

Theme I: Culture and Recreation

In-town recreational opportunities

Residents also enjoy outdoor activities that are a bit closer to home. A staging point for trails in the area, Hinton features more than 25 km of multi-use trails that loop through lush forests past creeks and lakes to mountain viewpoints. A growing network of mountain bike options is attracting riders of all ages, from a novice bike park at Happy Creek to Alberta's largest free access Mountain Bike Skills Park.



Numerous other parks and playgrounds dot the landscape, some created in partnership with neighbours, service clubs or corporate citizens. Similar parks and playgrounds can be found throughout the area in smaller communities, such as Brule.

Other outdoor facilities in or near Hinton and neighbouring communities include ball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis courts, an 18-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor archery, a campground, a gun range and a stock car racing track. You'll also find skateboarding and a paintball park and in winter, neighbourhood skating rinks, pond hockey and tobogganing.

“Recreation and parks hold potential few of us fully grasp, offering proven antidotes to many of Alberta’s most troubling issues. Obesity. Diabetes. Isolation and community breakdown. Environmental decay. Rural exodus. In short, this field is an essential public service, alongside sewers, roads and hospitals. It is Alberta’s best buy in public health.”

Town of Hinton Community - Development & Enhancement Plan
Integrated Report, 2003

The town's numerous programs include a summer Discovery Camp that exposes 6 to 12 year olds to white water rafting, hiking, swimming and other activities. A Hinton Get Fit Walking Challenge has attracted more than two dozen teams, spurring 1,000-plus residents to up their activity level.

Of course, there's more to recreation than outdoor activities. Town of Hinton recreation facilities are headlined by the newly renovated Dr. Duncan Murray Recreation Centre, with two ice arenas, an indoor swimming pool, a skateboard park, racquetball and squash courts, a daycare centre, a youth centre, an arts and crafts room and the Hinton Municipal Library. Other indoor facilities include school gymnasiums, a curling rink, a bowling alley and several privately owned fitness centres.

In 2007, the Town of Hinton conducted a survey to assess the town's recreational facility needs. This plan's findings regarding recreation are based on the results of that survey as summarized in the Barr Ryder Report and on the community feedback gathered as part of this plan.

The Barr Ryder Report is available online at [www.hinton.ca/municipal-government/major-projects & plans](http://www.hinton.ca/municipal-government/major-projects-&-plans)



Community perspectives on recreation

Clearly, many recreation opportunities are available for residents and visitors. But are these opportunities accessible by all, regardless of age, ability or income level? Which existing facilities need upgrades? Are additional facilities needed? These are some of the questions asked and answered by individuals who shared their thoughts regarding recreation in the service area. Community members identified the following, most pressing concerns.

Create a community park. Hinton would benefit from a park designed as a hub for outdoor community activities.

Address income barriers. Children and youth from low-income families have limited access to recreation both summer and winter, particularly when equipment investments are required. Keeping youth active, involved and engaged, is key to addressing issues such as school drop-out rates, obesity, chronic disease, drug use, vandalism and other criminal activity.

Improve indoor recreational opportunities. Our community has identified a need to evolve our current recreational facility to a full indoor multi-purpose facility. This facility would support indoor soccer, tennis, track and field.

Improve riverside access. Public access to the Athabasca River is limited in town due to the location of the pulp and saw mills operated by West Fraser Mills Ltd.

Link and expand trails. Not all neighbourhoods are well connected to other parts of town. Residents in some hilltop districts, for example, have no direct pedestrian/cyclist route to the lower districts without crossing Highway 16, a four-lane divided highway. The 2011 Trails Master Plan aims to expand the trail system to connect more neighbourhoods with more amenities. The trails will enhance both transportation and recreational options for residents and visitors.

Protect threatened landscapes. Some trail users are damaging natural areas, damaging trail elements, littering and contaminating surface water bodies. Residents recommended more onsite enforcement, coupled with education programs to promote a culture of stewardship among all users.

Ensure shared use of trails. Conflicts arise between ATV users, pedestrians and bikers over best use of the trails and surrounding landscape.

“Over the years, the town has developed a trail network, utilizing environmental reserves, parks, utility right-of-ways and lots, designated roads and sidewalks. The intent is that over time, all centres of activities and open spaces are linked by the community trail system.”

