HUMAN CAPITAL
in Foothills Model Forest
—Daft Only—

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# Table of Contents

1. Human Capital Report ................................................................. 2  
   1.1. Objective ................................................................. 2  
   1.2. Rationale ............................................................... 2  
   1.3. The Relationship Between Human Capital and Community Sustainability ........ 2  
      1.3.1. Defining Human Capital ..................................... 2  
      1.3.2. Previous Research on Human Capital in Resource Dependent Communities .... 3  
      1.3.3. Overadaptation to Resource Sectors ......................... 4  
      1.3.4 Human Capital Develop and Economic Diversification: Which Comes First?  6  
   1.4. Education Attainment as a Proxy for Human Capital .......................... 7  

2. Measures of Education Attainment ............................................. 7  
   Figure 1. Change in full-time school attendance for those 15+, 1981-1991 ........ 8  
   Figure 2. Education attainment as a percent of total population for those 15+, 1991 .... 9  
   Figure 3. Change in education attainment, Hinton 1981-1991 ...................... 10  
   Figure 4. Change in education attainment, Jasper 1981-1991 ........................ 10  
   Figure 5. Highest level of education as a percent of total population 15+, 1991 .... 11  

3. Hinton: Community Perspectives on Education ................................ 12  
   3.1. Community Immunity .................................................. 12  
   3.2. Rising Minimum Requirements ...................................... 13  
   3.3. Out of School and On the Job ...................................... 15  
   3.4. Past or Present Reality? ............................................ 15  
   3.5. Education As A Proxy Revisited .................................... 17  

4. Jasper: Community Perspectives on Education ................................ 18  
   4.1. Impact of Temporary Residents .................................... 19  
   4.2. Jobs After High School ............................................. 19  
   4.3. Local Education Limits ............................................. 20  
   4.4. Administration and Taxes .......................................... 21  

5. References ........................................................................ 23  

6. Appendix ........................................................................... 24  
   6.3. Census Data Tables .................................................... 27
HUMAN CAPITAL REPORT

1.1. Objective
To describe levels of human capital in the Foothills Model Forest and compare these levels to provincial and national levels. Appropriate secondary data are used to describe the condition of human capital in three census subdivisions in the Foothills Model Forest. Additional insights are provided through an analysis and discussion of primary interview data gathered in the region.

1.2. Rationale
Communities with well-educated residents, that possess diverse skills, and entrepreneurial capacity are better able to adapt to changing labour market conditions. These attributes are all aspects of human capital. Low human capital communities, those that lack leadership, have low education attainment levels, and either poor skills or very specialized skills, will have greater difficulty making adjustments to global, national, or regional economic changes.

1.3. The Relationship Between Human Capital and Community Sustainability

1.3.1. Defining Human Capital
Human capital refers to “the productive investment of resources in human beings rather than in plant and machinery,” (Jary and Jary, 1991:217). At the level of the individual, human capital refers to the collective skills and capabilities that an individual possesses. This is a difficult concept to quantify in meaningful and measurable terms as human capital encompasses elements of human productivity as divergent as creativity, entrepreneurial ability, education, specialized skills and training. Economists generally assume a fairly direct relationship between investment in human capital and returns to such investments. Human capital investment generally entails forgoing current consumption. For example, university training or certificate programs may require taking out student loans, or living with a lower standard of living for the period of training, than if one directly entered the labour market after high school. An individual
who makes a human capital investment is assumed to be looking toward future benefits
including, but not exclusively, financial rewards in the form of higher income.

In this study, we are interested in communities as the unit of analysis. There is an
assumed link between a community’s human capital and its long-term sustainability.
Communities marked by high levels of human capital development are likely better equipped to
adapt to changing global conditions and more capable of maintaining a competitive advantage
over communities with low levels of human capital. High human capital communities have
higher levels of entrepreneurship and greater transferability of skills to emerging economic
sectors. Low human capital communities are vulnerable to changing macroeconomic conditions
brought about by global competition, economic downturns and obsolescence. Lower human
capital levels or narrowly specialized skills may inhibit the pace at which communities may
adapt to changing market conditions and opportunity. As noted by several authors, adaptability is
the key to sustainability for communities (Beckley 1995; Doak and Kusel 1996).

