

Communities and Demographics

May 2021

Introduction

The lower Winnipeg River basin (LWRB) is located in the northwest section of the entire Winnipeg River basin (WRB), which spans parts of western Ontario and small parts of Manitoba and northern Minnesota, United States. The Discussion Sheet Series highlights research on ecological and socio-economic aspects of the basin to encourage discussion with experts, government departments, Indigenous groups, and stakeholders. The Discussion Sheet Series is based on available data collected in 2018 and 2019. Sheet 7 of 11 summarizes communities and demographics in the LWRB.

Communities and Demographics

TOWNS

There are several towns and settlements located in the LWRB—Lac du Bonnet, Pinawa, Powerview-Pine Falls, and Fort Alexander (or Sagkeeng First Nation) (Figure 1).

POPULATION

There are six census subdivisions partially or fully situated within the LWRB boundaries—Powerview-Pine Falls, town (T); Alexander, rural municipality (RM); Lac du Bonnet, RM; Lac du Bonnet, T; Pinawa, local government district (LGD); and Fort Alexander 3, Indian Reserve (IRI) (Figure 2). Based on the data from Census 2016, the population within these subdivisions grew from 11,839 in 2011 to 12,292 in 2016 (4% in five years) (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017d, 2017e).

Scenic landscapes of the Canadian Shield and proximity to Winnipeg and the mid-west United States have resulted in major cottage developments and significant numbers of seasonal residents and short-term visitors to the area. The population increases dramatically in summer months—from 3,333 to 20,000 in the RM of Alexander (n.d.) and from 3,800 people to 8,000 in the RM and Town of Lac du Bonnet (Scatliff Miller Murray, 2010).



DWELLINGS

There are 9,537 private dwellings across the five census subdivisions (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017d, 2017e). In the RM of Alexander and RM of Lac du Bonnet, less than half of the dwellings are occupied by usual residents,¹ pointing to a significant seasonal population, whereas in towns (Powerview-Pine Falls, Lac du Bonnet, and Pinawa), almost all dwellings are occupied by usual residents (around 90%) (Figure 3).

POPULATION DENSITY

The LWRB is a sparsely populated watershed with a low population density (Figure 3). Population density is highest in towns and settlements like the Town of Pinawa (856 people per km²), the Town of Lac du Bonnet (507 people per km²), and the Town of Powerview-Pine Falls (262 people per km²) (Figure 3) (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017d, 2017e).

POPULATION MOBILITY

Some population mobility is also evident: between 17%–38% of the population in the basin were living elsewhere five years prior to Census 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017d, 2017e). This does not include Sagkeeng First Nation, where around 95% of the population were non-movers. This can add to an understanding of the extent of people's long-term knowledge of the watershed and their attachment to the area.

FIRST NATIONS

One First Nation community (Fort Alexander First Nation/Sagkeeng Anicinabe) is located within the LWRB's boundaries, and two communities are located close to the basin (Little Black River First Nation and Brokenhead First Nation) (Figure 4). Members of all three First Nation communities historically used this area for hunting, wild rice harvesting, fishing, trapping, and other traditional activities as sustenance and as a living. Important sites of spiritual and cultural significance for the Indigenous Peoples in the region can be found in or close to the LWRB, for example, Bannock Point Petroforms located in the Whiteshell Provincial Park (Figure 4).

MÉTIS

Métis people are another Indigenous group that has traditionally used the lands of the basin to hunt, fish, trap, and gather, and whose activities are tightly linked to water. Métis rights to harvest natural resources for food and domestic use can be exercised in defined areas of Manitoba indicated in the Métis Recognized Harvesting Area Map. This map is currently being expanded and will include all of the LWRB (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2018).

¹ According to Statistics Canada (2019), "private dwelling occupied by usual residents" refers to a private dwelling in which a person or a group of persons is permanently residing.



