

# What can Wood Buffalo do to Improve Community Wellbeing?

**“The essence of creating an alternative future comes from citizen-to-citizen engagement that constantly focuses on the wellbeing of the whole.”<sup>19</sup>**

The information in this report shows that people with higher levels of wellbeing are happier, healthier, have a stronger sense of belonging to community, and are more satisfied with their lives in general than people with below average wellbeing. By focusing on improving the quality of life for those with below average wellbeing, all residents will benefit.

**“Evidence suggests that societies where there is greater inequality have worse health and wellbeing outcomes.<sup>20</sup> This is obvious for those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, but what may surprise many is that those worse outcomes extend all the way to the top of the ladder. Even the wealthiest in an unbalanced society suffer worse health and wellbeing. The stories of people who are most affected by this inequality bring this into sharp focus, but we must remind ourselves that focusing on wellbeing means more than just helping the 9% of Canadians that were living in poverty in 2010 (as defined by the low income cut-off). We must create the conditions that lead to greater wellbeing for everyone.”<sup>21</sup>**

Small groups, especially multi-sectoral collaborations, are encouraged to work together to explore the following questions and to generate innovative solutions, especially for residents with below average wellbeing.

## What would it take to:

1. Shift the patterns of behaviours, systemic structures and mental models to increase the wellbeing of residents?
2. Change rules, norms and cultural values to increase the wellbeing of residents?
3. Improve access to community facilities, programs, and services (e.g. sufficient quality childcare services for all families)?
4. Increase the percentage of people who volunteer?
5. Make community information more accessible?



# Resilient Wood Buffalo

A Guide to Understanding Wellbeing in Wood Buffalo

## Background

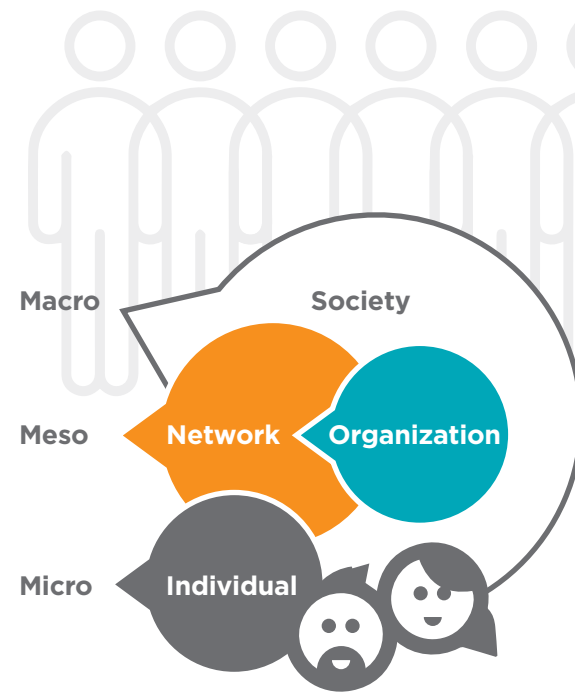
» In the fall of 2013, a group of community organizations<sup>1</sup> wanted to find out how residents felt about their quality of life in Wood Buffalo. Were they happy, healthy and able to access all of the community resources that could help them reach their full potential? Employers, local government and social profit agencies in Wood Buffalo want to support a high quality of life for residents, but in today's increasingly complex and interconnected world, no one organization can address social problems on its own. So the collaboration got together with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing — a Canadian-made social innovation success story — and conducted the “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey<sup>2</sup>. This survey provided a snapshot of how residents felt about their work-life balance, perceived accessibility of community facilities and services, and other factors that influence wellbeing. Wellbeing isn't just about your health or social life. It's a combination of things like education, living standards and even democratic engagement. The Community Wellbeing Survey Working Group<sup>3</sup> wanted to engage all members of the Wood Buffalo community in a conversation about wellbeing as it relates to individuals, organizations, networks and society as a whole. They hope the survey results will inspire

organizations from different sectors (local government, industry, and social profit agencies) to use this information to collectively develop strategies that will improve quality of life outcomes for all residents.

