

# THE NORTHERN VILLAGE OF GREEN LAKE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN



October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Final Report





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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Green Lake is one of the oldest communities in Saskatchewan. Established in 1785, Green Lake was an early Hudson Bay Company trading post. Located at the junctions of highways 55 and 155, it is considered to be a gateway to the North – especially to northern mines in the area.

### 1.1 THE “NORTHERN VILLAGE”

Driving through the present day Northern Village of Green Lake, it would appear to be like any village of its size in Saskatchewan; however, this community is rich in a distinct history which provides a unique platform from which the community must launch itself back to economic prosperity and self-reliance.

In 1939 the Province of Saskatchewan set aside six townships around Green Lake for the Métis people. Many Métis people were displaced from their homes throughout the province to make the farm land they occupied available. Green Lake was one of the destinations made available for them to reestablish homes.

A program of 99-year leases on 40-acre plots began but was then revoked. The Province chose to pursue the establishment of Central Farm as a training facility. The settlement was operated as a provincial entity and was managed by a provincially appointed settlement manager. Shortly thereafter, the Province of Saskatchewan altered the governance structure to what became known as a Local Improvement District (LID).



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In 1973 the Government of Saskatchewan set up a Northern Community Area (NCA) governed by a Local Community Authority (LCA). Green Lake became known as Northern Community Area 17 and consisted of the area within a three mile radius of the town's center. The following year, the first LCA was elected. In 1983 the Village was incorporated as an urban municipality. Since then, the Village has operated as a Northern Village as defined by the Saskatchewan Northern Municipalities Act. The Village and its operations continued under heavy influence from the provincial government.

## 1.2 LAND OWNERSHIP

It wasn't until 1996 that the provincial government shifted ownership of Central Farm to the Village of Green Lake. Subsequently, Green Lake Métis Farms Limited was incorporated in 1998. In 2006 the village also obtained ownership of the Silver Lake Farm from the Province. The village currently operates the two farms as Green Lake Métis Farms with the aid of a Farm Board which is appointed by Mayor and Council. Central farm is approximately 9000 acres, and Silver Lake is approximately 5,200 acres.

The shift of ownership from the provincial government to the Village is typically seen as a good thing; however, because of the village's history, it has provided for confusion and a sense of division within the community.

Some Métis within the community believe that the land should have been transferred to the Métis people themselves because the land was originally designated for their use and purpose. The Northern Village is an entity created by the Province of Saskatchewan and adheres to rules set out within the Northern Municipalities Act. Some see this as unjust because they feel they have little influence over land they believe to be rightfully theirs.

As such, Mayor and Council continue to work within an environment that remains somewhat divided. Support of economic development initiatives are often met with opposition because of the claim on Village land. Although other municipalities within the province work within their own Municipalities Act (either the Cities Act or the Municipalities Act), Green Lake finds itself with unique hurdles because of its distinct history.

## 1.3 MOVING FORWARD

The community understands that although there are hurdles to overcome, without progress the community is doomed to languish. In recent years the community and farm have undertaken a number of plans – strategic, action, marketing etc., in an attempt to revitalize this once vibrant community. Some of these reports have included:

- Two marketing plans for the Green Lake Métis Farm, prepared by University of Saskatchewan students
- Village Farm Strategic Plan, prepared by nuguru and the Indigenous Land Management Institute at the University of Saskatchewan

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- Community Strategic and Action Plan, prepared by the Municipal Capacity Development Program (Appendix A)
- Strategic Plan for a Non-Timber Forest Products Training and Industry Development Centre for Northern Saskatchewan, prepared by The Centre for Non-Timber Resources, Royal Roads University

This Community Economic Development Plan for Green Lake is the next step and builds on previous work. The Economic Development Plan clearly defines a number of economic and business development opportunities as recognized by the community of Green Lake. Each opportunity arose from discussions and focus groups with Mayor and council, community members and other stakeholders. Each opportunity has been preliminarily vetted to ensure a “good fit” for the community. The opportunities have been prioritized by Mayor and Council based on their probability of success and their value of success. The result is a clear roadmap for the community to follow as they continue to develop their community economically.

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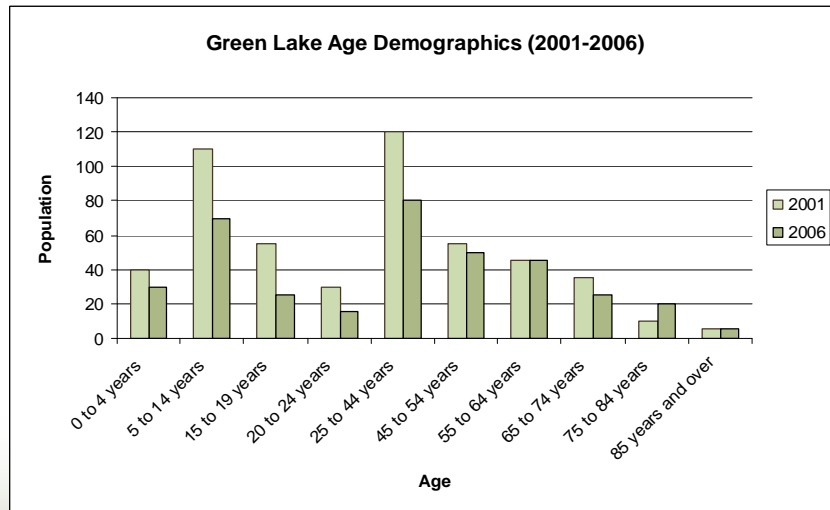
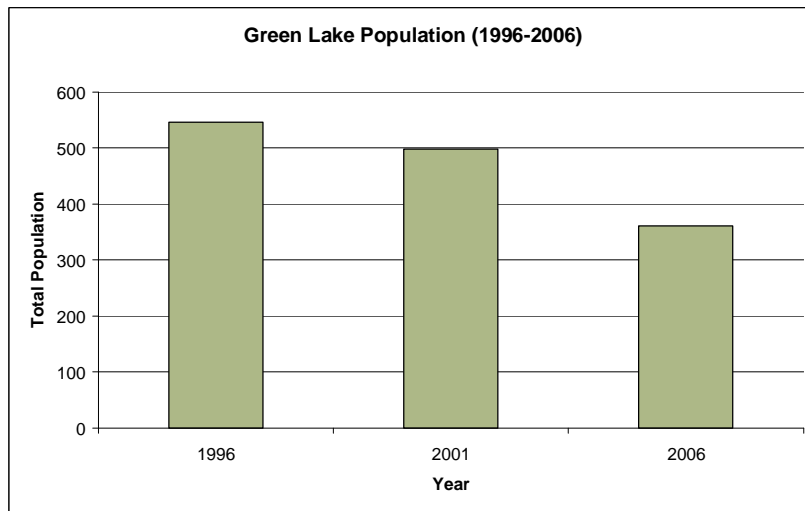
## 2.0 CURRENT STATE OVERVIEW

*Note: All data tables and graphs in this document were created from information gathered from Statistics Canada.*

The following sub-sections provide an overview of the Northern Village of Green Lake by providing information on its current population, age demographics, work force and education. This provides context against which business development opportunities will be framed.

### 2.1 POPULATION

As seen in the following charts, Green Lake's population has been declining. Persons aged 75 to 84 years make up an increasing portion of the populace, while all other age groups have either remained stagnant or have declined between 2001 and 2006. The median age in the Northern Village of Green Lake increased 38.3% to 37.2 years within the same time period; however, the largest segments of the population are between the ages of 5 to 14 years and 25 to 44 years. These two segments make up approximately 40% of the population.