Town of Hinton Community Development & Enhancement Plan
Integrated Report, 2003



Achieving our culture and recreation vision

The following strategies reflect the collective views of community stakeholders regarding the steps we must take to ensure the sustainability of the community's culture and recreation

- Ensure the arts and culture play a key role in enhancing civic pride and quality of life for the community through cultural, social and economic development.
- Provide community support to local artists and arts groups.
- Develop and upgrade indoor and outdoor facilities that make Hinton a destination for recreation and leisure activities.

These plans will almost certainly evolve. But at this point in our history, they give us a united focus for moving forward together.

The actions we need to take to achieve these strategies are included in Appendix B.

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Imagining who we could be: An education and wellness story

It is 2040, and Shelly is catching a quick coffee at Alberta's newest post-secondary campus, a welcome addition to the community's education landscape. She is joined by a diverse group. There's Chuck, a retired coal miner taking computing science; Richard, an Aboriginal teen studying to be a forester; and Otiba, an engineer from Japan who's learning English. They first met in the town's newest affordable housing complex, where they all live.

In decades past, nearly everyone around this table would have had trouble finding affordable housing in the community, let alone post-secondary accredited programs to follow their dreams. Now they have rent they can afford, plus courses that meet their needs. They are not alone in benefitting from Alberta's newest multi-dimensional campus. Already, its combination of superb programs and excellent outdoor recreational opportunities are attracting students and staff from around the world. Working with other local institutions and industry, the campus is earning a name as a premier resource-industry research institution with apprenticeship programs that translate into jobs in forestry, mining, lodge management, outdoor recreation and more.

Talk around the table turns to the comings and goings at the housing complex, where life is never dull. The complex has attracted an interesting array of tenants, in part because it offers everything from tiny suites to units big enough for extended families plus homecare.

Home care has been a lifesaver for Chuck, whose wife is battling early stage dementia. "Without help from our homecare workers, we'd have had to move somewhere else by now," Chuck says. The community's new senior drop-in centre and expanded array of health care specialists are also important, he adds. "I never thought we'd live here after retirement. But now we just might be able to stay for the long-term."

Younger families also have more places to turn for help in the community these days, observes Shelley, a single mom with three children ranging in age from 4 to 14 - going on 20. "I'm not sure I'd be coping otherwise." It's not an exaggeration. Shelley works shifts to make ends meet, and without things like transit service and all-hours child care and a dynamic youth centre, she'd worry about her children's safety. Recent family-friendly changes to the shift structure at work are also easing her stress.

As the conversation continues, Shelley realizes that many of the things keeping lives in balance around this table are an outgrowth of the community's sustainability plan. Step by step, the goals set in the plan are being met or revisited, thanks in large measure to volunteers such as those she's sitting with now.

That's a good thing, for as planned the community has attracted newcomers every year, primarily young families, students and professionals such as researchers and teachers, immigrant families and newly retired couples. Together, they are creating a much more diverse, livable, dynamic community while increasing the demand for family support, senior care, education, English training and other essential wellness tools. And the community has the capacity to make it all happen.



"If our children can learn in their home town, they can bring many great ideas to our communities. A Hinton campus would also bring other students here to see what a great place we live in and the courses themselves could open their eyes to the multitude of riches in the area."

Community Consultation Participant

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Who we are: A snapshot of education and wellness

We are a caring community; we are willing to work together through difficult issues. We're quietly generous with our time and expertise. We focus on the future, on what is possible, and take action to get things done. We are active, with an abundance of energy and heart to match. We have numerous informal and formal places to soak up knowledge and skills.

We are also a community with unique challenges. While our median income is higher than the Alberta norm, the gap between rich and poor is also greater. We lack some essential services prompting families, seniors and youth to head elsewhere for support and even to live. With no permanent post-secondary institution, we can't offer the full menu of training and apprenticeships that would allow students to fully prepare right here for jobs with our largest employers.

That said, we are already gearing up to fill gaps in our education and wellness landscape. Just a few examples: Plans for a post-secondary campus are underway, our array of affordable housing is expanding, youth programming is on the rise and we are working hard to attract a broader array of health care services to the town.

We aim to be a community with education and wellness opportunities that attract new residents and inspire everyone to stay.

“University towns never die. Let’s roll out the red carpet and create a splendid campus of the Rockies that will attract students from around the world with its focus on environmental studies, local industries, arts and tourism.”

Community Consultation Participant



What do we mean by education and wellness?

