

Youth Retention & Attraction Survey Results



April, 2010

Chukuni Communities Development Corporation
P.O. Box 250, 137 Howey Street
Red Lake, Ontario
P0V 2M0
phone: 807-727-3275
fax: 807-727-3285

Email: Gwyneth.carlson@chukuni.com



Canada

FedNor 

The Community Development Committee (CDC) has conducted a youth survey in order to obtain and analyze information about why youth tend to leave the community and not return and what those youth who do return find appealing about Red Lake. The survey was created to aid the CDC in creating youth retention and attraction strategies. The Committee recognized that this is not an initiative that can or should be pursued in isolation. Instead the CDC hopes to use these survey results, as well as any studies conducted by other organizations, to create joint initiatives. The Committee believes that the task of youth retention and attraction involves many aspects and must, therefore, be a cooperative venture, involving all community organizations and Municipal government.

The Community Development Committee collected survey results over a two month period, from February 8th to April 8th, 2010. The survey was open to all youth, ages 15 to 40, who currently reside in Red Lake or surrounding communities or who, at one time, resided in Red Lake. The survey was conducted online, with a link being placed on the www.myredlake.com website. The survey was circulated primarily using *Facebook*, and was also featured in the Northern Sun News.

The Community Development Committee received 217 responses to the survey in the two month period. The following report is a summary of survey results. Although some further analysis may be required, this report is designed to give a general glimpse into the intentions and perceptions of youth currently residing in Red Lake, as well as provide some information as to why a portion of Red Lake's youth leave the community and choose not to return. Throughout this analysis, when Red Lake is made reference to, this includes all communities within the Municipality of Red Lake and Ear Falls.

The Community Development Committee recognizes that all communities, even large cities, do experience youth out-migration to a certain extent. Studies show that cities, although experiencing some youth out-migration, tend to have overall net in-migration; in that, larger cities tend to have more youth moving to the city than they do leaving. Rural communities, on the other hand, tend to struggle with youth retention and attraction. Studies indicate that rural communities, in general, tend to experience overall youth out-migration.

The Community Development Committee does recognize that Red Lake will experience some youth out-migration and that nearly all youth must leave at some point in order to pursue post-secondary education. The Committee does not strive to eliminate youth out-migration, but rather hopes to develop strategies that will have our youth leaving the community with an overall positive attitude towards their "hometown" and strategies that will entice our community's youth to consider returning to Red Lake after having obtained post-secondary education, bringing with them new knowledge and experiences. The CDC also hopes to make Red Lake a more appealing community for youth who are considering migrating from elsewhere in Canada (or other parts of the world) to our community.

70% of respondents to our Youth Survey were born or raised in Red Lake or surrounding communities. 71% of respondents currently live in Red Lake. Of respondents currently in a relationship, 34% state that their partner was born or raised in Red Lake. 33% of respondents have lived in their current location for more than 10 years, whereas 24% have lived in their current location for 2 years or less. The median age of respondents is 29 years old; 63% of respondents are female; 55% are married or in a common-law relationship; and 39% currently have children or dependants.

Within the age range 15 to 40 years, we have identified four sub-categories: (1) 15 to 18 years (currently in high school); (2) 19 to 24 years (likely to be completing post-secondary education or have recently graduated); (3) 25 to 30 years old; and (4) 31 to 40 years old. From the 15 to 18 year age group there were 38 responses; from the 19 to 24 year age group there were 31 responses; age 25 to 30 years there were 62 responses; and age 31 to 40 years there were 86 responses.

15 to 18 years old

Of the respondents age 15 to 18, 95% are currently in the process of completing their education, most likely at the secondary school level. Youth, age 15 to 18 years old, most likely live in the community of Red Lake simply as a result of their parents choosing to make this community their home. The majority of these youth will likely leave Red Lake to gain post secondary education or other work and life experiences. Only 21% plan to return to Red Lake upon graduation, 37% do **not** plan on returning, and 39% are undecided. 68% of respondents, age 15 to 18, are employed, and, of those, 96% are employed part-time. Yet, these respondents listed *Employment opportunities* as their most important consideration when choosing to reside in their current location. Followed by: Distance from family and friends, Leisure activities available, Rate of Pay/Income, and Entertainment and Nightlife.