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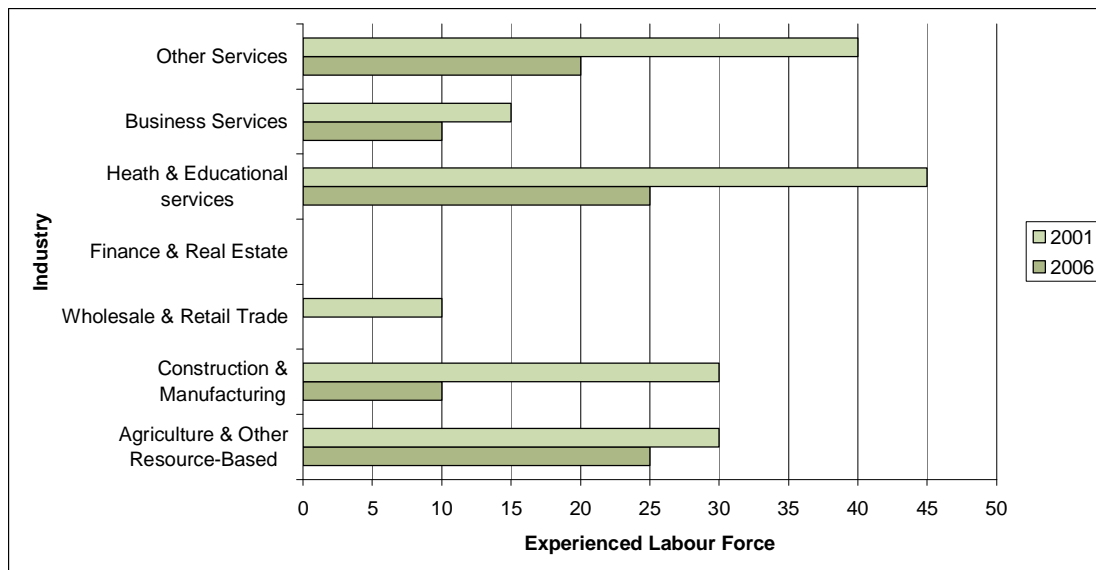


## 2.2 LABOUR AND INDUSTRY

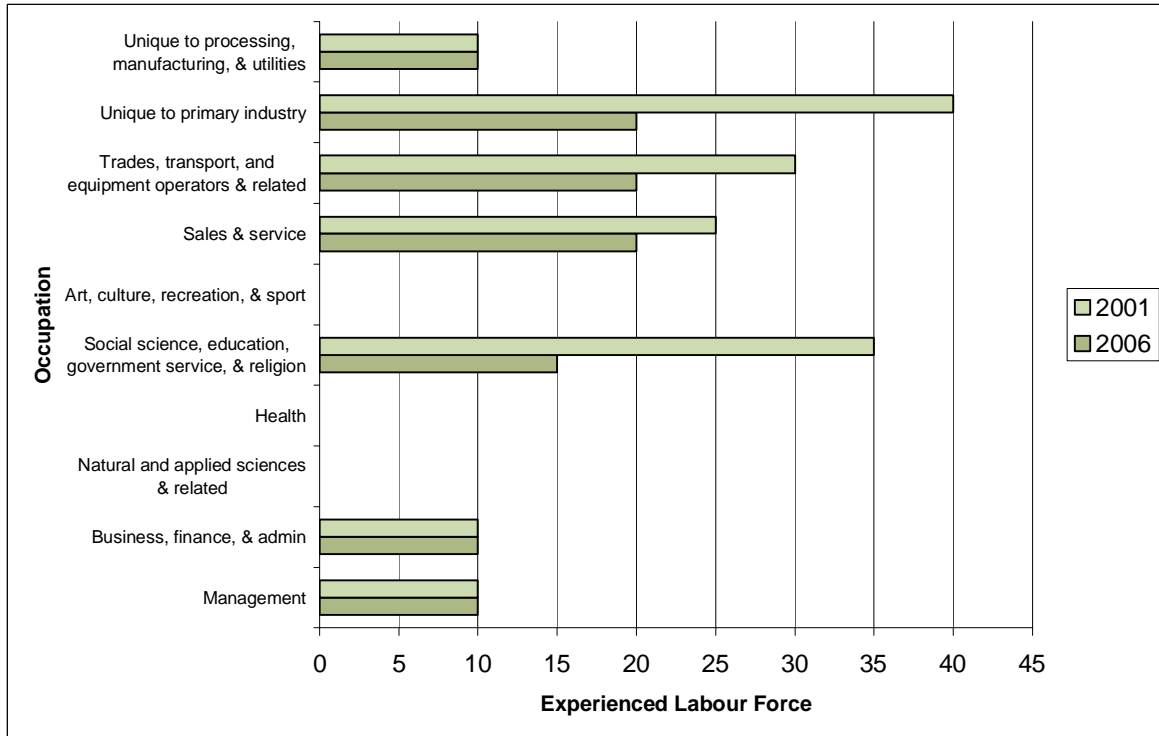
The labour force participation rate shows a decrease in the Northern Village of Green Lake of 12.6% from 2001 to 2006, reflected both in the 27.5% decrease in population as well as the significant population decrease of persons 25 to 44 years of age.

Labour Force Activity (%)			
	2001	2006	Change
Participation rate	52.2	39.6	(12.6)
Employment rate	42	30.2	(11.8)
<b>Unemployment rate</b>			
Green Lake	19.4	23.8	4.4
Saskatchewan	6.3	5.6	(0.7)

Also a result of the changes in population and age, the total experienced labour force of Green Lake has decreased 40.6%.



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*The total experienced labour force within all occupations has either remained stagnant or significantly decreased between the 2001 – 2006 period.*

Over a number of decades a sawmill operated in the community. The mill provided quality employment for members of the community. The first saw mill was opened in 1941 by Clark and Wall. In 1974 the New Saskatchewan Forest Products mill was completed. In 1992 the Village owned saw mill was incorporated – Green Lake Métis Wood Products Limited. The sawmill was destroyed by fire in 2000 but was rebuilt and reopened in 2002; however, the mill closed in 2003 and remains closed today.



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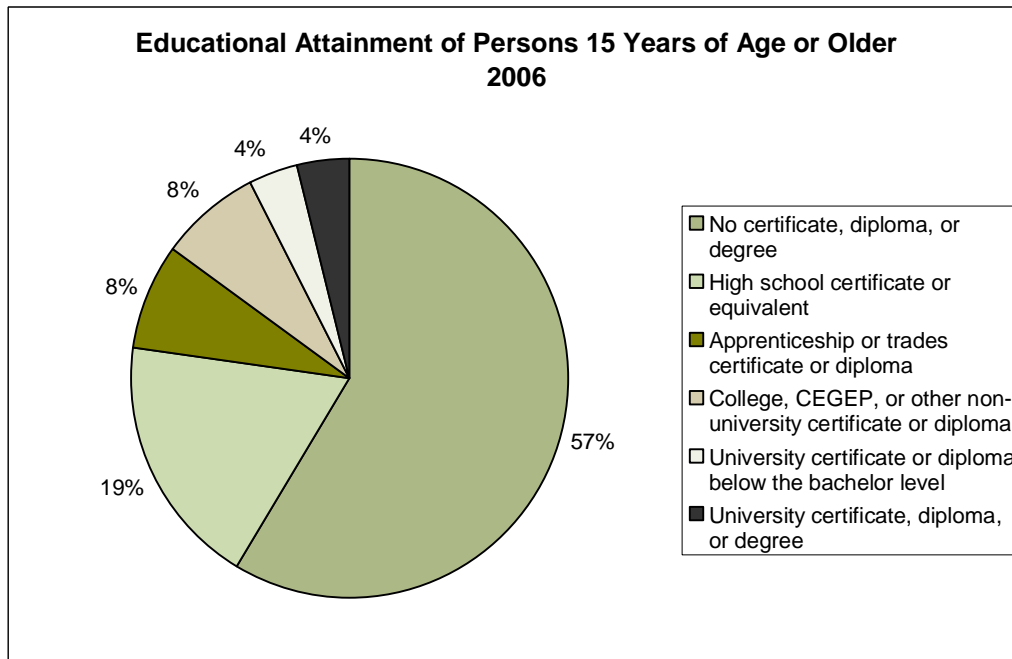