1.3.2. Previous Research on Human Capital in Resource Dependent Communities

Despite the focus on community, human capital theory, and human capital investment
decisions are generally related to the individual unit of analysis. Johnson and Stallman (1994)
suggest that a number of significant attitudinal factors effect an individuals decision to invest or
not invest in their own human capital development. Among these factors are; attitudes towards
one’s community and community attachment (willingness or unwillingness to move away),
attitudes toward the community’s traditional occupations (farming, mining, logging,
manufacturing), aversion to risk, and one’s views toward education in general, and educated
people. Johnson and Stallman (1994:225) point out that individuals may have sufficient
understanding of the value of education (e.g. the potential rewards or returns to investing in their
own human capital), but they suggest that negative attitudes toward educated people or education
institutions may lead them to choose not to develop their own human capital through continuing
formal education.

Several factors account for historically low levels of human capital in resource-dependent
communities. First, most jobs in the natural resource industries have had low human capital
requirements. Particular pieces of machinery, either in the forest, in the mines, or in processing facilities require specialized training to operate, but they do not require technical degrees or a college education. Indeed, many older workers in natural resource sectors today have a high school education or less. As a result of low human capital requirements in the dominant industry, many people who live in resource-dependent communities see little incentive to invest time or money into continuing education. In most resource towns, a significant proportion of professional and technically trained persons - teachers, health care workers, social service workers, and government employees - earn less income than production workers at the local mill, truck drivers, or workers on extraction crews. Particularly if young people are interested in remaining in the local area, it may be irrational to spend much time or effort on continuing education. There is much less literature on labour market dynamics in tourism-dependent communities. However, similar structural conditions exist that promote rational underinvestment in human capital. If youths wish to remain in the community in which they were raised, and there are few jobs that require skilled or highly educated employees, there is a major disincentive to invest in one's own education and training. Rational underinvestment in human capital is cited in a number of studies as a leading cause of poverty in resource-dependent places (Humphrey et al. 1993; Freudenburg 1992; Johnson and Stallman 1994).

1.3.3. Overadaptation to Resource Sectors

Freudenburg (1990) and Freudenburg and Gramling (1992) elaborate on this issue of rational underinvestment in human capital. They also claim, that people may rationally overinvest in human capital. By this they mean that some individuals may invest significantly in specialized skills acquisition due to the potential of high returns. Unfortunately, in many contexts, those highly specialized skills are not transferable to other sectors and therefore this type of human capital does not serve those who invest in it during economic downturns. The example that they give is of argon welders in the Louisiana petroleum industry. This is very lucrative work, when one can get it. But when one cannot, there are few other places available to practice one's skills. Freudenburg (1990) refers to rational under and overinvestment in human capital as overadaptation. When a local labour force is characterized by low education levels and
very specialized skills, it may well be overadapted to a particular sector or industry. If the skills of mill-wrights, pulp cutters, and machine operators employed by a local pulp mill are highly specialized and not transferable to other sectors, and these types of occupations make up a significant proportion of the local labour force in Hinton, the community may be overadapted and therefore vulnerable. Freudenburg (1990) claims that overadaptation may be reinforced if workers learn at a young age that financial success depends more on who you know than what you know. Again, in tourism-dependent places the problems of human capital underinvestment are more due to the low-skilled labour requirements of the service sector versus highly specialized skills required in some resource sectors.

Given these market pressures and prevailing negative attitudes toward education in many rural areas it is not surprising that human capital in resource-dependent communities is low. Often times there are no “champions” of human capital development in such communities. Large corporate players in the resource sectors lobby local political bodies to keep taxes low (thereby undermining educational quality in the local public school system). As well, unions reward their members through seniority and not for skill development or continuing investments in human capital. Therefore, unions are not great supporters of human capital development either (Johnson and Stallman 1994). In many resource-dependent communities these two institutional actors are the dominant influences in local tax policy and town spending (Beckley 1996). It is not surprising, then, to find elaborate sports facilities (reflective of high community priorities placed on recreation) and well-funded fire departments (to protect significant corporate investments in facilities) and sub-standard educational facilities in resource-dependent towns.