**“Large-scale transformation occurs when enough small groups shift in harmony toward the larger change.”<sup>4</sup>**

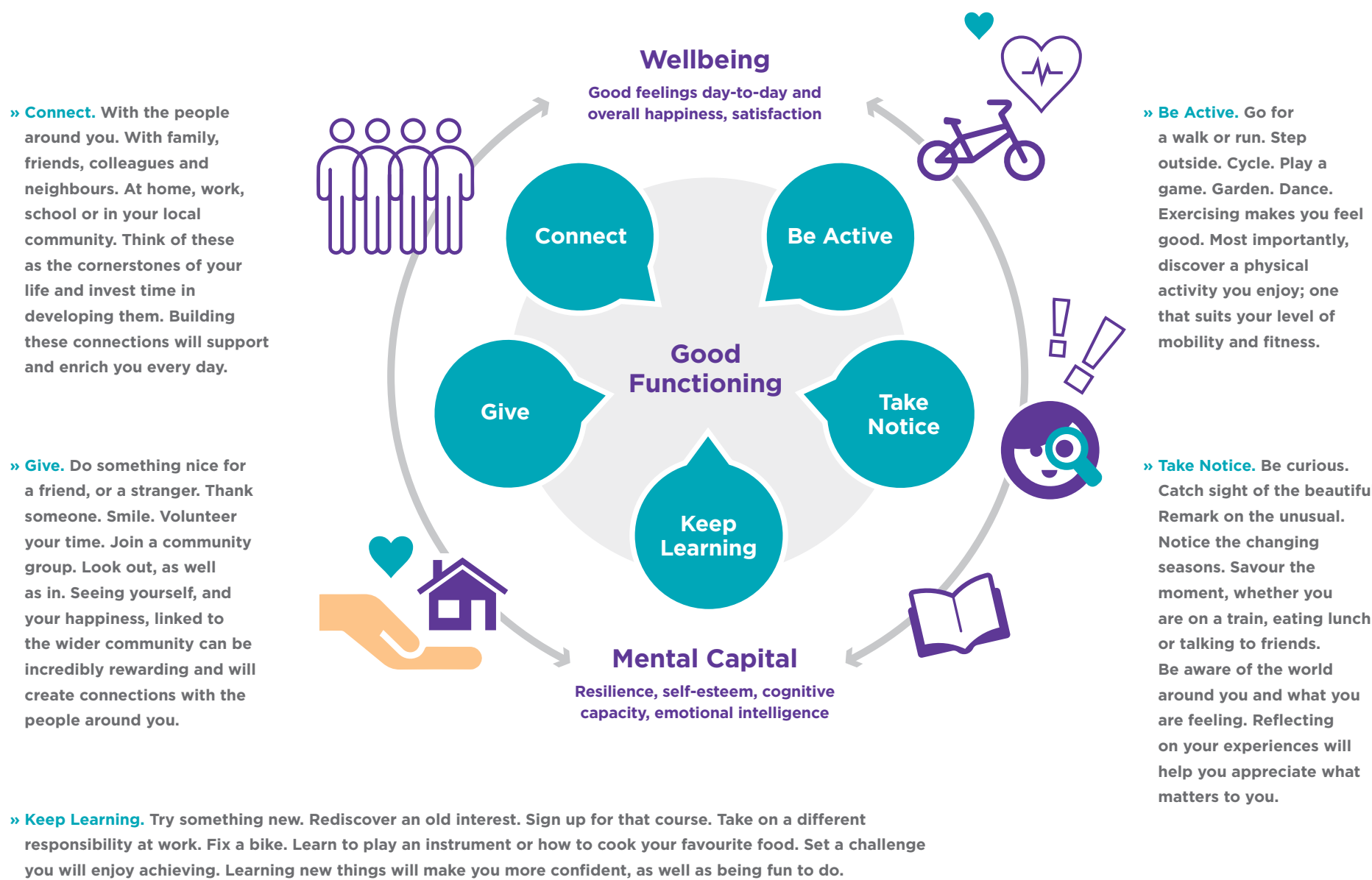
This report summarizes the key findings from the community wellbeing survey reports and analysis that were presented at the Resilient Communities Conference<sup>5</sup> and the “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey Report-Back presentation. It also includes new information about what influences a person's wellbeing and compares profiles of residents with above average and below average wellbeing in Wood Buffalo.