## 2.2.1 Education

The community currently has an elementary school which includes Kindergarten to Grade Nine. There are currently 3 kindergarten students, 47 students in Grades 1 to 5 and 34 students in grades 6 to 9 for a total of 84 students. High School students are currently bused to Meadow Lake. The community has a keen interest to retain the elementary school as well as to create a robust environment in which they could once again support their own High School. The Village as a whole recognizes the importance of education and sees it interacting with economic development and the overall well being of their community.



Statistics also show that the majority of people in Green Lake over the age of 15 do not have post-secondary education.



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## 2.3 CURRENT BUSINESSES AND ECONOMIC FLOWS

The community currently has a small contingent of operating businesses. There is a small number of outfitter and guides for hunting and fishing, a privately owned lodge and campground, a gas and grocery store as well as the Village-owned farm operations.

The Village has recently undertaken a lake lot program. Fifty-nine lots are subdivided and available for 99 year lease. Mayor and council are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of a lease program versus selling the lots and continue to discuss the merits of each and what they mean to the Village. More information regarding Village lots is included in Appendix B.

### 2.3.1 Silver Lake and Central Farms

In 1939 the Provincial Government set up and ran Central Farm to assist the people of Green Lake with employment and training. In 1996 the Northern Village of Green Lake, came to an agreement with the Provincial government which saw ownership of the farm shift to the village. Silver Lake Farm was seconded through an agreement with the Province in 2006. The Northern Village of Green Lake has run the two farms with the help of the Green Lake Métis Farm Board. Central farm consists of approximately 9000 acres, 10% of which is alfalfa. Silver Lake consists of 3649.2 acres of grazing land (Alfalfa/Brome mix), and 1485.7 of Hay usage.



The farm employs one full time manager and typically 3 part time employees. The farm has been under some financial strain since the BSE crisis and averages a loss of approximately \$60,000 annually.

### 2.3.2 Current Economic Flows

Currently, most community members do the majority of their spending in Meadow Lake. Situated approximately 50 kms to the south west, Meadow Lake is a community of approximately 5,000 people. It provides much of the services and amenities to the surrounding area such as groceries, clothing, hardware, hotels and food service to name only a few.

Mayor and council are aware of this economic flow out of the community and hope to create enough critical mass back to Green Lake to be able to support more and more businesses that will provide the opportunity for community members and visitors to spend money in Green Lake, creating jobs and other economic spin-offs throughout the community.





### **3.0 THE NORTHERN VILLAGE OF GREEN LAKE'S VISION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

During the first facilitated session Mayor and council participated in an exercise to 'blue sky' concepts that define what economic development in Green Lake means to the community into the future. From this exercise, the following vision statement for community economic development was created.

**Vision Statement:**

*Economic Development in the Village of Green Lake will be aimed at creating a self-sufficient, stable community through developing our core assets and creating meaningful employment opportunities. Our farming operations will be sustainable and a method of job creation. We will focus on being a welcoming and cooperative community. We will focus on economic development while striving to maintain a pristine environment.*



## 4.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Through facilitated discussions, Mayor and council have identified some economic development initiatives and some business development opportunities that should be pursued.

Economic development initiatives are defined as initiatives the community should pursue to assist the community to be more successful with any or all of the economic development opportunities the community wishes to pursue.

Economic development opportunities are defined as actual business opportunities to be investigated and pursued i.e. businesses to be developed within the community.

Both are outlined in the following sub-sections.

### 4.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

#### 4.1.1 Economic Development Manager

The Village has identified the need to incorporate the services of an economic development manager into their economic development plans. Mayor and Council are aware that the time involved in developing future economic development initiatives are onerous and time consuming. Each of Mayor and Council has other responsibilities that limit the time they can dedicate to specific projects. The types of projects the Village is interested in are large enough in scale and scope that they cannot be managed 'off the corner of one's desk'. These projects require a dedicated resource to drive and champion them.



Mayor and Council are also open to sharing a resource between one or two neighboring communities. Many of the neighboring communities have similar hurdles and strengths as Green Lake. A common economic development resource will likely produce synergies between communities while reducing the cost to each individual community. The Village has incorporated discussions with neighboring communities into its plan going forward.

#### 4.1.2 Land Use Plan

Mayor and council are very interested in performing a Land Use Plan (LUP). At its most basic level, the plan would incorporate zoning and infrastructure planning for the future to ensure that land is used efficiently for the benefit of the community and its environment. To date, the Village has not performed any community planning studies and work of this nature has been performed ad hoc on an as needed basis. A plan of this nature would provide guidance for future administrations and generations as to the planning of residential, community and business development initiatives.



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## 4.1.3 Economic Development Corporation and Board of Directors

Mayor and council have a keen interest in developing an economic development corporation governed by a Board of Directors separate from Mayor and Council. The Village currently has a similar governance structure for the management of the farms – a Board which reports to Mayor and Council is appointed to manage the farm.

There are two distinct advantages to this governance structure. Firstly, an economic development corporation provides arms length risk management for the Village itself. The Village, as an entity, owns all the land and infrastructure within the municipality. The liabilities of businesses owned and operated by the Village may put publicly owned Village assets at risk. Secondly, an economic development corporation with a separate Board reduces turnover. Elections currently occur every three years in the Village of Green Lake. Turnover among Mayor and Council creates a period where everyone has to get up to speed on Village initiatives. A separate Board could have the luxury of longer terms. Business development initiatives occurring over longer periods of time could move forward uninterrupted by civic politics.

The most appropriate strategy would be to create an economic development corporation in which the Northern Village of Green Lake is the 100% shareholder. A Board of Directors should be appointed or elected and this Board would report directly to Mayor and Council.

The opportunity to form municipal development corporations is provided within the Northern Municipalities Act. These provisions do not exist in the Municipal Act or the Cities Act and many northern municipalities have established economic development corporations under Act. It has been found that the municipal involvement has added greater security to provide employment and opportunities in the north that may not otherwise be there.

According to the Tax Act, the corporation would be a municipal corporation (paragraph 149(1)(d.5) and as such, would be exempt from paying income tax on businesses operating within the municipality.

## 4.1.4 Meet with Neighboring Communities to Discuss Area Economic Development Initiatives

Throughout discussions with Mayor and Council a prominent topic of discussion was that the community cannot be successful as an island to successfully develop the economy of a small, rural and northern community. Neighboring communities, many of which are facing the same issues, must band together to create synergies that will assist in conquering similar hurdles.