The most popular leisure activities that respondents, age 15 to 18 years, participate in are: (1) fishing; (2) hockey; (3) snow machining or four-wheeling; (4) sports, including tennis, basketball, volley-ball, baseball and soccer; (5) walking, running or working-out; and (6) swimming and boating. The most popular organized activities participated in by youth, age 15 to 18 years, are (1) hockey; (2) school sports, including basketball and badminton; (3) soccer; (4) baseball; and (5) swimming. These youth tend to be very involved in organized sports, as well as leisure and outdoor activities. However, they feel there are not enough activities and clubs designed and available specifically for teens, especially for those teens uninterested in sports or outdoor adventure activities. The most common activities that respondents, age 15 to 18 years, would like to see offered in the community are football and, more generally, clubs and activities specifically for teens. Additionally, they feel there are very few activities or facilities available to them on evening and weekends.

The aspects of Red Lake that really appeal to these respondents, age 15 to 18 years, are the outdoor activities available, the nature and scenery, and the small-town mentality, where you know your neighbour and people are friendly. The improvements to Red Lake that these youth feel should be made are: (1) More activities designed specifically for youth, with emphasis on evening and weekend activities; (2) More shopping and dining establishments; (3) Improvements to Municipal infrastructure, including roads and parks; (4) The development of a movie theatre; and (5) Improved recreational facilities.

- *What in particular makes the community so unappealing to these youth?*
- *How can we, as a community, ensure these youth are leaving with a positive impression of Red Lake?*
- *Down the road, what factors will contribute towards making the important decision as to whether or not they return to Red Lake?*

- *What can we do for these youth **now** that may influence them to return in later years? If these youth have a positive experience now, will it create a stronger emotional attachment to Red Lake?*
- *Will the perceptions these youth have of Red Lake change as they move into later life stages?*

19 to 24 years old

Of the respondents, age 19 to 24 years, 77% were born or raised in Red Lake. 38% currently reside in Red Lake or surrounding communities, whereas 27% reside in Southern Ontario and another 19% reside in Northern Ontario (but, not Red Lake). Youth, age 19 to 24 years old, are most likely to be currently completing their post secondary education or have recently graduated. Of the respondents currently living somewhere other than Red Lake, 75% are still in the process of completing their education. 35% of these respondents, age 19 to 24 years, have obtained a University degree (or are currently enrolled in a University institution) and 35% have obtained a College diploma (or are currently enrolled in a College program). 69% of all respondents, age 19 to 24 years, are currently in the process of completing their education. Of those currently completing their education, 24% have plans to return upon graduation, 43% do **not** plan on returning, and 33% are undecided. The most common fields of study for these respondents are: (1) Psychology, (2) Biology, Sciences, & Environmental Studies, (3) Engineering, and (4) Medical fields.

For these respondents the most important considerations when choosing to reside in their current location are: (1) Employment opportunities; (2) Educational opportunities; (3) Rate of pay/Income; (4) Desire for something new/Change of scenery; and (5) Distance from family and friends. For these respondents, the most important considerations, when choosing to reside in their current location, are employment and educational opportunities. Red Lake does have some post-secondary education options available and there seems to be ample employment opportunities, as well as overall high income levels. However, most students will migrate to a larger centre for their post-secondary studies and, once they have made this transition, they may discover that the employment opportunities in their chosen field are limited in Red Lake. Youth, age 19 to 24 years, do desire a change of scenery, but distance from family and friends does still weight on their decision when choosing to reside in their current location.

The top five leisure activities participated in by respondents, age 19 to 24 years, are: (1) watching and going to movies; (2) fishing; (3) walking, hiking and jogging; (4) shopping; and (5) snow machining. The most common organized activity participated in by this same group of respondents is hockey. The clubs or activities that these respondents would like to see offered in Red Lake are hiking, soccer, and movies. This group of respondents, in general, seems to be less involved in organized activities.