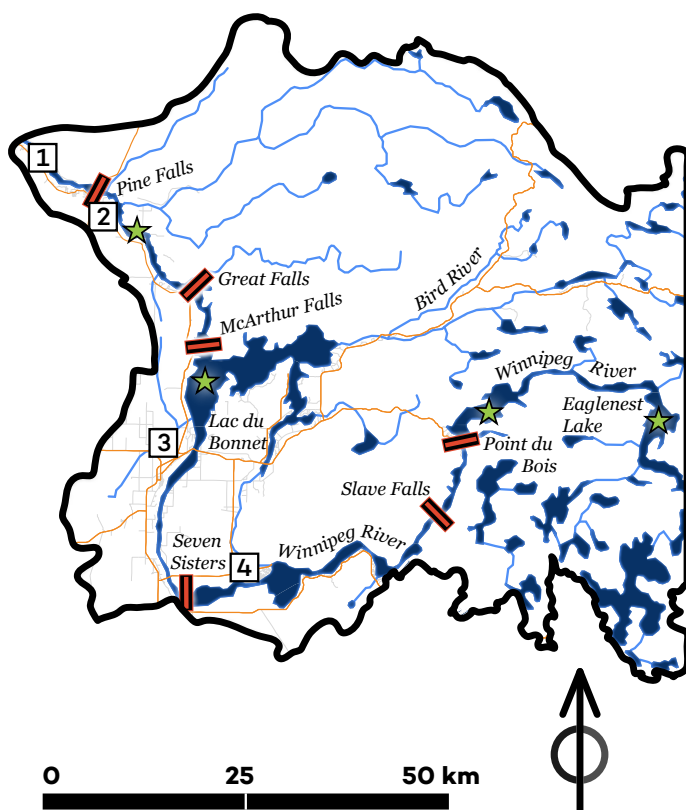
Population characteristics presented above—such as population growth rate, density, and mobility—not only inform land-use patterns necessary for planning, but they also provide critical insights into people’s culture and values, for example, their sense of place/attachment to a place. These are social factors to be considered in any research or planning initiative.

Figure 1. Map of the LWRB

Communities

- 1 Fort Alexander / Sagkeeng
- 2 Powerview-Pine Falls
- 3 Lac du Bonnet
- 4 Pinawa

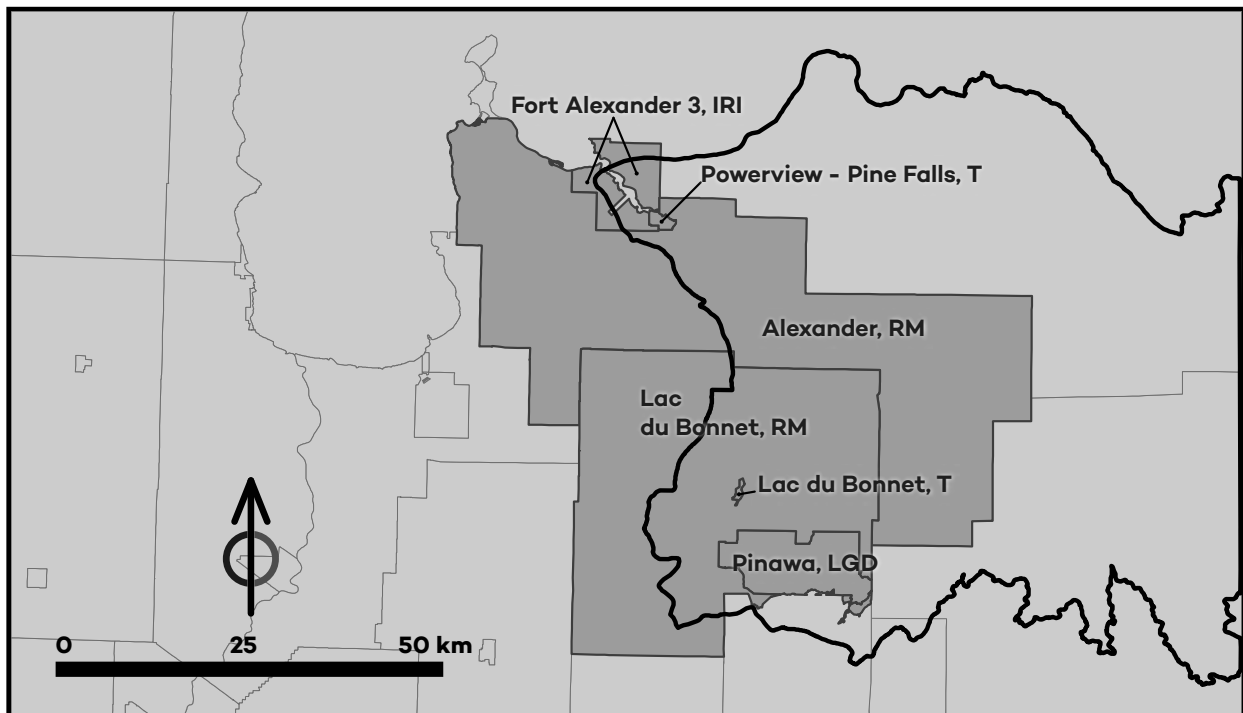
- Generating Station
- River/Stream
- Trans-Canada Highway
- Highway
- Other Road
- Mainline Railroad
- Other Railroad
- Water Quality Sites