Mayor and council plan on meeting with neighboring communities to discuss business development initiatives, possible synergies and partnerships that may be developed to the benefit of each community.



## 4.2 REJECTED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

During the interview and focus group process, many ideas or opportunities were brought forward for consideration. During a facilitated session with mayor and council, opportunities were vetted based on determining:

1. Where does the value come from?
2. Who is willing to pay for it?
3. How rare are the resources required?
4. How imitable is the opportunity?

Based on these criteria, the following opportunities were dropped from further consideration during this session.

### 4.2.1 Eco-Tourism

Although popular as a potential economic development opportunity in northern communities, Eco-Tourism is a business requiring a critical mass of attractions to remain feasible. Although it's been proven that eco-tourism can extract value, how many people and how much they are willing pay for it remains inconsistent. Most communities can argue that they have a unique history, lake or pristine natural environment but without a truly unique critical mass of attractions, eco-tourism sites have a difficult time differentiating themselves from other similar communities or sites. For example, Churchill has polar bears and whales - rare resources. These rare resources make tourism in Churchill sustainable. The other detractor to eco-tourism is the cost of marketing. To attract the volume of visitors required to make a venture successful requires expensive marketing campaigns – each of these campaigns compete for the same limited amount of dollars.

### 4.2.2 Ethanol and BioDiesel

The popularity of these biofuels projects peaked as the price of oil peaked in 2008. Despite the seemingly positive drivers behind these two industries, profitability still relies on government subsidization of these commodities. In the United States, governments subsidize these industries heavily. The United States is the world's major oil importer and because of defense relations wants to decrease its dependency on oil. Despite these subsidies, these industries are still only marginally profitable. In Canada, government policy and subsidization is less enthusiastic – Canada is an oil exporter and does not have defense issues similar to those of the U.S. These projects require mass amounts of capital and, at this time, typically remain unprofitable.

### 4.2.3 Cattle Processing Facility

The commercial meat processing industry is marked by massive labor turnover and equally large economies of scale required to compete at razor thin margins that have become the industry standard. This industry is highly competitive, typically from competitors with comparatively better geographic animal supply positions than Green Lake. Plants are highly capital intensive, labour intensive and very tough to operate profitably.



The exception to this opportunity is, on a small scale, the opportunity to develop a “Green Lake Metis Farms” brand at the farmer’s market level. The volumes at this level would likely warrant custom slaughtering services and packaging under a Green Lake label.

## 4.3 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following section outlines opportunities the Village of Green Lake has identified to develop their community economically. Opportunities were identified by interviewing multiple stakeholders from outside the community from organizations such as Forest First, The Ministry of the Environment and Saskatchewan Agriculture. Interviews were also performed with community members and community business owners. A public forum, open to the entire community, was also held. Council had also previously discussed options through a strategic economic development group. The results of these interviews and meetings were consolidated for presentation and discussions with Mayor and council in a one-day facilitated session. The following opportunities, in random order, are a result of these discussions.

- A. Cattle Herd – Increase Size, Custom Backgrounding
- B. Farm Land Rental and Rejuvenation
- C. Vegetable Production
- D. RV/Campground and All-Season Cabins
- E. Biofibre – Commercial Fuel Production
- F. Biofibre – Co-Generation
- G. Non-Timber Forest Products
- H. Sawmill – Retrofit to Perform Specialty Cuts

In the sub-sections that follow, each opportunity is summarized and includes a description of the opportunity and the industry within which it resides, its strategic importance to the community, the current gaps within the community that need to be filled in order to take advantage of the opportunity and a brief description of the action plan moving forward.



## 4.3.1 Cattle Herd – Increase Size, Custom Backgrounding

Currently the Green Lake Métis Farm runs approximately 400 cow/calf pairs and pastures a number of cattle for cattle farmers outside of the community. When a cow/calf operator does not have adequate pasture for their animals they look to rent pasture outside their own land base. Currently Silver Lake Farm pastures cattle from Alberta operators.

With the size of the existing land base, there is existing land and infrastructure that is not being used to the full potential. Therefore, there is an opportunity to increase the size of the farm's herd as well as provide pasture services to a greater number of clients throughout the year.

This concept has been addressed during two initiatives. In 2005, a Farm Business Assessment was performed for the farm outlining the increase in the size of the herd to 1,000 pairs. In 2008, the farm underwent a Strategic Planning session. During this session, it was again identified that an increase in herd size to 1,000 head was of merit to the operation.

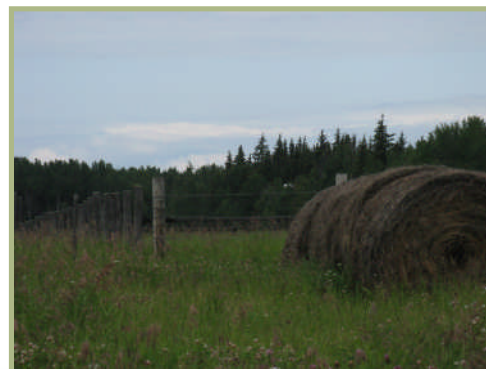


Green Lake Metis Farm is currently receiving assistance from Saskatchewan Agriculture. Representatives from this ministry are assisting the farm in measuring the potential of the land base and preparing a grazing plan that matches estimated forage production to the appropriate number of animals.

### Strategic Importance

The Green Lake Metis Farms are of immense importance to the Northern Village of Green Lake. The land base within the farms is the community's largest asset and is typically seen as a pool of untapped opportunity.

The cattle industry is an industry that the community has some capacity in, although it is acknowledged that the farm is not managed to its potential and assistance would be required to increase the size of the herd to the proposed size.





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## Industry Background

Canada has approximately 13 million cattle and almost 90,000 beef producers across the country producing over \$6 billion in cash receipts in 2007. The Canadian cattle industry has evolved since the early 1960's into two distinct operations – cow/calf ranching and cattle feedlot finishing.

Green Lake Farm provides backgrounding services for other cattle producers. Backgrounding is the process of feeding high forage feeds to increase the weight of smaller calves. This type of animal is fed to gain weight at a relatively slow rate to promote growth. In Canada, this typically occurs on pasture land. Approximately one half of the cattle in Canada are backgrounded during their lifetime.

As with most agricultural operations, margins have become increasingly slim over the decades. To compete, cattle operations need to be managed efficiently taking into account feed content, breeding programs, sales weights and a myriad of other details. Lack of attention to these details immediately affects an operation's bottom line.

## Gap Analysis

Through the strategic planning session in 2008, the Farm Board has identified gaps in their current operation that will likely impede the successful expansion of their own herd as well as custom backgrounding services. The most salient of these include:

- Lack of proper management, knowledge and training
- Some equipment is outdated and needs replacing
- Lack of record keeping

## Action Plan

The first part of the plan is to continue to work with the Ministry of Agriculture staff to:

- Determine land base available for pasture operation
- Prepare grazing plan that matches estimated forage production to number of animals
- Develop a report on farm capabilities

The number one concern of Mayor and Council regarding this opportunity is that there is currently not enough management and operational expertise at the farm or on the Farm Board to manage this opportunity. To be managed properly, the Green Lake Metis Farms will have to hire outside expertise.