If you would like to learn more about the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, the full survey reports or the survey process, please visit: [uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing](http://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing).



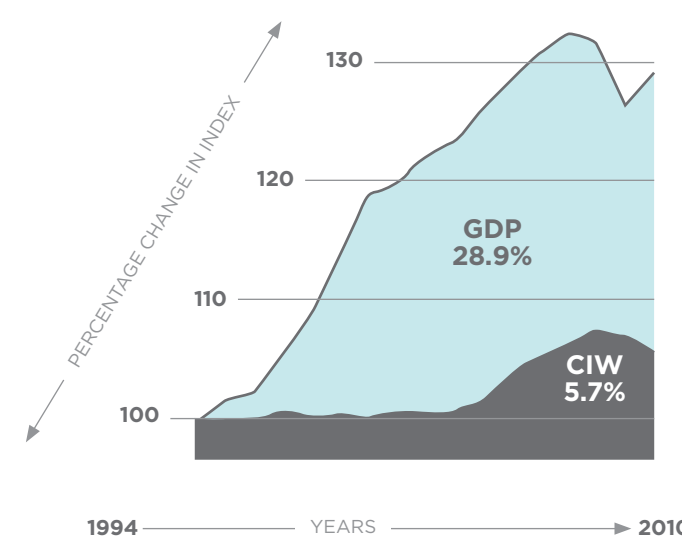
<sup>1</sup> Including the Oil Sands Community Alliance, the United Way of Fort McMurray, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo, and FuseSocial. <sup>2</sup> The “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey took place from May 3 to June 20th, 2014. <sup>3</sup> The “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey working group was composed of representatives from each of the partner organizations as well as representatives from the Canadian Index of Wellbeing. The working group members are listed at the back of this report. <sup>4</sup> Buck, P. (2008) Community: The Structure of Belongings p.186. <sup>5</sup> Resilient Communities Conference took place October 1-3, 2014 at the Sawridge Inn, Fort McMurray, AB.

Individuals are also encouraged to take part. What steps are you prepared to take to improve your own wellbeing? **The Five Ways to Wellbeing<sup>22</sup>** are a set of evidence-based actions individuals can integrate into their everyday lives to help increase personal wellbeing. They are<sup>23</sup>:



## Why Measure Wellbeing?<sup>6</sup>

» The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) shows that, while Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown over the years, our wellbeing has not kept pace. The CIW comprehensive framework offers a way to look at the things that matter most to Canadians and takes into consideration how these things influence each other. Measuring that same information over time will tell us whether quality of life outcomes are improving.



<sup>6</sup> Graphic demonstrating change in GDP and Wellbeing indicators from: Canadian Index of Wellbeing (2012). How are Canadians Really Doing? The 2012 CIW Report. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and University of Waterloo, p. 11.