In tourism-dependent communities a similar phenomenon may occur. Many tourism dependent places attract young, unattached individuals and/or retirees. Neither of these populations are likely to have school-aged children and they are therefore not likely to support high local taxes, a large portion of which usually go toward local public education. If enough amenity or equity in-migrants move to an area and successfully lobby for property tax reduction, there may be serious implications for future human capital development in the community.
1.3.4 Human Capital Develop and Economic Diversification: Which Comes First?

Another problem that may plague resource-dependent communities is the inability of individuals with high human capital to find a niche in the local economy. By definition, resource-dependent communities are specialized in sectors that rely on low-skilled labour. Persons who wish to remain in the community, or return to the community after a period away developing their human capital, may find it difficult to utilize their formal educational training locally. The result is that human capital may be drained away from resource communities during periods of outmigration, or that young people who migrate for advanced education do not return (Kranich and Luloff 1991). The difficulty in fitting highly educated or highly skilled individuals into productive occupations in resource communities remains a significant challenge for community leaders and community-development professionals in those places. If there are no jobs, human capital development will go unrewarded at the individual level, and those individuals who do invest in their human capital will have to leave to find work in their chosen fields. On the other hand, if the local economy diversifies and matures faster than human capital develops in the community, new opportunities in professional or highly skilled occupations will go to non-residents who migrate in to the community for those jobs.

While much of the literature claims that resource-dependent communities are in a state of overadaptation, this situation is not true for all communities. Natural resource industries today are characterized by high exposure to competitive international markets that necessitate highly automated environments and a skilled workforce. The Foothills region exhibits some of these market characteristics with coal mines that sell product to Japan, a pulp mill that competes for the lucrative North American market, and a recreation industry dependent on international travelers. To maintain a competitive edge, the workforce must be well trained and function in complex and changing work environments.

Levels of human capital, the imagination of community leaders, the ability to access information, and the availability of a flexible, diverse resource base are variables that create the conditions for adaptable communities. Sustainable communities are those that can create opportunities from crises, that can take advantage of changing local and global economic conditions, and that have the vision to see beyond the immediate socio-economic reality. Human
capital development facilitate these essential community characteristics and creates a flexible and adaptable workforce.

1.4. Education Attainment as a Proxy for Human Capital

Human capital is defined as skills, capacity, entrepreneurship, creativity and general know-how acquired through education and training that increases individual productivity. Some of these characteristics or attributes are very difficult to measure. Researchers often use education attainment as a proxy measure for human capital. We will do the same for the quantitative data that we discuss below. The qualitative data from interviews addresses, in part, the larger picture regarding local skills and the capacity of the labour force. Aggregate levels of education attainment can provide data on a subset overall human capital levels in a community. All dimensions of human capital are not adequately covered by measures of education attainment but the concepts are closely linked and they provide a sufficient basis for analysis at the community level.

2. Measures of Education Attainment

The categories chosen to represent education attainment in Figure 1 require brief explanation. Each category includes individuals who fall within a range of achievement defined by the category title. For instance, the category some university includes those who have a university degree as well as those who have attended some university but do not hold a degree. Figure 1 shows that more than 60% of ID#14 (rural Foothills) over 15 years of age are educated to the high school level. Of the 60%, only 11% have a high school certificate and 15% have less than a grade 9 education (Table 1). Within the Foothills region, Jasper has the highest number of individuals educated to the university level. Hinton has lower university attendance than Edmonton, the province, and the nation, but it boasts a high percentage of individuals with some post-secondary education. This category includes trade and diploma programs.

1Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada. The raw data from which these figures were created are included in Appendix 6.3.
Beyond the single snapshot provided by Figure 1, it is important to examine the change in education attainment over time. Examining change in education levels reveals trends that single year indicators cannot furnish. Figure 2 simply shows change in school attendance from 1981 to 1991. In 1981 approximately 10% of the population of Alberta was in school full time. This number has not changed much since then and only Jasper records noticeable drop in full-time attendance from around 12% in 1981 to 8% in 1991. Hinton maintains a steady full-time attendance record at around 10%.
While Figure 2 shows little change in full-time school attendance between 1981 and 1991, Figure 3 suggests that more residents in Hinton are achieving higher levels of education. The shaded area of the pie (some post-secondary and some university) indicates nearly half the population achieving some form of post-secondary education, up from 40% in 1981. Most gains are made in the some post-secondary category where trade and diploma programs are counted. In contrast, students in Jasper (Figure 4) have not taken a similar path. Attainment at the university level has slipped from 51% in 1981 to 46% in 1991, whereas the number of individuals achieving some post-secondary education have stayed about the same. Essentially, these figures show opposite trends for Hinton and Jasper where more students in Hinton are achieving some post-secondary education while less students in Jasper are achieving beyond the secondary school level. We will discuss some factors contributing to these trends later in the report.
Figure 3

Figure 4
Change in education attainment, Jasper 1981-1991
Figure 5 represents slightly different information than Figure 1. Instead of showing the percentage that falls within a range of educational achievement (ie. some university grouped with university degree holders), this figure shows only diploma and degree holders. Again, Hinton has the highest number of non-university diploma holders. This category includes residents who hold any kind of diploma from a non-degree granting institution. Graduates from the Environmental Training Centre (ETC) in Hinton might fall under this category. Jasper shows a smaller number of residents with non-university diplomas but more residents with trade diplomas and university degrees. Both communities lag behind the provincial average when it comes to university degrees. This information is useful when considering the scope of education attainment at the community level. Figure 5 provides some interesting information regarding different levels of specialized skills in the trades and non-degree categories compared to general education attainment at the university level. This information will feed into an analysis general education versus technical education as two distinct dimensions of human capital.
3. Hinton: Community Perspectives on Education

The census data indicates a trend toward increasing education attainment in Hinton. More people are attending school and they are staying in school longer. This trend is not surprising given the increase in school attendance across Alberta and Canada as a whole. As a simple rationale for the trend, a good-paying job is often more difficult to find in the 1990s and people need more education than ever just to gain entry-level positions. Students realize this fact and are staying in school longer with hopes of higher earnings in the future. As we shall see in the discussion to follow, this rationale may be accurate for Hinton but perhaps not so accurate for Jasper. Community perspectives are organized into five themes: community immunity, rising minimum requirements, out of school and on the job, past or present reality?, and education as a proxy revisited.

3.1. Community Immunity

One interesting aspect about the Hinton economy, as compared to other resource-dependent communities in Canada, is the local diversity of primary resource industries and the growing recreation and retail sectors. Historically there has been some redistribution of population. Some communities in the Foothills Model Forest region have essentially gone “bust” and either disappeared altogether (Mountain Park) or seen their populations dramatically reduced (Cadomin). However, for the last several decades economic activity in several resource sectors has come to be concentrated in Hinton. This has diversified Hinton’s employment base and led to considerable stability and prosperity. Hinton residents often refer to this aspect of Hinton history and the relatively even economic development of the modern economy:

I sometimes think we live in a bubble. People have very unrealistic expectations, especially young people who have gone to school here. Their parents worked at the mill and they get a job with the mill. They don’t realize that the life they live is not reality. It may be their reality but is it very very unusual. Clergy

In spite of sustained economic prosperity, positive economic conditions have not always favoured human capital development. In previous decades, primary industry employers required little in terms of formal education and many local residents found jobs straight out of high
school. In some cases students deserted school for the job market even before receiving a high school diploma, and after generations of this anomalous economic condition, Hinton residents have come to expect accessible and continuous employment. As a result, higher education never became an essential requirement for employment, and perhaps more importantly, was never emphasized by the major employers. Once more, entry-level jobs required little advanced education and what training was required was often realized on the job. Some residents, possibly unaware of more recent trends in human capital development, speak about some of these historic realities:

There are very low levels of education here. Kids come out of school and go straight into the mill. *Outfitter*

I think there’s a lot of people working in the forestry business or mining, and they haven’t got no education. *Outfitter*

### 3.2. Rising Minimum Requirements

Given obvious changes in education attainment indicated by the census numbers, many local perspectives on human capital development have changed as well. Certainly some young people do continue to find full-time employment straight from high school, but more emphasis is placed on higher education today and this emphasis has significantly re-directed previous education patterns. Pressure from industry and the school system have placed Hinton firmly on the path toward higher levels of education attainment. Representatives from industry and the school system speak about some of these developments:

Well I think the industries and the major employers are looking for more...I guess placing higher expectations on skills and the knowledge levels of the people they employ. *Mill Employee*

There’s very few jobs that you’re going to go anywhere with a grade 12 education and the company no longer is interested in people that come in and at an entry level, say as a front line supervisor, that are limited in terms of going on beyond that because of education or otherwise. So I think that being the case, whether it’s happening now but I see in the future, you know unless you’re really motivated because that’s the way your Dad did it and his Dad did it, and that’s all you want to do. If you want to get ahead I think there’s a recognition that you’re got to go
on minimally at least at the technical school and better than that, get a degree of some kind. *Mill Employee*

As a matter of fact, that was recognized many years ago to the extent that the management of the day stipulated that the minimum you needed was grade 12 to join the workforce here. That became a bit of a problem for us at the sawmill. We tried to honour it as best we could, but we’re not just interested in warm bodies with grade 12 education and it seems that was in a way an attitude that if I grew up in Hinton and I had a grade 12 education then I’d done my thing for getting in the door and we were more interested in other behavioural attributes that people would be able to offer us for the long term. *Mill Employee*

When I was in high school kids definitely thought of the mill as a place to work. It’s a quick-fix solution...It’s harder to go straight to the mill now from high school. *Young Mill Employee*

In large measure, the minimum qualification for entry-level jobs provides the impetus for increasing levels of education. As these residents state, perhaps there was a time when young people could find work with nothing but a strong body and a good attitude, but no longer. Formal education - often from some type of post-secondary institution or trade apprenticeship program - is a present reality for most job-seekers. This change alone has stimulated higher levels of human capital development.

Experts on human capital acquisition in resource communities point out that highly specialized education can lead to human capital development but they also raise a caution. Highly technical programs do not always lead to general skills applicable across several sectors of the economy. In such cases, human capital development might in fact lead to a condition of over-adaptation to a single industry. We do not have data on minimum entrance requirements in resource sectors. Nor do we have data on the transferability of skills that are acquired for work in mining, forestry, manufacturing or the oil patch. These would be illuminating data to collect. Again, if there are many opportunities in several sectors, for welders or equipment operators, one would assume that human capital investment in these areas would be appealing to local youths who would like to remain in the area. More research is required in this area to understand the extent to which highly technical skills are transferable within the regional economy.
3.3. Out of School and On the Job

In addition to industries’ endorsement of higher minimum education standards, other factors contribute to human capital development. Some new local institutions have developed in recent decades in response to a shift in philosophy regarding the role of education and life-long learning in modern society. Specifically, there are wide ranging opportunities to upgrade skills and participate in adult education programs both at work, and at local educational institutions. For the person wishing to pursue post-secondary education in Hinton, there are a number of opportunities including the Yellowhead Regional Education Consortium (YREC) and the Environmental Training Centre.

For employees of larger companies, skills upgrading is often built into corporate human resource development strategies. Sometimes training is carried out in-house, while other companies team with local institutions like YREC to provide training. All these initiatives are part of new thinking on human capital development; thinking reflected in these statements:

Something that has been really positive here is the high school. [The principal] has worked really hard at the registered apprenticeship training program. For kids who are not going on to university they are doing their core courses and the rest of the time they are working towards their apprenticeship. We need to offer our young people some options if they want to stay in Hinton.

*Female Government Employee*

In terms of people that are working (for the mill), I think quite a few of them take advantage of some of those courses. And then the company also supports a lot of training programs for its people. Certainly in terms of woods workers, the members of the IWA crew and our contractors are striving to give them stewardship training and training in environmental principles and so on, to make sure that doing the job that we express that we intend to do. *Mill Employee*

3.4. Past or Present Reality?

Despite positive trends in human capital development over the last two decades in Hinton, we also heard some perspectives on education attainment that are typical of resource-dependent towns. For many people, problems of the past remain problems of the present. Initially, someone might be tempted to write these people off as having outdated or uninformed views except that all of the following statements come from people employed by or closely
associated with the local education system. These comments come from people who are knowledgeable and concerned about human capital development in their town:

Well, I can't speak authoritatively on this but I've heard that the principal of the high school has actually at times taken Weldwood to task for the fact that they actually take a lot of people right out of high school or before they graduate. The lure of $19.85 an hour starting salary is just too strong and a lot of people either quit before they get their diploma or as soon as they're done they choose not to go any further because they can get a, essentially a $20 an hour job right out of high school. *Resource Industry Employee*

There is a very good chance that the kids I see as sons and daughters and other workers in this community may have the impression that they can have the same lack of education their parents have and, it’s not an easy thing to say to someone you know, “Look, you really do have to do more than your Mom or Dad did because the world has changed.” *High School Teacher*

Well there are a lot of kids who don’t look at post secondary as an option especially if they have family working in the mines or the mills. *Advanced Education Employee.*

It's the Yellowhead Regional Education Consortium. And they do upgrading and they provide college programs, for transfer through Grande Prairie College and Grant McEwan College. They broker programs for universities and technical schools etc. My feeling is they're not being very aggressive right now, they keep whining about not enough money. *Community Leader*

The census numbers on education attainment suggest that Hinton has made recent gains in human capital development. Statements above, however, paint a picture that suggests there remains much room for improvement. What makes these statements noteworthy is not only what is said but the high degree to which each one of these individuals is connected to human capital promotion. Each one of these people talk about education in ways that are incongruent with industry’s view of changing minimum requirements for employment as well as positive changes in educational attainment numbers (section 2). These perspectives allow us to make at least one conclusion here. Even though Hinton has made some gains in education attainment, residents view human capital develop as a constant challenge. While students can be encouraged and persuaded to further their education, they cannot be accused of irrational decision making when mill workers earn higher wages than many local professionals. In this case, incentives to work
are seen to be stronger than incentives to stay in school.

3.5. Education As A Proxy Revisited

Further to comments in the previous section (3.4), a number of individuals associated with social services consistently mention specific reasons for educational deficiencies. These perspectives are uniquely held by those most closely associated with the point where educational services and social services connect. Comments most often focus on three issues: home schooling, substance abuse, and shift work:

There are a lot of teenagers that are in home schooling who aren't in home schooling, they are supposed to be in home schooling but they are not doing it so all day they are just hanging around. And not getting anywhere, there will be a real problem with no education. We were talking about it this morning. There were only five graduates that went on to secondary education out of 100 and some. Social Services Employee

A lot of drug use in High School. I've never seen how accepted it is. I was overwhelmed at how available, how often, and where and who. And actually how accepted it is for a lot of people, including their kids. Again a lot of people will say it's because there is money in town. If you have the money, and it's available, somehow it seems to be acceptable. School Board Employee

There is a drug problem in high school but I just don't know if it's any worse than anywhere else. Physician

[Regarding shift work] I notice quite a bit of logistical issues for sure. And again, there are positives to it where people can function quite well. But a lot of kids I work with are being shuffled from this aunt for two hours, over to the baby sitter for four and then back to the house for someone to meet them for the night. School Board Employee

These statements do not speak directly of human capital or educational attainment, but there is a connection (at least in the minds of residents) between these issues and question of education attainment. None of these perspectives are specifically observable in the census numbers, and generally speaking, education attainment in Hinton is moving in a positive direction. This being the case, how can one account for markedly negative perspectives viewed against the general improvement in education attainment. Are these statements merely descriptions of narrow views
instead of broad perspectives or is there something more to the story?

The objective of this report is to describe and explain the condition of human capital development in the Foothills Model Forest. By marrying census data with resident perspectives, it is possible to gain a broad understanding of general trends in education. But our method of measuring human capital employs education attainment as a proxy. Education attainment does not contain fully all dimensions of human capital and the extent to which non-education issues contribute to and detract from human capital development. To an extent then, education attainment fails as a proxy because the concept of human capital goes beyond this measure. Certainly substance abuse, child home life, and parental involvement are broader human capital issues with respect to the capacity of individuals to succeed in the workforce and in society in general. So while these statements may appear to be far off base from the original question of education attainment and human capital, they are definitely important to the broader human capital question.