The aspects of Red Lake that really appeal to these respondents, age 19 to 24 years, are the natural surroundings and scenery, the accessibility of outdoor activities, the small-town mentality, and the family-oriented nature of the community. The aspects of the community that these youth, age 19 to 24 years, feel could be improved upon are: (1) the extent of drug use in the community; (2) the lack of activities specifically for teens and young adults; (3) the fact that nothing is open late; (4) the inadequacy of recreational opportunities and facilities; and (5) the lack of public transit.

Respondents, age 19 to 24 years, currently residing somewhere other than Red Lake, indicated that our community is unappealing to youth because it lacks educational opportunities, activities for youth, and an element of confidentiality and anonymity. These same youth indicated that increased educational opportunities, increased programming, activities and facilities for youth, increased shopping opportunities, and increased entertainment and nightlife might entice them to move back to Red Lake or surrounding area.

It is important to note that many of these youth are away attending University or College in a larger city. This may be the first time that many of these youth have experienced living in a larger city. Many of these suggested improvements may be a result of a somewhat unfair comparison. Red Lake and other smaller communities will likely never have the attributes of a large city – opportunities for shopping, dining, and nightlife are endless in these cities. However, youth in this age group, 19 to 24 years, often lead a much different lifestyle and their priorities are likely to change in the coming years.

- *What has influenced those youth that plan on returning to Red Lake? What is drawing them back? What can we, as a community, do to ensure they want to stay?*
- *For those who have decided **not** to return to Red Lake, what factors have contributed to the decision? Can we, as a community, change their minds?*
- *What can we do to attract those that are ‘undecided’ back to the community?*
- *Although youth will migrate, what can be done that would make Red Lake a more desirable option when choosing where to live and work?*
- *Does the apparent lack of participation correlate with their current stage of life? What activities and programs could be offered that would appeal to this age demographic?*
- *Is it possible to compete with large cities? What changes can we make, as a community, to appear more desirable in this highly competitive environment?*
- *Are there certain suggestions we are prepared to address? What is perhaps out of our reach?*
- *Will the perceptions of these respondents change as they age and move into later stages of life? How can we prepare to meet the needs of these youth as they age?*

25 to 30 years old

Youth, age 25 to 30 years old, are often at a stage of life where they are starting a family or raising children. Stage of life will clearly affect a person’s perceptions of the community and their priorities when choosing where to live. Of the respondents, age 25 to 30 years, 62% currently reside in the community of Red Lake, 55% of which were born or raised here. Of respondents, age 25 to 30 years, who are currently residing in Red Lake, 82% are married or in a common-law relationship and, of those, 48% state their partner was born or raised in Red Lake and 68% have children or dependants. It is clear that this group of respondents will have different interests and priorities, related to their stage of life. This group is likely going to be interested in family activities and their decision to reside in their current location may be as a result of importance they place on family.

47% of respondents, age 25 to 30 years, who are living in Red Lake, have a University Degree and 26% have a College Diploma. 92% of this same group of respondents are employed. However, only 57% (just over half) of this group of

respondents state that their field of employment relates to their post-secondary field of study. This could mean that those respondents may have chosen to sacrifice a career in their chosen field in order to live in Red Lake. This may, in part, be due to the high levels of income reported by these respondents. The median annual income of males, age 25 to 30, living in Red Lake is \$75,000. The median annual income of females, age 25 to 30, living in Red Lake is between \$36,000 and \$45,000.

The most important considerations for females, age 25 to 30 years, when making the decision to reside in their current location are: (1) Employment opportunities; (2) Distance from family and friends; (3) Rate of pay/Income; (4) Spousal employment; and (5) Desirable place to raise a family. The most important considerations for males, age 25 to 30 years, when making the decision to reside in their current location are: (1) Employment opportunities; (2) Rate of Pay/Income; (3) Leisure activities available; (4) Desirable place to raise a family; (5) Housing availability and affordability.