Education encompasses the formal and informal systems that facilitate the lifelong learning of residents and visitors. This cradle-to-grave approach to learning includes early childhood development, K-12 education, post secondary education, trades and skills training, language training and literacy (functional, cultural, information, media, mathematical, computer/technological) and personal interests.

Wellness means being in good physical, mental, spiritual and social health. It incorporates a wide array of areas, including (but not limited to) family support, housing, health care, nutrition, poverty, safety and security. A community that values wellness fosters the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being of all who live there, enabling them to grow to their highest potential.

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Our education strengths

Our community is home to a number of education institutions and organizations that serve learners of various ages and across a variety of sections.

Teaching our children

Several early childhood programs are available to our youngest learners. These are operated by Alberta Health Services, Parent Link, Evergreen Catholic and Grande Yellowhead Public School Divisions and several independent care providers. As well, the Hinton Friendship Centre offers the Head Start program, to prepare children for a successful education experience. While Aboriginal children are given priority, the Head Start doors are open to all.

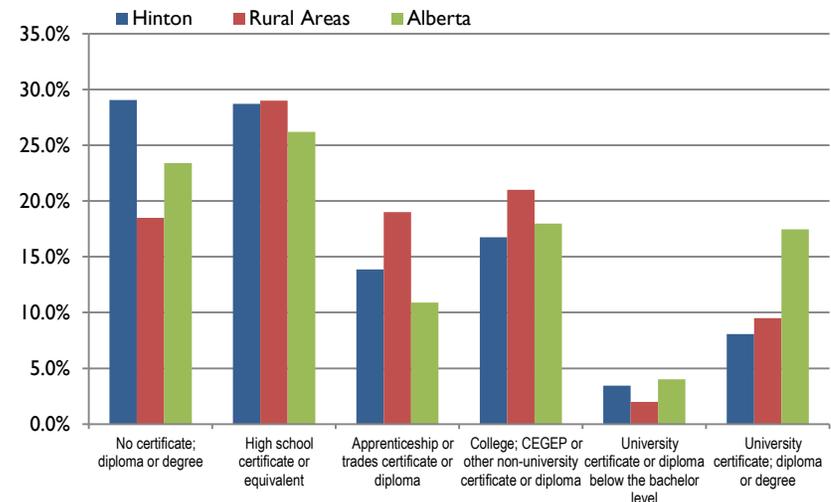
Once the little ones are ready to move on, their parents can choose the public or separate school system, including three elementary schools and two high schools. As well, some families in our community choose to home school their children. Support for parents who home school is provided through the Learning Connection.

Students attending local schools perform consistently with the provincial average in reading, math, problem-solving and science skills.

Post-secondary education

Compared to other parts of Alberta, we have a higher percentage of residents with apprenticeship and trades qualifications and fewer with university degrees. Our community Education Attainment Profile illustrates that reality. Despite the large number of tradespeople, health care providers, educators and equipment operators employed in our community, we do not have a permanent trade school and training facility. Educational institutions, such as the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, offer mobile training hosted by Campus Alberta (formerly the Yellowhead Region Educational Consortium), and local industries provide apprenticeships and private courses to meet internal needs. For those interested in forest and land management or working as forest firefighters, the Hinton Training Centre, run by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, offers internationally recognized programs. Campus Alberta also offers college and university programs.

Table 1: Community Education Attainment Profile, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada

Internationally known research

The Hinton Training Centre is a leader in the delivery of forest related education, research and technology. Lured by the Centre's Cache Percotte Training Forest and interactive multimedia wildfire simulator, learners from Alberta, Canada, and across the globe come to the centre to learn more about managing forest, wildlife, and land resources. The centre has received many awards, including the Canada Award of Excellence and the Premier's Award of Excellence

The Foothills Research Institute has been conducting applied research on the cultural, ecological, economic and social values of Alberta's forested landscape since 1982. The internationally acclaimed institute plays a vital role in the study of sustainable forest management. Some of its most provocative and successful research programs include the Grizzly Bear Program, the Natural Disturbance Program, Fisheries and Watershed Research and the Adaptive Forest Management/History Program.

FP Innovations is the world's largest private, not-for-profit forest research institute. The Hinton Training Centre has been home to the FP Innovations Wildlife Fire Operations Research Group since 2001. The wildland fire program delivers practical solutions to issues affecting fire fighters enhancing safety and effectiveness. It is the only program of its type in Canada.