## Next Steps:

- Hire a consultant to prepare feasibility study for the desired expansion – can be built upon previous documents
  - Plan needs to be comprehensive, specific and include the required management costs to make this a successful expansion
- Based on results move to Business Plan Phase



## 4.3.2 Farm Land Rental and Rejuvenation

It is generally agreed that the Green Lake Métis Farms – Silver Lake and Central Farms – have not been properly maintained. The land is underutilized and unkempt. There is an opportunity to open up sections of land to area agricultural producers who wish to properly work the land to grow various crops over a period of years. This will rejuvenate the land for future uses in the community. It will also provide some necessary cash flow through rental agreements from land that is currently underutilized.

Land would be rented to area farmers at a discount to the market because of condition of the land. Farmers would utilize the land for a period of years and leave it in a better physical and nutritional condition than at the beginning of their contract. Green Lake Farms needs to measure the benefits in cash flow, improved soil physics and improved soil chemistry against the cost of administering such a program and the opportunity cost of having land out of production or having land subjected to practices that may impede its use in other Green Lake initiatives i.e. chemical on land that may be needed for naturally produced beef or vegetables.



### Strategic Importance

Strategic plans for the community and the Green Lake Métis Farms have outlined the preservation of the environment and the development of a sustainable industry as strategic directions for the community. Rejuvenating the farm land would lead to environmental stewardship and responsible agricultural practices on the farms while providing a necessary source of income.

The farm land owned by the Village is most often listed as the community's greatest asset. Developing the community's core assets is a strategic goal for economic development within the community.

### Industry Background

Farmers often rent land to increase the size of their operation without needing to outlay capital to do so. Rental arrangements are typically 'cash', an agreed upon annual price for using the land, or a crop share arrangement where the renter gives the land owner a portion of the crop whether it be livestock or grain. In either case, the renter needs to ascertain the profitability, affordability and desirability of expanding their farming operation. In turn, this will dictate the level they are willing to pay for the use of a particular piece of land.

### Gap Analysis

- Farming and management expertise as it pertains to rental agreements

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## Action Plan

- Develop a plan that measure the benefits in cash flow, improved soil physics and improved soil nutrition against the cost of administering such a program and the opportunity cost of having land out of production or having land subjected to practices that may impede its use in other Green Lake initiatives i.e. chemical on land that may be needed for naturally produced beef or vegetables
- Determine land base available for community usage
- Develop a cropping plan that matches the nature of the soil
- Work with Ministry of Agriculture – currently developing a report on farm capabilities
- Engage a consultant to assist in developing a plan to rent land to area farmers and measure its financial feasibility against rental rates the market will bear



### 4.3.3 Vegetable Production

The Silver Lake and Central Farms are owned and operated by the Northern Village of Green Lake. This large farm base can provide an opportunity to mass produce vegetables. There is an opportunity to sell fresh vegetables to the catering companies that serve the mines in the north through northern procurement agreements, or in a “market garden” operation. Additionally produce could be sold in higher end markets or restaurants in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Waskesiu, etc as “naturally grown”. Naturally grown vegetables refer to vegetables grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides; however, the label “naturally grown” is not regulated. Certified “Organically Grown” vegetables require a certification process which includes detailed records from seeding to market, requiring more time and effort. Both options should be investigated as part of this opportunity.



It has been shown that locally and naturally grown vegetables have the ability to extract more value from the market. There is certainly merit in creating a brand like “Green Lake Metis Farms” naturally grown vegetables. At a small scale, this typically occurs at the farmer’s market level. Moving to commercial production levels takes time and further development of a brand. Each successive step requires exponentially higher levels of production, marketing, brand awareness and capital. The vegetables could potentially be marketed as natural due to the absence of past chemical use on the land. There is an opportunity to develop brand awareness for products grown in and around Green Lake. This exercise takes time, but can prove to be profitable.

This opportunity will be scale reliant. It is an opportunity where starting relatively small will prove beneficial in terms of learning the industry and learning the market. As the opportunity grows, operations can grow at a commensurate pace.

#### Strategic Importance

In September of 2008 a Strategic Plan was developed for the Village Farms. Within this strategic plan, vision and mission statements for the farms were developed:

#### Vision Statement:

*The Green Lake Métis Farms will be a diverse, sustainable agri-business producing 10 to 15 jobs in the community and providing the Town of Green Lake with rent and tax revenue at market value.*

#### Mission Statement:

*The Green Lake Métis Farms provides economic opportunity and employment for the community through farming operations.*



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The strategic plan outlined a number of opportunities to be pursued in order to meet this vision and mission for the farms. Vegetable production meets both the vision and mission, diversifying the farm through an operation that can provide jobs and unique experiences to community members.

## Industry Background

In 2008 Canadian commercial farms produced approximately 1.9 million metric tones of vegetables. The farm value of the vegetables sold was over \$629 million. In Saskatchewan commercial vegetable farms produced 194 metric tones for a value of approximately \$700,000. These figures for both Canada and Saskatchewan exclude potatoes.

A marketing plan completed previously by University of Saskatchewan students identified a number of potential customers for vegetables and potatoes grown by the Green Lake Métis Farms. This plan is a starting point and must be further developed to identify the full opportunity and market for produce grown in Green Lake.



The two markets to be explored through this opportunity are the supply of vegetables through northern supply agreements and the sale of naturally grown vegetables at the farmer's market level. The two, although obviously related, are unique. Supply to northern mines etc., is the more straight forward of the two. An agreed upon volume is delivered at an agreed upon quality and price. The farmer's market route can extract higher prices at lower volumes but typically requires more effort, sales labour and marketing to create a brand that's recognizable. After discussion, it was decided that both of the avenues have merit and should be investigated and/or pursued.

## Gap Analysis

- Require capital for equipment, storage
- Require production expertise
- Require management expertise
- Require sales and farmer's market experience (can be built internally)

Some challenges outlined in the Saskatchewan Irrigated Vegetable Crop Competitive Analysis Report from 2005 include:

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- Saskatchewan banks are generally not equipped to finance vegetable production equipment.
- Successful operations are usually third generation farms and few Saskatchewan residents have commercial vegetable growing experience.
- A quota system that regulates supply may need to be set up as in Manitoba.
- A central organization with solid leadership must be in place. This organization must likely ensure a six month supply of produce to retailers to be competitive.
- There is a lack of marketing skill amongst Saskatchewan growers.
- There is not a large food service market and restaurants generally do not like to deal with a supplier that can only supply a few items.

While these gaps and challenges were discussed in terms of Saskatchewan as a whole they are applicable to the Northern Village of Green Lake's farm as well.

### **Action Plan**

- Submit a funding application for the further development of a Feasibility Study from the initial Marketing Plan that was completed previously.
- Hire a consultant to prepare study
- Based on results move to Business Plan Phase

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## 4.3.4 RV/Campground and All-Season Cabins

A full service campground and RV park is a business opportunity for the Village to further develop and potentially pursue for the community. The development of a campground would create jobs during the construction phase and would provide seasonal employment to community members. The number of jobs would be dependent on the number of sites and the services provided. Mayor and Council have indicated they would like to investigate the feasibility of all-season cabins as part of this development.

A search for RV/Camping in the Green Lake area on the Northern Saskatchewan tourism website ([www.northern.sask.info](http://www.northern.sask.info)) returned five results – only one of which was for Green Lake. The Green Lake Lodge has fourteen cabins and thirty-six campsites. The other four campgrounds that are listed by the tourism site are in Meadow Lake.