Respondents, age 25 to 30 years, are highly involved in leisure and organized activities available in the community. The most common leisure activities participated in by the youth are: fishing (47% of respondents); walking, hiking or running (43% of respondents); and watching movies (28% of respondents). Other activities participated in by this group of respondents are: cross-country skiing, snow machining, four-wheeling, shopping, arts and crafts, boating and water sports, camping, playing or watching hockey, and dining out. The most common organized activities participated in by respondents, age 25 to 30 years, are curling, hockey, yoga, swimming, and baseball. The community clubs and organized activities that respondents, age 25 to 30, would like to see offered in their community are: outdoor adventure groups and activities, a movie theatre, pottery and art classes, fitness classes, evening entertainment, cooking classes, music lessons, dance classes, walking groups, and more social activities. This group of respondents is clearly looking for a variety of activities.

The aspects of Red Lake that really appeal to respondents, age 25 to 30 years and living in Red Lake, are: being close to nature and water; the outdoor activities available and the ease of access; the small town mentality and sense of community; the feeling of safety; a good place to raise a family; the proximity to family; the friendly people; the easy-going lifestyle; the ability to avoid a commute; the peacefulness; and the employment opportunities and high income levels. The aspects of Red Lake that respondents, age 25 to 30 years and living in Red Lake, feel could be improved upon are: dining and retail options; entertainment and social activities; aesthetic appearance and maintenance of public spaces; recreational facilities and walking trails; medical care; educational opportunities; availability of housing; and the cost of living.

For those respondents, ages 25 to 30 years and currently residing somewhere other than Red Lake, the community is unappealing because it lacks: dining and retail options; a variety of employment and career opportunities; educational opportunities; affordable housing; ease of access to major centres; organized activities for children and young adults; nightlife and entertainment; access to medical care; public transit; cultural activities; ethnic diversity; and anonymity or confidentiality. These same youth indicated that more organized activities, events and opportunities for socializing, more housing availability, and more businesses, services and restaurants might entice them to move back to Red Lake or surrounding area. Some stated that nothing would entice them to move

back to the area, whereas others stated that they would move back if they could, but work or family restricted their ability to return to the community.

- *How does stage of life affect this group of respondents' perceptions of their community? How do their priorities differ from those youth that are in high school or post-secondary school?*
- *It seems that employment and income are the main considerations for these respondents, do these youth view living in Red Lake as just a pay check? Do we, as a community, need to work towards creating the sense that Red Lake has 'the whole package'?*
- *Why are these respondents, in this age group, much more involved in leisure and organized activities available in their community?*
- *Is this demographic more willing to embrace the community they have decided to call home?*

31 to 40 years old

Of the respondents, age 31 to 40 years of age, 76% are currently residing in Red Lake or surrounding communities and 58% of those were born or raised in the community. 80% of respondents, age 31 to 40 and living in Red Lake, are married or in a common-law relationship and, of those, 44% state their partner was born or raised in the community. 71% of respondents, 31 to 40 years old and living in Red Lake, currently have children or dependants. It is clear from these results that this group of respondents, age 31 to 40 years old, are likely to be married or in a common-law relationship, with children or dependants.

Of respondents, age 31 to 40 years and living in Red Lake, 38% have a College Diploma, 27% have a University Degree, 17% have some University or College, 3% have an Apprenticeship or Trade certificate, 12% have only a High School Diploma and 3% have less than a High School Diploma. 98% of this group of respondents are employed, but only 46% state that their field of employment relates to their post-secondary field of study and 19% state that their field of employment is only somewhat related to their post-secondary field of study. Although the levels of education obtained by youth does vary depending from one sub-category to the next, employment rates of those youth residing in Red Lake remains high, as does rate of pay and income brackets. The median annual income of males, age 31 to 40 and living in Red Lake, is \$75,000 or more. The median annual income of females, age 31 to 40 and living in Red Lake, is \$36,000 to \$45,000.