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Lifelong learning

Community members also have access to non-credit lifelong learning opportunities. The Hinton Adult Learning Society (HALS) provides a range of community based adult learning courses as well as a Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Service and iCCAN video conferencing facilities. Creative Campus, the Hinton Municipal Library and a host of clubs and organizations also organize a variety of learning sessions. When the doors open to the Historical Tracks & Trails Society museum, it will also offer educational programs.

The Town of Hinton and Campus Alberta are committed to developing Hinton as a regional education hub. Together, they are exploring and promoting a variety of strategies, such as

- Providing local access to work-based training, so workers do not have to leave the community
- Providing local access to post-secondary opportunities that support our mountain community economy
- Supporting employers to train employees, including enhancing employee awareness of the value of training for young job-seekers looking for long-term, well-paying employment
- Expanding the Campus Alberta facilities into a major post-secondary institution



“Developing a post-secondary facility for professional programs, such as nursing. Or develop and promote specialized, short-term relevant training, like lodge management or mountain river and wilderness training.”
Community Consultation Participant

Community perspectives on education

While educational opportunities are available for learners of all ages and at various stages of their schooling, we are far from where we want to be as a community of learners. We believe that a sustainable community is a community that values learning. During community consultations, many individuals commented on both the strengths and limitations of the available educational options.

Address drop-out rates. Many individuals said that schools in our community have a significantly high drop-out rate. It was felt that, during boom times, too many students leave school with the short-sighted impression that they can find high paying work locally without having to finish school.

Statistics suggest that current drop-out rates are somewhat lower than the provincial average. Significant improvements have occurred in the last few years, perhaps accounting for the discrepancy between community perceptions and actual numbers.

Expand education options. Many community members felt after school programs and a local post-secondary campus and/or adult education centre would encourage our youth to stay in the community. There is the perception that when our youth leave home to take their education to the next step, they do not come back. As well, some residents wondered if the youth understood the importance of higher education and skills training to finding employment in their desired fields.

Foster quality. As our community grows, the school system is becoming strained by limited resources, larger classes, and more students with socio-economic needs. We need to foster a culture of excellence within the school system and provide more support at all levels, especially for different types of learners.

Make education inclusive. Citizens from all walks of life, with varying levels of ability and from different cultures, seek help in developing life skills at varying levels, from basic literacy to post-secondary training. Existing local programs do not meet all those needs. Meanwhile, many who are illiterate remain isolated and embarrassed to seek help

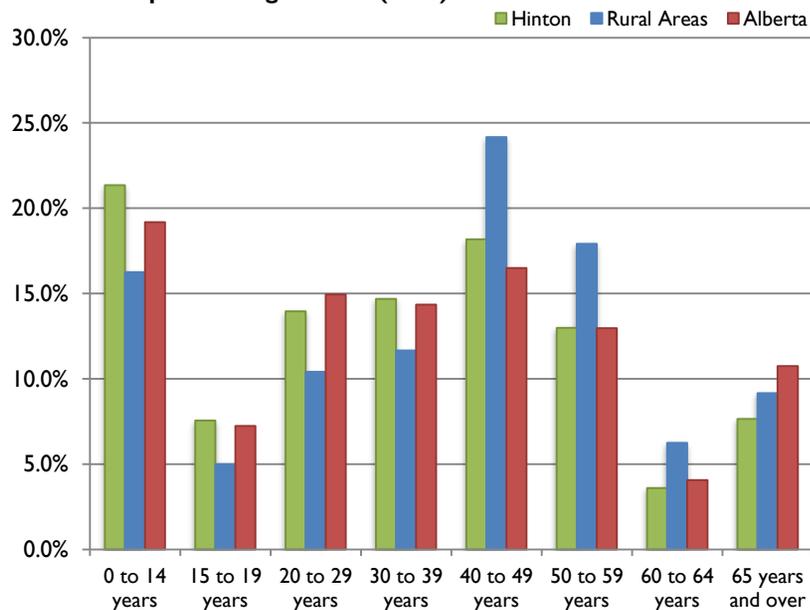
Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Our wellness strengths

Our community's population profile shows several marked differences from the Alberta average; together, these differences signal social needs that may need extra attention in the years ahead. It is useful to note that this profile has similarities to other communities in British Columbia and Alberta whose economies rely heavily on resource development.