### Strategic Importance

This opportunity takes advantage of one of the strengths most commonly listed by community members – the lake and surrounding natural area. In late 2008 a Community Action Planning Report for the Northern Village of Green Lake was developed. This report documented the strategic and action planning process that occurred in the community. Tourism was identified by the participants as a near-term priority for the community. During the interviews and discussions with community members and Village council the desire to develop a tourism industry in the area was highlighted. Mayor and council are also quick to note that this venture must be approached with care. One of the greatest attractions for campers and boaters to Green Lake is that it is not a major tourist area and provides a quiet and relaxing experience. Mayor and Council are aware this needs to be considered in the investigation and development of this opportunity.



### Industry Background

In 2006 there were 863,000 visitors to Northern Saskatchewan communities – which contributed \$125 million to the northern economy.<sup>1</sup> The growth sectors of the Northern Saskatchewan tourism industry include:

- Authentic Culture and Crafts
- Adventure and “Experience” Tourism – quading, canoeing, kayaking, snowmobiling
- “Soft” Adventure Tourism – cross-country skiing, tobogganing, ice skating

The Northern Village of Green Lake is suited to attract visitors who wish to pursue all of these activities.

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<sup>1</sup> “Tourism Potential in Canada’s North – Report on Survey Results”, July 2008



## Gap Analysis

Within the community the following gaps must be addressed to fully exploit this opportunity:

- Capital for construction
- The community likely has individuals with available skills to manage this operation although the management capacity for the operation will likely be dependant on the ownership structure

Additionally, some challenges for Northern Saskatchewan communities were identified in the “*Tourism Potential in Canada’s North*” report. They include:

- Infrastructure – roads, parks, communications
- Labour shortages
- Limited available skills
- Minimal certification standards
- Community capacity
- Policy restrictions
- Limited awareness of northern tourism products
- Limited financing<sup>2</sup>

These are challenges that Green Lake will likely face in the development of a campground and RV park.

## Action Plan

- Submit a funding application for the development of a Feasibility Study.
- Hire a consultant to prepare a feasibility study
- Based on results move to Business Plan Phase



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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.





## 4.3.5 BioFibre – Commercial Fuel Production

Using biomass to create heat and energy is not a new concept. In 1850 firewood represented 91% of the total energy supply in the United States<sup>3</sup>. The use of biomass for energy purposes decreased until the 1950's when it began to quickly regain popularity through initiatives such as pulp and paper mills attempts to incinerate their own waste materials to produce energy for internal use<sup>4</sup>. Energy shortages in the 1970's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century have kept biomass on the energy-producing radar.

Increasing fossil fuels prices and enhanced environmental awareness have created opportunities in alternative fuels. A rapidly expanding wood pellet market has developed, especially in Europe, out of this interest in renewable energy. Wood pellets are used as a source of fuel to heat homes and to fuel power generation stations.

### Wood Products

Wood can be combusted in its natural state or in a variety of processed forms:

Wood chips – usually described as having uniform size and a moisture content of less than 20%. Size may vary depending on whether the chips are intended to be processed further, into pellets or briquettes, or burned as is.

Wood Briquettes – usually described as compressed wood larger than a pellet. Briquettes are not regulated with accordance to size, shape or property.

Wood pellets – usually described as compressed wood having a diameter of between 6mm-8mm and a length of 12mm-30 mm. Wood pellet guidelines are monitored in North America by the Pellet Fuels Institute.

Biomass, and more specifically wood products, is an attractive energy source because it is deemed friendly to the atmosphere. Kyoto protocol has motivated involved governments and their citizens to adopt energy processes more environmentally friendly than fossil fuels.



### Strategic Importance

This opportunity is a strategic fit for the Village because of their current wood fibre allocation and because of their knowledge and experience in wood fibre harvesting. Depending on scale, a wood pellet plant and the harvesting and transportation activities that support it can generate between 50 – 75 jobs.

Wood fibre projects in Canada are becoming more efficient at utilizing waste wood. Following a European model, wood pellet plants have the ability to utilize whole trees and leave no waste – a vast improvement over traditional harvesting techniques. This model is a good strategic fit for Green Lake whose community members wish to develop industry while remaining stewards of the land.

<sup>3</sup> Bain & Overend. Biomass for Heat and Power, Forest Products Journal; Feb 2002; 52,2

<sup>4</sup> Bain & Overend. Biomass for Heat and Power, Forest Products Journal; Feb 2002; 52,2

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Although the world-wide pellet industry is relatively infantile, especially in Canada, all signs point to it being a market that will continue to gain momentum and strength as environmental legislation continues to clamp down on fossil fuel usage and as pellet users and suppliers gain more experience and better logistic channels.

## Industry Background

The wood pellet industry is developing rapidly in Canada with \$250 million in revenues from 23 operational plants that produce over 1.2 million tonnes of pellets, over 80% of which are exported<sup>5</sup>. In 2006, Canadian pellet producers exported over 700,000 tonnes to European pellet plants<sup>6</sup>. 80% of exports originated from Prince Rupert and Vancouver and the remaining 20% from the east coast (mainly Halifax)<sup>7</sup>.

British Columbia will continue to be a leading source of production and export. The pine beetle infestation has obliged the implementation of significant increases in harvesting providing raw materials for wood pellets. Production is expected to increase to over 3 million tonnes per year.

## Gap Analysis

Commercial wood fibre, and more specifically wood pellet production, has been defined in this case as developing a manufacturing plant that could create approximately 100,000 of pellets annually. Gaps that currently exist within the community to succeed in this venture include:

- Capital – a plant of this scale would require approximately \$15-20 million in capital
- Logistics – Green Lake is not situated on a rail line
- Management expertise – although the technology and process of manufacturing wood pellets is quite simple, the management of the associated complex logistics would require an individual with experience in this area
- Wood supply – 100,000 tonnes of wood pellets would require approximately 250,000 cubic meters of wood fibre – Green Lake's current allocation is approximately 30,000 – 50,000 cubic meters

## Action Plan

Because of the large scope and scale of this project, Mayor and council have decided to keep this opportunity on their radar, but have prioritized other projects as needing immediate attention. The economic development group or corporation will continue to inquire with provincial departments about this opportunity, especially as a replacement for coal, as well as with neighboring communities that may be interested in future partnerships.

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<sup>5</sup> Bio-Mass Fuel Pellet – Logistics and Transportation and Costing Study – Nordcity Group Ltd.

<sup>6</sup> Wood Pellet Association of Canada – John Swaan Presentation

<sup>7</sup> ibid



## 4.3.6 Biofibre – Co-Generation

Co-Generation refers to the combustion of bio-fibre to create both heat and power. Typically, wood fibre is used to heat water, creating steam that turns electricity producing turbines and is piped throughout buildings to provide a source of heat.

By using this technology, the community could become relatively self-sufficient regarding heat and power while stimulating the local economy by creating jobs in fibre harvesting, transportation and co-generation. Any excess power can be sold back to the main power grid as 'green' power.

### Strategic Importance

This opportunity is a strategic fit for the Village because of their current wood fibre allocation and because of their knowledge and experience in wood fibre harvesting.

The project is also a strategic fit because it provides the community with a carbon-neutral source of heat and power. This fits the community's desire to remain environmentally sensitive and to act as stewards of the land.

### Industry Background

Cogeneration represents only six percent of electricity production and three percent of the industrial thermal energy in Canada. This is typically attributed to relatively low energy prices and electric utility policies on surplus energy. Most successful applications in Canada have been adopted by industrial users requiring high levels of both heat and power at one site, such as the pulp and paper industry.

