
West Kootenay Aboriginal Mapping Report

Kootenay and Boundary
Regional Resources
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Project Summary

Project Background and Purpose:

In 2006, the Aboriginal Service Providers Table identified a need for a “map” of the Aboriginal population and the cultural resources and services. This map would serve both the Aboriginal population and service providers. In order to gather this information, a survey was developed and distributed alongside an awareness campaign encouraging the Aboriginal community to complete it. Several important benefits came out of this work, including:

- The establishment of personal connections with Aboriginal individuals and families
- The establishment of a project “presence” through the dissemination of information

Recognizing that some key information was still missing, additional research was carried out and the results were mapped using Mapping software. The results are contained in this report.

Though there is no single or correct definition of Aboriginal, for the purposes of the Census: “If a person reports at least one Aboriginal ancestry (North American Indian, Inuit, Metis) the person is categorized as having Aboriginal ancestry.”¹

Key Findings:

- According to the 2006 Census, there were 2540 Aboriginal residents living in the West Kootenay. This represents an increase of 40% from the 2001 Census (1815).
- Between 2001 and 2006, Montrose and Salmo saw the largest increases in the Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal residents ages 24 years and younger represented nearly half (46%) of all Aboriginal residents in the West Kootenay. This is consistent with the national average of 48%.²
- The City of Trail had 450 Aboriginal residents, the largest concentration in the area.
- Of the 1025 Aboriginal residents living in Trail, Castlegar or Nelson, approximately 5.5% (56) reported an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue.³

¹ Statistics Canada, *How Statistics Canada Identifies Aboriginal Peoples* (2007). P. 7.
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/12-592-XIE/12-592-XIE2007001.htm>

² Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Metis and First Nations*. (2006) P. 51.
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/aboriginal/index.cfm>

³ Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Population Profile. Community Profiles*, p. 3.
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/aboriginal/Index.cfm?Lang=E>

The Aboriginal Mapping Survey Results Suggested:

- The services most commonly used by respondents were school programs (41 responses) and infant, preschool and childcare programs (28 responses)
- The most helpful program to connect with included family center programs (i.e. family support, CAPC, Pregnancy Outreach, Life After Birth, IDP), followed by school programs (7 responses) and Aboriginal Education Program (2 responses)
- Respondents reported the following kind(s) of support as being helpful/beneficial to themselves or their family: cultural connections (63 responses) and employment training (43 responses)
- Respondents reported the following challenges in accessing needed supports: Unaware services exist (69 responses) and finances (39 responses)

Aboriginal Mapping Project Challenges:

- Only 89 surveys were returned (out of 1500 distributed), representing a 6% response rate. A low response rate makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.
- The Survey was met with skepticism, which ultimately affected the response rate.
- Aboriginal Census Data is available for Regional Districts, Electoral Areas and larger municipalities. Some Aboriginal data is not available at the village level.
- There is concern from some members of the Aboriginal community that the Census 2006 numbers under-estimate the Aboriginal population of this area.
- *There are no reserves or Friendship Centres in the West Kootenay.* This can make it more difficult to gather feedback from the Aboriginal population.

Recommended Next Steps:

- 53 survey respondents were interested in being given the opportunity to participate in reviewing findings of the report or they would like to be contacted for the mapping project. It is recommended that these individuals receive a copy of this Report.
- Host public forums to gather population information in a more personal way. Aboriginal potluck dinners have been suggested as one strategy.
- Communicate with Elders to gain support for identifying the Aboriginal population and services in the West Kootenay
- Keep the process open and encourage people to still send in completed surveys
- If the survey is to be used again, consider ways to make the survey process more family friendly
- Follow the work of UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). An Aboriginal Community Liaison and Researcher will guide the development and implementation of a population-level research agenda in British Columbia about the cultural and social determinants of Aboriginal child development.
- Await the release of further Aboriginal data in the Fall 2008, including:
 - Aboriginal People's Survey
 - Aboriginal Children's Survey
 - Canadian Community Health Survey
 - National Population Health Survey

Map 1: West Kootenay Aboriginal Mapping Project Study Boundaries



Map 2: West Kootenay Aboriginal Population in 2006

