident - smaller, higher-income families migrating to Thompson to work at INCO, Ltd. and Manitoba Hydro.

Outlying communities were experiencing an in-migration of individuals and families that found themselves with no place to live in Thompson. Participants spoke of hardships many families were facing, such as separation. Many families who were faced with eviction sent older children to live with relatives elsewhere to try to keep their homes, particularly when the number of individuals living in a single dwelling was exceeded regulatory limits.

Migration patterns changed rapidly and significantly over the last two years. New mining discoveries prompted growth and development, which in turn fostered rapid population growth. Participants speculated that Thompson's population rose from 13,000 to 17,000, but school enrolments have declined by nearly 250 students. Many families with school-age children found themselves essentially homeless and subsequently moved away. In addition, many of Thompson's new citizens were individuals relocating temporarily or permanently for employment.

The availability of high paying jobs in the community put pressure on youth to exit school prior to graduation. One participant described how the age of youth pumping gas at local stations had decreased recently. People were also being lured away from jobs in the service sector and professional employment to industrial jobs. Hydro was mentioned as a large local employer as well. It was often said that there was no shortage of employment opportunities if individuals have a desire to work.

Illegal substances and criminal activity were perceived to often follow rapid economic development. One participant said, "lots of drugs and money are flowing through the community, associated with an economic boom and development." Participants also alluded to the fact that organized crime is on the rise, that "bigger gangs are arriving." Some participants said that research should delve more specifically into the effect of drugs and

violence on youth in the north. It was also noted that the highest rate of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) was in northern Manitoba. These were suggested as specific factors that should be considered when relocating youth from outlying communities to Thompson for high school. Children away from their families were thought to experience heightened risk and vulnerability. Home placements could be difficult for these youth, especially when unhealthy dynamics, such as alcohol, were present.

Local recreational and social opportunities were perceived to be widely available. Athletic opportunities, and arts and cultural activities were spoken of. Drop-in centres, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs and the Friendship Centre, provided an abundance of youth programming. Some civic engagement and volunteering of youth was visible; Nikki Ashton, the recently elected Member of Parliament and a woman in her late twenties, was pointed to as an example of a young person involved in and dedicated to the north.

## **Summary**

Conversations with northern residents highlighted that each community is distinct, with unique challenges and needs. It was difficult, if not impossible and perhaps detrimental, to compare communities, even within a specific geographic region such as the North, with the intent of discovering common needs and overarching solutions. An understanding of education related challenges and how those challenges translate into other larger social issues was noted. Solution-oriented strategies should focus on positive goals and change.

## Reflections

The purpose of this project was to collect stories and information from three distinct regions within Manitoba. Reflections were based on findings and lessons learned as the research process evolved. The decision to stay, leave or return was personal; challenges and opportunities are unique to each community, however there were general lessons and reflections across the regions and communities studied:

- The overarching theme arising from the project was the role and importance of learning opportunities. Education and learning opportunities were keys to attracting and retaining youth. Whether it was primary, secondary, skills training, or post-secondary education, youth were looking for opportunities to learn.
- Youth need to feel valued by their community to become engaged in their community. Community leaders need to be attentive and receptive to potential contributions and current needs of young people and their families. This could be achieved by formalizing local communication strategies.
- Manitoba's Aboriginal population is young and growing. Particular attention needs to be paid to their unique circumstances and needs.
- The availability of meaningful and diverse employment opportunities were inherent to youth's desire to reside in rural and northern communities.
- Long-term vision for fulfilling personal growth and development was essential to ensure young people and their families choose their 'path' deliberately as opposed to settling or leaving rural and northern communities. Meaningful employment opportunities were essential to leading a fulfilling life.
- Entrepreneurship and small business training and support that actively engage youth would benefit the local population and economy. Resourcefulness and creativity were highlighted as potential ways to enhance income generating opportunities.
- Effective communication within and outside of communities was identified as necessary for local vitality. Efforts to reach the community at large must include a variety of mediums, such as radio, Internet, newspaper, and bulletin boards. Discussions about youth should include youth.
- Participants shared many benefits and opportunities to living in rural and northern communities. A promotional campaign articulating Manitoba's rural and northern advantage should be undertaken.
- It is the responsibility of individual communities to determine their own destinies. Communities could take advantage of this study (i.e. findings; methodologies; interview and focus group guides) to assist planning regarding youth mobility and related matters.
- Census data for small communities, particularly ones located in remote regions cannot be used to analyze population trends and structure. A community-based census tool developed specifically for small populations might help alleviate this problem.