Although cogeneration and district energy have been proven in other parts of the world, their benefits remain largely unknown in Canada. Such systems require a large initial investment with returns spread over time. Developers of combined heat and power face an uncertain market for their energy service as potential customers, builders and land developers are typically more concerned with keeping start-up costs low and turning a profit.



### Gap Analysis

Although this wood fibre energy project is of a smaller scale than the commercial wood pellet project the gaps to its successful completion are similar:

- Capital – even locally based plants of this nature can be capital intensive
- Lack of expertise in energy contracts
- Lack of expertise in energy generation

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## **Action Plan**

Because of the large scope and scale of this project as well as the uncertainty of technology that is relatively new to Canada, Mayor and council have decided to keep this opportunity on their radar, but have prioritized other projects as needing more immediate attention. The economic development group or corporation will continue to inquire with provincial departments about this opportunity, as well as with neighboring communities that may be interested in future partnerships.



## 4.3.7 Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)

Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP) are typically defined as “products of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests. They may be gathered wild, or produced in forest plantations, agro-forestry schemes and trees from outside forests<sup>8</sup>”.

Products include items such as wild berries, mushrooms, flora and more recently, an increasing interest in the potential of nutraceutical and related bio-products.

The development of a NTFP industry in the community could be incorporated with the development of a vegetable production operation. The two opportunities share the same goal of creating “Green Lake” brand awareness.

### Strategic Importance

One of the biggest assets and strengths for the community of Green Lake is the large land base and access to forests. Green Lake community members can harvest a variety of NTFP easily as the knowledge of the products in the area is strong. A marketing strategy would be developed to determine pricing and key market segments. Packaging and processing will be key to the perceived value and potential selling price. Initially sales would likely be focused on local higher end markets – Saskatoon Farmer’s Market, Waskesiu, etc.

Of vital importance to the community are the preservation of the environment and the development of a sustainable industry. The development of a NTFP industry in Green Lake would provide wages for harvesters and potentially processing and packaging job opportunities. It is also considered to be a sustainable, environmentally respectful use of the forest. There are some Green Lake community members that are recognized for their expertise in this area.



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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization





## Industry Background

With a current yearly output of \$241 million, non-timber forest products contribute significantly to rural and First Nations communities in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Non-Timber Forest Products can provide a means of generating forest-based economic development in northern areas providing long-term economic, community and environmental sustainability.

In North America, NTFP encompass a wide variety of products, including conifer boughs, wild rice, wild blueberries, and medicinal herbs. In British Columbia, 200 types of NTFP are recognized; in Ontario, 50 types are commercially used. It is possible that there may be as many as 500 in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

The Saskatchewan NTFP industry is continuing to develop. Wild mushrooms and wild rice are considered to be the most important sectors of the industry. Wild rice production was down dramatically in 2007 from the 10 year average of 2.3 million pounds. The low production reduced inventories and increased prices. Wild mushroom production has been variable. Chanterelle production was approximately 40,000 pounds in 2007 with strong prices paid to pickers.<sup>11</sup>

## Gap Analysis

The gaps for this opportunity are highly scale dependent. Some potential gaps may include:

- Capital for processing equipment
- Capacity to manage the operation
- Marketing capacity

## Action Plan

Because this market is relatively new and its mechanics not well understood, other provincially operated NTFP sites have ceased operations due to lack of profitability. Mayor and council have decided to keep this opportunity on their radar, but have prioritized other projects as needing more immediate attention. The economic development group or corporation will continue to inquire with provincial departments about this opportunity as well as investigate the potential for partnerships in this area.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/news/296>, August 10, 2009

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> [http://ntfpnetwork.ca/en/provincial\\_profiles/saskatchewan](http://ntfpnetwork.ca/en/provincial_profiles/saskatchewan), August 10, 2009



## 4.3.8 Sawmill – Retrofit to Perform Specialty Cuts

The sawmill has had a long and important history in Green Lake. From its inception as a Saskatchewan Forest Products mill to the incorporation of the Village-owned mill, Green Lake Metis Wood Products Ltd in 1992, the mill has played an integral part of Village economics until its closure in 2003.

One of the opportunities identified within the community is to retrofit the existing sawmill to perform specialty cuts or to cut oversized logs to sizes that can be readily handled at area sawmills. Interviews with industry experts suggest that this opportunity no longer exists due to technology and changes in the industry.

### Strategic Importance

The village-owned sawmill is of strategic importance to the community because there still exists in the community some of the skills required for operations. The community still has cutting rights to approximately 50,000 cubic meters of wood fibre.

### Industry Background

The sawmill industry has been affected world wide by a global economic downturn and the resulting decrease in demand for dimensional lumber products. Many area sawmills have indefinitely ceased operations in anticipation of a future increase in demand.

## 4.3.9 Gap Analysis

According to industry experts, the mill in its current condition would require millions of dollars to incorporate the proper technology. Even so, because of economies of scale, a mill of its size would prove to be uncompetitive.

### Action Plan

Because of the difficulties facing the mill, Mayor and Council have chosen to leave the mill in its status quo state and continue to work with provincial departments and ministries as well as neighboring communities to continue to uncover any potential opportunities in the forest industry.





## 4.4 PRIORITIZATION

In order to prioritize the opportunities for the community a prioritization session was delivered. This one-day prioritization session was facilitated by MNP with Mayor and Council. For each opportunity, Mayor and Council was asked to compare each against each other based on its “**value of success**”, focusing on potential net financial gains and potential job creation and the “**probability of success**”, focusing on the project’s complexity, human resource intensity and the potential degree of change.

The following figures demonstrate the results of that session:

Opportunity	Value of Success Score	Probability of Success Score	Total Score
A. Cattle Herd	6	5	11
C. Vegetable Production	6.5	4	10.5
B. Land Rental/Rejuv.	3	7	10
D. Campground & Cabins	3	6	9
E. Wood Fibre - Commercial	4.5	2	6.5
H. Non-Timber Forest Products	3	3	6
G. Saw Mill	0.5	1	1.5
F. Wood Fibre – Co-Gen.	1.5	0	1.5

As a result of the session, Mayor and Council have chosen to focus on the top four priorities. The remaining opportunities will be left for future consideration.

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## 5.0 NEXT STEPS

The Northern Village of Green Lake Mayor and Council plan on using this community economic plan as a road map and timeline to assist in directing them through the economic portion of their community development. The opportunities discussed in this document are summarized in a placemat that is included as Appendix C of this document. Laminated copies of this placemat are provided to Mayor and Council to be used as a reminder of progress against the plan to date.

### 5.1 FUNDING NEEDS

Through this exercise, Mayor and Council have identified financial needs to further investigate each of the selected opportunities to ensure their feasibility and to ensure that they are approached with the strategy and management plan that are best suited to the community, its needs and its goals. The following is a summary of the estimated costs going forward to perform these studies. These estimates assume that the feasibility study will be in enough detail to provide a good understanding of the operations financial merits. If these studies prove positive results, the business plan portion becomes the follow-up to the feasibility study, building upon its work to complete a document with enough detail of scope to be fit for presentation to lenders, funders or investors. If performed separately, these two documents will likely prove more expensive independently.



The following costs are merely estimates and are based on Mayor and Councils understanding of the scope and type of work to be completed.