Our population is younger than most other municipalities in Alberta and includes a relatively high number of temporary residents attracted to work in surrounding resource industries. Especially in town, we have a somewhat higher percentage of youth under 20 and a notably lower percentage of seniors 65 or older. Our rural population is slightly older on average, with 42% between 40 and 59 years of age. See table 2 for details

Table 2: Population Age Profile (2006)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada

We also have higher than average median annual income, with the striking exception of single mothers, who earn 19% less than their counterparts across Alberta. As seen in table 3, the median income for Hinton families (defined as 2.6 persons per household) is \$82,069, about 11% above the Alberta norm. But for lone female parents, the median is \$30,259. That's 2.5 times less than our male-led lone parent families, whose median stands at \$73,370.

Table 3: Median Annual Income of Census Families, Hinton and Alberta, 2006

	Hinton	Alberta
Median Annual Income		
All census families	\$82,069/yr	\$73,823/yr
All households	\$77,539/yr	\$63,988/yr
Lone Parents	\$33,795/yr	\$40,397/yr
Female Lone Parents	\$30,259/yr	\$37,469/yr
Male Lone Parents	\$73,370/yr	\$55,205/yr

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada

49% are satisfied with human services offered here

Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy
Hargreaves & Associates, 2009

96% say Hinton is a good place to raise a family

Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy
Hargreaves & Associates, 2009

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Our community has more single family homes, fewer apartments and a larger percentage of manufactured homes than most Alberta municipalities. Housing is a significant issue. Not only are there specific gaps in the housing stock, but nearly a quarter of us cannot afford the going rates. Low income renters experience the most significant housing need - especially households receiving social assistance, but also those living on modest salaries.

27% of Hinton households are likely needing help with shelter costs
(Based on Provincial Core Need Income Threshold)

Taking the wellness pulse

What is life like in our community? A 2009 survey by Hargreaves & Associates highlights both positive and negative perceptions. On the plus side, 96% said Hinton is a good place to raise a family and more than 80% reported a strong sense of family, willingness to help others and tolerance of differences.

On the other hand, satisfaction with human services in the community was only 49%. The lowest ratings came in response to questions about affordable housing, drugs and property-related crime. Many residents also expressed concerns about a general unwillingness to volunteer and about a lack of activities for young people. In addition to youth, unmet needs are apparent among seniors, newcomers, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and single-parent families.

“Volunteerism is seen as a cornerstone for getting things done in Hinton. Two-thirds of respondents have previously volunteered and 93% are somewhat or very likely to do so again. Yet there is a feeling among 45% of respondents that residents are unwilling to volunteer, suggesting that volunteerism is driven by an attitude of taking responsibility.”

Town of Hinton Social Development Strategy
Hargreaves & Associates, 2009

In areas where programs and services are locally available, a significant percentage of residents said they don't know about those supports. When services are not offered in Hinton, or when they're available but not well known, we either go without or travel as far as Edmonton, 270 km away.

With survey in hand, the Town of Hinton approved a long-term strategy for meeting our community needs. That Social Development Strategy is available online at www.hinton.ca/municipal-government/major-projects-plans.

Many hands on deck

Many organizations are already hard at work addressing the community's health and social needs. Funded largely by annual government grants, they do their best to address drug and substance abuse, poverty, domestic violence, accessibility, suicide, active living, volunteerism and programming needs among youth and seniors. The following players will be essential to future wellness.

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) helps the community identify and respond to social needs, including the needs of the retired and semi-retired, children, families and volunteers.

The **Hinton Friendship Centre** strengthens Aboriginal culture while encouraging equal access to and participation in Canadian society.

The **Hinton Youth Centre**, located at the Dr. Duncan Murray Recreation Centre, offers an expanding slate of programs and activities free to any youth. Among recent additions is a pilot program that involves students in peer tutoring.

The **Active Creative Engaged (ACE)** communities strive to improve quality of life by nurturing grassroots leadership and action in arts, culture and active living.

Acute and community health care services include 24-hour emergency services with surgical capabilities, lab services, diagnostic imaging, CT scans, mobile MRI, chemotherapy, extended care, assisted living, rehabilitation services, dentistry, optometry, chiropractic care, Chinese medicine, acupuncture, massage therapy and other community health care services.

Alberta Employment and Immigration provides career and employment counseling; access to training programs; a Labour Market Information Centre; and information on schools, colleges and universities as well as apprenticeship and industry programs. Student Finance Board funding applications are also available.