## References

- Bjarnason, T., & Thorlindsson, T. (2006). Should I stay or should I go? Migration expectations among youth in Icelandic fishing and farming communities. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 22, 290-300.
- Bowlby, G., Dennis, J., Langlet, E., & Malo, D. (2004). Aboriginal Data Initiative - Survey Component. Retrieved June 6, 2008 from [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-522-XIE/2004001/Denis\\_eng\\_final.pdf](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-522-XIE/2004001/Denis_eng_final.pdf).
- Corbett, M. (2007). All kinds of potential: Women and out migration in an Atlantic Canadian coastal community. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23, 430-442.
- Domina, T. (2006). What clean break?: Education and non-metropolitan migration patterns, 1989-2004. *Rural Sociology*, 71(3), 373-398.
- École Saint-Joachim (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://stjoachim.dsfm.mb.ca/>.
- Gabriel, M. (2006). Youth migration and social advancement: How young people manage emerging differences between themselves and their hometown. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(1), 33-46.
- Garsky, S. (2002). Where are they going? A comparison of urban and rural youths' locational choices after leaving the parental home. *Social Science Research*, 31, 409-431.
- Garasky, S. (2002). Where are they going? A comparison of urban and rural youths' locational choices after leaving the parental home. *Social Science Research*, 31, 409-431.
- Glendinning, A., Nuttall, M., Hendry, L., Kloep, M., & Wood, S. (2003). Rural communities and well-being: a good place to grow up? *The Sociological Review*, 129- 156.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. New York: Continuum.
- Hytek Ltd. (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from [www.hytekmb.com/whoweare.php](http://www.hytekmb.com/whoweare.php).
- Kloep, M., Hendry, L., Glendinning, A., Ingerbrigtsen, J., & Espnes, G. (2003). Peripheral visions? A cross-cultural study of rural youths' views on migration. *Children's Geographies*, 1(1), 91-109.
- La Broquerie. (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from [http://www.labroquerie.com/index\\_en.html](http://www.labroquerie.com/index_en.html).
- Manitoba Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Manitoba regions: population and demographic projections 2006-2026. Winnipeg: Author.
- Manitoba Community Profiles. (2008) R.M. of La Broquerie Community Profile. Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca/cgi-bin/csd/index.cgi?id=4602053>.
- Manitoba Community Profiles. (2008). Village of Nore Dame de Lourdes Community Profile. Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca/cgi-bin/csd/index.cgi?id=4602053>.

- Manitoba Community Profiles. (2008). R.M.of St. Laurent Community Profile. Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.communityprofiles.mb.ca/cgi-bin/csd/index.cgi?id=4602053>
- Malatest, R. A. & Associates. (2002). Rural youth migration: Exploring the reality behind the myths. *Government of Canada*, 1-44.
- Manitoba Métis Federation. (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://mmf.mb.ca/index.php>
- Ni Laoire, C. (2007). The 'green green grass of home'? Return migration to rural Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23, 332-344.
- Notre Dame de Lourdes. (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.notre-dame-de-lourdes.ca/>.
- Rural Development Institute. (2005). *Manitoba Rural Immigration Case Study: Steinbach, Manitoba*. Retrieved March 3, 2008 from [http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publications.asp#rural\\_immigration](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publications.asp#rural_immigration).
- Rye, J. (2006). Heading for the cities? Gender and lifestyle patterns in rural youths' residential preferences. *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 60, 199-208.
- Statistics Canada. (2008). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census Retrieved June 6, 2008 from [www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/aboriginal/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/aboriginal/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf).
- Statistics Canada. (2007). Learning resources: population pyramids. Statistics Canada. Retrieved January, 2008 from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/animat/pyone.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2003). *2001 Census analysis series - Aboriginal peoples of Canada: A demographic profile*. Retrieved June 6, 2008 from [www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/pdf/96F0030XIE2001007.pdf](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/pdf/96F0030XIE2001007.pdf).
- Stipple, J. *Rural schools and youth: Local community control and centralized educational goals*. Department of Education, Cornell University.
- St. Laurent. (2008). Retrieved March 3, 2008 from [www.stlmb.ca/english/home.htm](http://www.stlmb.ca/english/home.htm)
- Stockdale, A. (2004). Rural out migration: Community consequences and individual migrant experiences. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(2), 167-194.
- Suthey Holler Associates. (2001), Far Northeast Training Board. 1-40.
- Tremblay, J. (2001). Rural youth migration between 1971 and 1996. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, 2[3]. Statistics Canada.
- Wyn, J., & Woodman, D. (2006). Generation, youth and social change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(5), 495-51.

## **RDI ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Scott Grills**, Chair  
Brandon University  
Brandon, MB

**Mona Cornock**  
Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives  
Brandon, MB

**Larry Flynn**  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
Winnipeg, MB

**Kim Beilby**  
Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives  
Brandon, MB

**Reg Helwer**  
Shur-Gro Farm Services  
Brandon, MB

**Elliot Hewitt**  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Calgary, AB

**Ben Maendel**  
Baker Hutterite Colony  
MacGregor, MB

**Jonathon Maendel**  
Baker Hutterite Colony  
MacGregor, MB

**Darell Pack**  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Winnipeg, MB

**W.J. (Bill) Pugh**  
Meyers Norris Penny  
Brandon, MB

**Fran Racher**  
Brandon University  
Brandon, MB

**Doug Ramsey**  
Brandon University  
Brandon, MB

**Frank Thomas**  
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce  
Brandon, MB

**Larry Wark**  
MTS Communications Inc.  
Brandon, MB

**Dion Wiseman**  
Brandon University  
Brandon, MB

**Robert Annis**, Director  
RDI, Brandon University  
Brandon, MB

The role of the RDI Advisory Committee is to provide general advice and direction to the Institute on matters of rural concern. On a semi-annual basis the Committee meets to share information about issues of mutual interest in rural Manitoba and foster linkages with the constituencies they represent.