

2.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.1 Population Forecast

The On-Reserve population in Pukatawagan has increased from just under 1,000 people in 1978 to 1,743 people in 1998. Based on the population growth since 1995, the future population growth is estimated to be 2.5% per year. Figure 2.1 shows the projected on Reserve population for the next 20 years which is as follows:

- 1998 - 1,743 people
- 2010 - 2,240 people
- 2020 - 2,880 people

Note: Population of Sherridon and other small settlements is estimated at less than 100.

The foregoing assumes that the past population growth has been primarily a function of birth and mortality rates and members added under the provisions of Bill C31. The in and out migration of First Nations people is expected to have an ongoing cyclical pattern with no abrupt shifts. The current non-reserve band population of 735 is also assumed to vary in proportion to the First Nation's growth.

The next 20 years will see the population of Pukatawagan and Sherridon increase by approximately 65 percent to 3,000 people. This will create an increasing demand for services and financial support. Therefore, it is essential that the current study deal with these future needs and reflect these in the comparison of the current transportation system with the proposed All-Weather Road system. The scenario involving a complete loss of rail service will also have to be discussed.

2.2 Community Services

The following community services exist for the community of Pukatawagan:

- Health needs of the Pukatawagan community are initially met by a First Nations Authority operated nursing station, with a staff of 14 including dental and drug/alcohol workers. However, it relies on the Norman Regional Health Authority and its medical staff for acute care and/or hospitalization in The Pas, Flin Flon, or Thompson. Medivac and patient referrals to Winnipeg are a frequent occurrence.
- Education needs are primarily provided by on-reserve First Nations schools (Kindergarten to Grade 9). High school and post-secondary students travel to Cranberry Portage, The Pas, Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, etc.

See Figure 2.1 Population History and Forecast

- Social services are largely administered locally by the Mathias Columb First Nations.
- Hydro and telephone services are on a land line system.
- Water and sewage utilities include limited treatment facilities and distribution/collection pipe systems.
- Fire protection is provided via two pumper trucks and a fire hydrant system.
- Police protection is provided locally by three First Nations constables supported by RCMP.

2.3 Economic Activities

Local businesses include a hotel, Northern Store, two other retail outlets, pool hall, two crisis and one youth centre, as well as construction and repair companies.

The economic base of the Pukatawagan community consists primarily of trapping, fishing, and wild rice operations. Forestry operations in the general area also provide employment opportunities. Mining activities exist on a limited basis at Lynn Lake to the north and Sherridon to the south. Local government and community services account for most of the employment. Approximately 27% of the workforce was unemployed in 1996 based on the active work force.