The top five most important considerations for females, age 31 to 40, when making the decision to reside in their current location are: (1) Employment opportunities; (2) Spousal employment; (3) Distance from family and friends; (4) Rate of pay/Income; and (5) Desirable place to raise a family. The top five most important considerations for males, age 31 to 40, when making the decision to reside in their current location are: (1) Employment opportunities; (2) Rate of pay/Income; (3) Spousal employment; (4) Desirable place to raise a family; and (5) Distance from family and friends. Males and females in the age range make similar considerations when choosing to reside in their current location, with a focus on employment and income, followed by choosing a desirable place to raise a family and choosing to be close to family and friends.

Like the 25 to 30 year age group, respondents, age 31 to 40 years, are very active in community leisure and organized activities. The most common leisure activities

participated in by respondents, age 31 to 40, are: fishing; walking and hiking; camping; watching movies; snow machining and four-wheeling; entertaining, socializing and spending time with family and friends; beach, water sports, boating, and swimming; running and biking. The most common organized activities participated in by respondents, age 31 to 40, are: hockey; curling; swimming lessons; fitness classes, yoga, aqua aerobics, and gym membership; softball, baseball and slow pitch; and golf. Yet, this group of respondents are looking for even more variety of activities. The community clubs, organized or leisure activities that respondents, age 31 to 40 years, would like to see offered in their community are: dance classes; movie theatre; cooking classes; fitness classes; walking, biking and hiking trails and groups; arts, crafts, and photography classes; social functions; and sports.

The aspects of the community that are really appealing to respondents, age 31 to 40 years and living in Red Lake, are: the outdoors and access to lakes; safety for children; small-town community; community support; good place to raise a family; employment opportunities; fishing and hunting; and friendly people. The aspects of the community that respondents, age 31 to 40 years and living in Red Lake, feel could be improved upon are: retail options; medical services; activities for children and teens; Municipal infrastructure; community facilities and activities; nightlife and social functions; aesthetics and community appearance.

The areas in which respondents, age 31 to 40 years and residing somewhere other than Red Lake, feel the community is lacking, which makes it unappealing, are: lack of employment opportunities; lack of retail stores and services; distance from major centres; and high cost of living. The improvements to the community that this same group of respondents feel might entice them to move back to the area are: more retail business and dining options; increased housing options; better access to medical services and specialists; and increased variety of employment opportunities.

- *The large majority of these respondents are married or in a common-law relationship and about three-quarters have children, obviously this will influence on their priorities. How does having a family change the perceptions these youth have of the community they call home?*
- *As with the 25 to 30 years old youths, employment opportunities and level of income seem to be the most important considerations when choosing where to reside, but they also wish to live in a desirable place to raise a family and to be close to family and friends. Are these families simply choosing to make Red Lake their home because of the employment opportunities? If so, how can we ensure they have a positive impression of other aspects of the community?*
- *Just over half of the respondents, age 31 to 40 years and living in Red Lake, were born or raised here. How do the perceptions of Red Lake differ between those that were born or raised in Red Lake and those that moved here later in life?*

The Community Development Committee recognizes that there will always be a certain amount of youth migration, in and out of our community. The Committee does not wish to prevent youth from leaving the community all together. However, we, as a community, should want our youth to leave with a positive opinion towards their hometown, so they can go off and gain knowledge and skills and, hopeful, return to Red

Lake down the road. The Committee recognizes that in order to continue to retain our youth in the future, as well as attract youth from other parts of the country to live and work in Red Lake, we must ensure that the community dedicates time and energy towards our youth and make their interests a priority. Our youth are our future.

The Community Development Committee invites comments and questions in regards to this Youth Retention and Attraction Report. The Chukuni Communities Development Corporation encourages local organizations to use this information to assess their services and programming and assist in improving Red Lake and surrounding area, not only for youth, but for everyone living and working in the community. Please contact our office if we can be of any assistance you your organization now or in the future.