Source: Government of Manitoba, n.d.



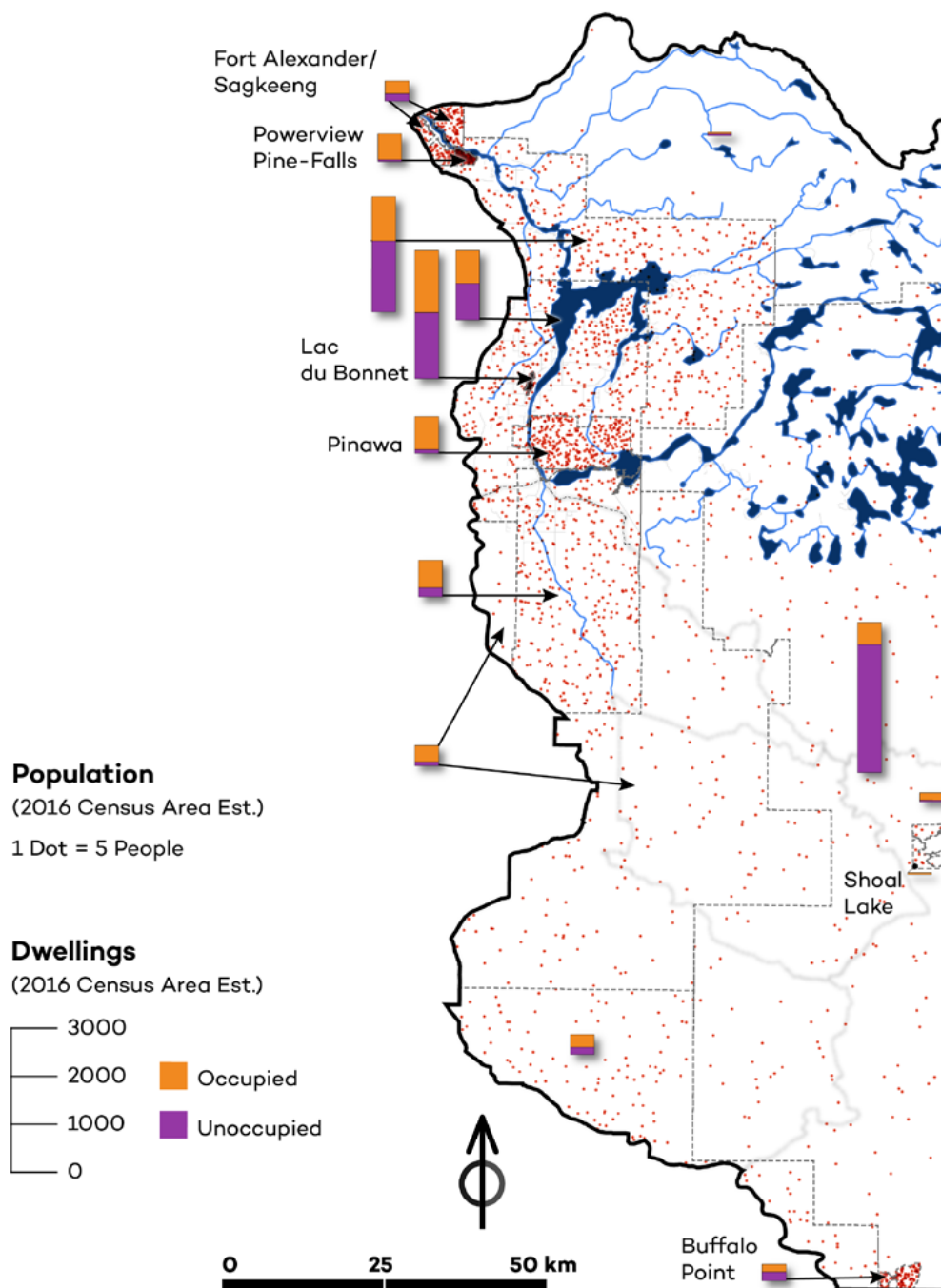
Figure 2. Census 2016 subdivisions partially and fully situated within the LWRB



Source: Statistics Canada, 2017b.