Alberta Health Services, Addictions and Mental Health Service provides services to help individual of all ages address emotional and psychological problems. It also provides assessment and treatment for purposes with different problems in thought, emotion and behaviour and provides public education programs to create awareness of positive mental health.

Theme 2: Education and Wellness

Alberta Family and Youth Services provides child protection services, family support, foster care and residential resources.

Hinton Community Health Services provides programs ranging from prenatal classes to early childhood development, communicable disease prevention and health education. The staff includes health inspectors, public health nurses, dental hygienists, home care workers, home care nurses, pathologists and occupational therapists.

Hinton Adult Learning Society provides non credit, part time, community based learning courses in Adult Basic Literacy, English Language Learning, Employability Enhancement, Community Issues and General Interest. HALS is also a Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Service provider, serving adults wishing to improve their reading, writing, math, and English skills. As well, HALS is an iCCAN connected video conferencing site.

Safety and security needs are handled by the RCMP, Hinton Bylaw Enforcement, Alberta Sheriffs, Hinton Fire Department and Hinton Emergency Medical Services. The 24 RCMP officers responsible for law enforcement and crime prevention set the following priorities for 2010: trafficking drugs, police visibility/community involvement, late night alcohol fuelled violence, mischief and violence.

Fire and rescue services are provided by the Hinton Fire Department. Led by a fire chief and deputy chief, the department employs 31 firefighters. It responded to 196 emergency calls in 2009, including fires, incidents involving dangerous goods, multi-vehicle collisions/extrication and other rescues. The department promotes fire prevention and public education through speaking engagements and such initiatives as Junior Firefighters and P.A.R.T.Y. (Preventing Alcohol Related Trauma in Youth).

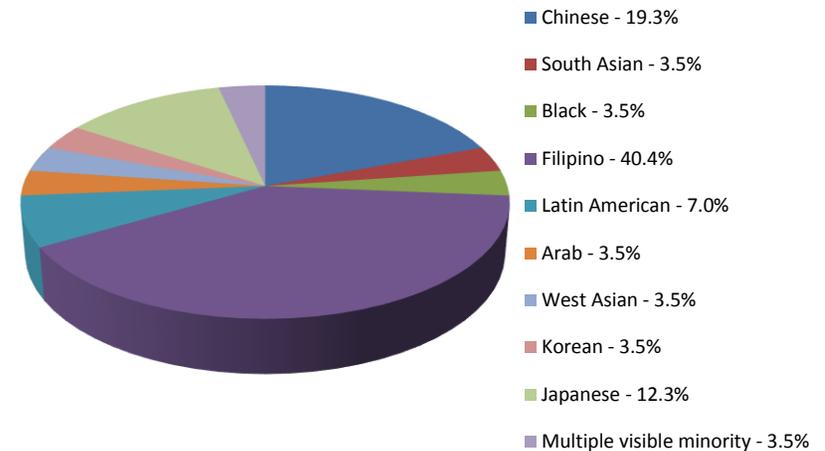
Service clubs and their members generously donate time, expertise and dollars to many causes.

Worship centres meet spiritual needs and extend caring hands to people needing support. Our community has more than a dozen churches and places of worship.

An **Interagency Committee** and other informal networks help connect people to work together. Yet there is strong sense that greater cooperation and collaboration are needed to avoid gaps and overlaps at a time when resources are scarce and needs are growing.

The mix of cultures living here is also unique. According to the 2006 Census, 11% of our town's population is Aboriginal, which is about twice the rate found elsewhere in Alberta. As shown here, (see Chart 1), our community also has noticeably higher percentage of Filipino people, Chinese and Japanese than the Alberta average.

Chart 1: Visible Minorities in Hinton



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada

Naming the challenges

“Beyond Boredom,” a 2006 report by the Foothills Research Institute helps to crystallize the mix of challenges facing Hinton and area. Hired to study the social implications of local economic development, the consultants found high levels of family dysfunction and substance abuse. They linked those realities to “lack of social cohesion” resulting from five social risk factors:

- Income and class divides between high-paid resource workers and workers in the services sector
- High incomes coupled with high consumer debts in a “keeping up with the Joneses” culture
- Unionized work environments resulting in a culture of entitlement
- Transience
- The prevalence of shift work

Consultants recommended that human service agencies receive resources to take a lead role in addressing these risks. The alternative, researchers warned, is “decreased social cohesion and increased isolation.”