4. Jasper: Community Perspectives on Education

Unlike Hinton, most indicators from the national census show reduced levels of education attainment. Jasper has seen a decline in full time school attendance by 4% from 1981 to 1991. In addition, Figure 4 shows a 5% decrease in university achievement and an associated 4% increase in high school achievement. It is also clear from Figure 5 that more Jasper residents have achieved a high school diploma than any other category. Some have achieved more than high school, and a high proportion of Jasper residents are educated to the university level but both Jasper and Hinton continue to lag behind Alberta in this category. Because of its size and location, Jasper residents face very little local opportunity to upgrade skills and abilities. While residents accept this situation as one of the trade-offs of living in a National Park, educational opportunity (especially for young people) remains a concern and a priority for many families. Comments on education are organized into three sections: jobs after high school, local limits on education, and administration and taxes. Before addressing these points, it is important to deal with the effects of temporary (seasonal) workers on census figures reported earlier.
4.1. Impact of Temporary Residents

According to the 1997 Municipal Census\(^2\), temporary residents comprise just under 20% of the Jasper population. More than 50% of this population is 20 to 24 years of age and 90% of them intend to reside in Jasper for less than 6 months. People assume that because these people reside in Jasper for a portion of the year, they are counted in the national census figures and therefore distort the actual socio-demographic numbers for permanent (long-term) residents.

Before attributing the negative trend in education to temporary residents however, consideration should be given to the differences between the national census and the municipal census. The recent municipal census was taken on June 10, 1997, at a time when many seasonal employees are living and working in the community. The national census is also administered in late Spring, but for the nation census there is a residence requirement that many short-term resident do not meet. The net result is an under-counting of temporary residents in the national census and a more accurate profile of temporary residents in the municipal census. This fact accounts for the small national census population (******) compared to the municipal census population (4,691). The upshot of these considerations is this; temporary residents in Jasper do not overwhelm socio-demographic profiles taken from the national census. Education indicators, therefore approximate the permanent resident profile for Jasper.

4.2. Jobs After High School

One explanation for the decline in education attainment between 1981 and 1991 is the employment realities facing young people in Jasper. While Hinton youth look forward to high-wage jobs in the resource sector, Jasper youth anticipate casual employment in the hospitality or tourism industry with ample opportunity for leisure time to hit the ski slopes or to climb a mountain. This relaxed attitude toward life after high school is expressed by a number of parents:

Both my daughters have these type of boyfriends who work some, go to school for awhile maybe, and then ski. It's a very mixed lifestyle. *Tourism Employee*

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She has lived here for 27 years. Children are finished school and live in town. They work during the evenings delivering pizza and then spend their days recreating. She believes this is a healthy and clean lifestyle for her children\(^3\). *City Employee*

This kind of attitude toward life after high school, where jobs require little by way of formal education and those that do are few and far between, might provide part of the answer to why education attainment in Jasper is slowly dropping between 1981 and 1991. Whether one argues that declining education attainment is due to lifestyle choices or limited employment opportunities, it is easy to see that Jasper generates an abundance of jobs with few requiring advanced education.

### 4.3. Local Education Limits

If education attainment among residents declined between 1981 and 1991, what causes do residents point to? A local economy that requires little in terms of advanced education is important but perhaps just as important is the geographic isolation of Jasper. In some ways it’s difficult to think of Jasper as a remote community when the town comes alive with visitors from around the world for much of the year. This is one of the interesting paradoxes of Jasper as a tourism centre and a place of residence for almost 5000 people. After talking with a few families with children of high school age, one becomes aware of how Jasper’s geographic remoteness impacts on educational attainment and, more broadly speaking, human capital development:

> There is not a lot to do that a larger metropolitan centre would provide. Even clubs or groups that you can get involved with. Educational opportunities, you can't take night classes, you can't take continuing education classes. You can take them by correspondence but there is also part of that social element of being able to get out and going to the U of A for an extension course that you just can't do here. Some of those things are difficult. *Town Employee*

> There are many good things about living in Jasper. The community is one of those things. My wife is a school teacher so I've gotten to know many people and young kids that way. It's a very friendly and co-operative place. It's easy to bring up teenagers because there is lots of stuff to do. That being said the town does very little for it's kids. You'd