Figure 3. Population density and dwellings by subdivision map of the Manitoba portion of the Winnipeg River basin in 2016²

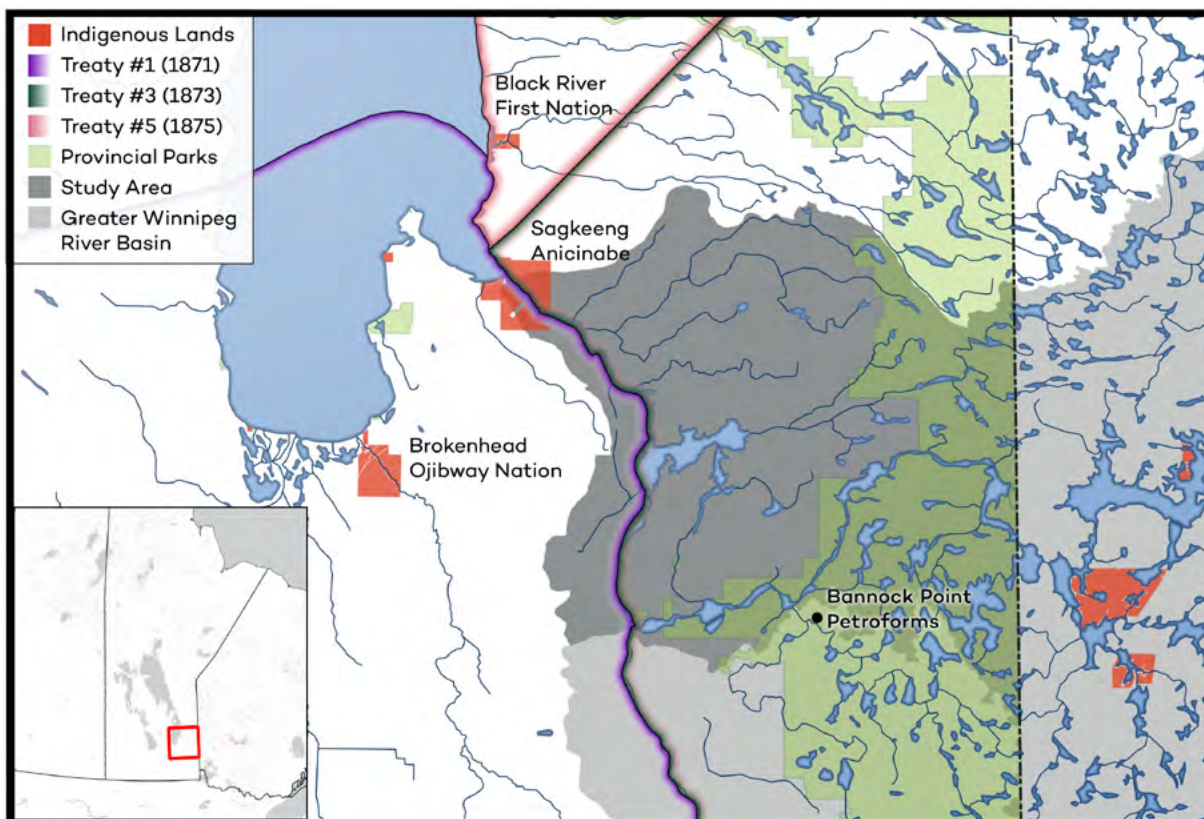


Source: Statistics Canada, 2017c; Government of Manitoba, n.d.

² The population and dwellings information is scaled to the watershed boundary.



Figure 4. Map of Indigenous presence in the LWRB



Source: Natural Resources Canada, n.d.

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