Opportunity	Feasibility	Business Plan	Total
Cattle Herd	\$20,000 - \$30,000	\$10,000 - \$20,000	\$30,000 - \$50,000
Vegetable Production	\$20,000 - \$40,000	\$10,000 - \$25,000	\$30,000 - \$65,000
Land Rental and Rejuvenation	\$10,000 - \$15,000	\$5,000 - \$10,000	\$15,000 - \$25,000
RV/Campground and Cabins	\$15,000 - \$25,000	\$10,000 - \$20,000	\$25,000 - \$45,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$65,000 - \$100,000</b>	<b>\$35,000 - \$70,000</b>	<b>\$100,000 - \$185,000</b>

Mayor and council continue to pursue hiring an economic development officer and believe it is a primary priority for this plan to be successful. Mayor and council anticipate the annual cost for an experienced economic development officer will range between \$50,000 and \$80,000.



## Appendix A

### Community Action Plan - Notes



# THE NORTHERN VILLAGE OF GREEN LAKE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN



**Note: Information in this section comes from the Community Action Planning Report for The Northern Village of Green Lake.**

A Municipal Development Plan was developed for the Village of Green Lake in 1983. This plan detailed economic characteristics and regional influences that affected Green Lake at the time. The plan also looked at infrastructure, housing and planning issues.

Since 1983, the Village has annexed a significant amount of land and the economic influences have changed. The population of the community is now declining rather than increasing as predicted in the 1983 study. There are also significant new economic activities in the region arising from mineral and oil and gas exploration.

Municipal funding is also becoming an issue. New regulations are being implemented and there are changes in the funding formulas for communities. There are additional pressures on the management of landfills and water treatment. The Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) and the Municipal Asset Information (MAIS) will require municipalities to report asset information in their financial statements by 2009.

The Administrator for the Village of Green Lake requested that the Municipal Capacity Development Program facilitate a community action planning process to help the community address infrastructure, economic and social issues that are arising in the area.

## **Economic Trends**

A discussion was held during the community action planning session regarding global and national trends. During this conversation, the effects of these trends on Green Lake and how certain trends could be capitalized upon was discussed.

### What are the big issues in the world

- Global economy
- Resource values
- Global warming
- Alternative energy – closer to home solutions (local solutions to global problems)
- Exploration taking place in northern lands
  - Impact on animals, nature, and people
- depopulation of rural areas
  - Refocuses resources
  - Changes a lot of what people like about the area
  - Community lost 120 people from 2001 to 2006
- Displacement of people and resources
  - Skilled people move away
  - The money moves away
  - Disproportionate sharing of resources

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## What is going on in this country

- Government is promoting exploration of resources – opening of the north.
- Shortage of oil which leads to other impacts.
- Government chooses economic development over the environment – big business makes decisions.
- Talking about green and sustainability but nothing is really happening.
- Petro Can sending oil straight through to the US but they can't supply their own stations in Canada.
- Federal Election coming up – questionable promises.
- Rural places don't even have a voice.
- Governments support big national and international corporations rather than local businesses. Grants go to the big guys.

## How do we experience it here?

- Changes in biodiversity.
- Change in traffic – more vehicle traffic in community and we need to do something to take advantage of that.
- Population declines due to people leaving to work in Alberta but none of that money comes back here.
- Business has declined in the community.
- Exploration is happening in the area but community hasn't been consulted. Duty to consult is not being respected. Need more communication.
- Formation of interest groups in the NAD but they don't necessarily complement each other.
- Need to focus on getting corporations that are working or exploring in the area to give people in the community a chance to get jobs. Also need to provide training if people lack the skills.

## Are there any positive trends we can capitalize on?

- Economic development is coming. Oil Sands development is coming. Green Lake can't stop it. We can participate in it. We can make our community more attractive to bring business in to take advantage of this. We have land, people and power.
- Need better water and sewer to promote development. We have problems with the current lagoon. We need to develop better infrastructure.
- Build a biologically sensitive method of dealing with waste rather than a lagoon.
- Need to develop our own electricity with sunlight and our almost constant wind.
- More community functions.
- Need an airport.

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- We want our high school back. The community now has too few students to support a high school. If we don't have a school we don't have kids if we don't have kids we lose the school.
- A Métis Local would be very helpful to develop training and social services. Need help to get a training facility.
- Work with the Métis people to resolve the land claim. Encourage everyone to work together.
- Capitalize on the space to attract more people.
- Global warming studies suggest that our location (boreal forest) is probably the best place to be.
- Have looked all over the world and there is a good possibility of a nutraceuticals and non-traditional forest products industry in the area.
- Question: Who owns all the land in Green Lake?
  - Private lands and the community owns the rest?
  - How is the Métis land owned?
- Official Community Plan – the province and the funders now want to see that you have done some planning about how to proceed before they will consider funding new projects.

## Needs Assessment

The specific needs of Green Lake were identified during the planning process. They were then ranked in importance as shown below:

1. Create an economic development board and increase economic opportunities
2. Better communication between the Village Council, interagency groups, community members and the Métis Nation. Show respect to everyone
3. Admit that we have a drug problem
  - Set-up a place for AA and NA meetings
  - Run an awareness program and workshops
  - Get a permanent addictions counselor based in the community
  - Run “sober community” structured activities
4. Expand recreational programs at the school
5. Strengthen community government that is viable
  - Cooperation between council and the Métis Nation
  - Improve funding support for the municipality
  - Improve human resources administratively to implement programs and projects
  - Land use, recreation and waste management issues
  - Support for existing resources and finding links to other resources
6. Clean up the town
7. Have a community discussion about what form of government we want
  - A Métis government or a municipal government

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- Find a bridge between the two
  - Solve the outstanding land ownership issues
  - Find people who may be interested in helping to implement projects and programs
  - Build local capacity and find expertise to help with the process (consultant)
  - Deal with the financial pressures around taxation and the economic base
8. Land Use
- Provide mechanisms for appropriately scaled development
  - Links o a development land use plan and zoning
9. Look at mechanisms for cultural and recreational development
- Seasonal
  - Servicing, etc

## Desired Changes

List of items individuals wanted to remain the same about Green Lake and items that they wanted to change were created and prioritized. They are as follows:

Items that the community members wanted to remain the same by rank order:

1. Keep landfill here and extend recycling facilities but look at a regional system
2. Keep the government services that we now have here and expand them in the future
  - RCMP
  - Health facilities – make sure we keep the nurse
3. Keep our forests intact
4. Keep the Highways maintenance facility and the Fire Cache here
5. Biodiversity to be respected and maintained
6. Junction to remain
7. Expand the recreational activities
  - Curling rink
  - Skating rink
  - School
  - Rodeo grounds
  - Boat launch
8. Keep and develop the two farms
9. Keep our local store

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Items that the community members wanted to change over the next twenty years, by rank order:

1. Expand education and training opportunities
2. Do something about drugs and get an addictions councilor and treatment centre
3. Have the farms look at ethanol and other products
4. Community has a strong seasonal use character. We need to utilize it for more year-round benefit.  
Criteria:
  - Zoning
  - Services
  - Good communication
  - Friendly neighbors
5. Develop business and job opportunities
6. Develop eco-tourism and tourism facilities
  - Canoeing
  - Hiking
  - Community campground
7. More youth programming
8. Capitalize on the traffic going by
9. Population growth
10. Reopen senior's home and the high school





## Appendix B

### Lake Lot Details



## Appendix C

### Placemat