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\(^3\) Quotations in the alternative font (Arial) denote paraphrased statements.
have a problem if your child was not into outdoor activities. My kids love the snow. They are really big snowboarders. Tourism Employee

There are no opportunities for kids here because it is too remote. To go any further in things like hockey or music or academics people are going to other centers to give their children the opportunities that aren't available here. He said that a grade one class will have 60-70 kids in it but by the time they get to high school there is only 30-40 kids that graduate. Most of the out migration is because parents are moving their kids to other centers so they have more opportunities. Business Operator

Basically the high school is teaching to the 15% of excellence. 15% of the kids in the school are above the provincial average, therefore 85% below. It is harder to teach children with special needs and they are often left behind. There needs to be integration and there needs to be different programs that focus on the special needs rather that the 15% above average students. She feels that there is a large number of high school drop outs for this community because the kids are getting frustrated with the system. Child Care Worker.

Each one of these individuals speak to some inhibitor to human capital development. Remoteness is a defining aspect of Jasper by those who are drawn to the place for its wildlife and scenic beauty. But for families raising children and seeking educational opportunities, remoteness and isolation are serious obstacles to human development. Special need children, adult education and upgrading, non-recreational activities are all difficult to access. Jasper maintains a higher proportion of university educated residents than in any other area of the Foothills Model Forest. Attraction to place and lifestyle choices brought that educated population to Jasper. Whether these same residents are able to instill educational goals and provide educational opportunities for their children remains to be seen. The extent to which this takes places will inform the scope of human capital development in the next generation.

4.4. Administration and Taxes

Residents often comment on financial and bureaucratic dimensions of education. Most notably there is intense concern over increasing school taxes and the regionalization of school-system management. These are not new concerns and the impact of such changes on educational
attainment is unclear. Residents and community leaders have lost some control over their education system and to accept direction from outside the townsite adds to the sense of frustration with bureaucratic control in other areas of community life. These are a few statements from residents regarding these concerns:

I was on the school board for 10 years. Chairman for 3. We were the almost like the town's council I guess. We did everything. Good school boards and good schools. It was an extremely stressful time because there was so many changes building the schools, lots of development. Senior Citizen

Well I think it was managed in the olden days. I think it was managed very god. But now the taxes are going up. Gov't is going to want more land rent on the leases. It's going to go up. Tax is going to be 10% and then you pay provincial and school tax on top of that. I don't think people can afford it. They've got a set income and they don't have any money saved up. I don't think they can live here. Senior Citizen

Similar concerns about changing regulations, taxation, and control exist with health care, business development, and residential housing. One reason residents take these issues seriously is because, up until recently, they have exercised a great deal of control over the delivery of educational services in the community. Historically, Parks Canada managed other municipal services but left school administration to a local board. Now administration is centralized in Edson and residents feel some loss of control. Until some of the management issues between Town Council and Parks Canada are resolved, uncertainty and concern among citizens will continue.
5. References


6.3. Census Data Tables

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Divisions</th>
<th>Total population 15 years and over by highest level of schooling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>less than grade 9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>I.D. #14*</td>
<td>6,330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasper**</td>
<td>2,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foothills</td>
<td>15,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edson</td>
<td>5,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grande Cache</td>
<td>2,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitecourt</td>
<td>4,845</td>
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Table 2

<table>
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<th>Census Divisions</th>
<th>Total population 15 years and over by:</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2,965</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foothills</td>
<td>15,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edson</td>
<td>5,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grande Cache</td>
<td>2,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitecourt</td>
<td>4,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>485,695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>1,944,455</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>21,604,295</td>
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Foothills Model Forest

Canadian Forest Service
Table 3
Education Categories as a Percentage of Total Population 15 years +, 1991

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<tr>
<th>Census Divisions</th>
<th>Ttl. population 15 years and older</th>
<th>less than gr. 9</th>
<th>less than gr. 13</th>
<th>some trades or non-university</th>
<th>some university</th>
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<td>27.5</td>
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Table 4
Education Categories as a Percentage of Total Population 15 years +, 1981.

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<th>some university</th>
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