## What We Did: “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey

### Survey Sample:

- » 25% randomly selected households in Fort McMurray or 6,161 households
- » 100% of households in outlying communities (over-sampling in rural communities)

### Questionnaire:

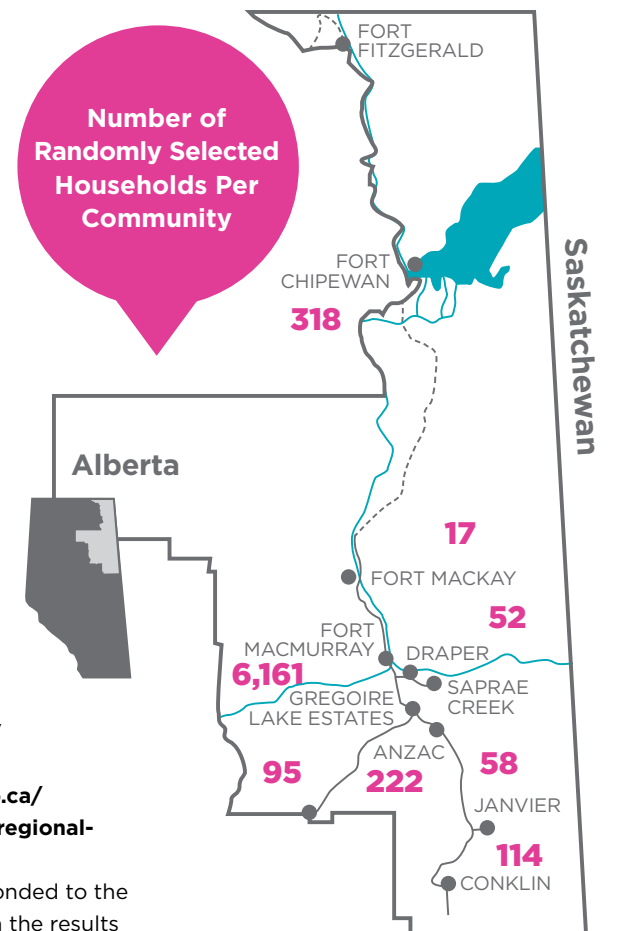
- » Survey questions were adjusted to reflect Wood Buffalo context
- » Both online and paper versions of the survey were available
- » The “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey took place from May 3 to June 20th, 2014

### Response Rate:

- » 560 surveys received, or a 8% response rate
- » 496 from Fort McMurray
- » 65 from outlying communities

### Results:

- » Data was managed and analyzed by the CIW
- » CIW produced 3 reports based on input from the Working Group and Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo (SPWB)
- » Full reports can be found at <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/community-users/regional-municipality-wood-buffalo-fort-mcmurray-ab>
- » The number of First Nations people who responded to the survey was not high enough to be confident in the results
- » The results are weighted by age, sex and geographic location to ensure they are representative of the total population based on 2011 Census Canada estimates. Methodology details are included in all CIW reports



Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo is a community-driven process to build and sustain innovation and social change in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. It grew out of the Suncor Energy Foundation's vision to improve the social wellbeing of communities by building the capacity of social profit organizations. Partners include stakeholders in Wood Buffalo, the Suncor Energy Foundation, and the University of Waterloo. Social prosperity refers to quality of life, to thriving and resilient communities where people are connected and have access to community resources that help them reach their full potential.

This report was prepared by Nancy Mattes, Director of Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo with input from Katharine McGowan, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Katharine Zywert, Project Officer for Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo, Linda McKessock, Project Manager, Canadian Index of Wellbeing and Bryan Smale, Director, Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

### SPWB would also like to thank members of the Community Wellbeing Survey Working Group:

- Francisco Bermejo, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Inta Clinite, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Ifeatu Efu, SPWB
- Bryan Jackson, Suncor Energy Inc.
- Brandl Gartner, Oil Sands Community Alliance
- Margo Hillebrecht, Canadian Index of Wellbeing
- Lynley Kotyk, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Manny Makia, FuseSocial
- Nancy Mattes, SPWB, University of Waterloo
- Katharine McGowan, SPWB, University of Waterloo
- Linda McKessock, Canadian Index of Wellbeing
- Jerry Neville, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Kim Nordbye, Suncor Energy Foundation
- Keely Phillips, Canadian Index of Wellbeing
- Joanne Roberts
- Diane Shannon, United Way of Fort McMurray
- Bryan Smale, Canadian Index of Wellbeing
- Dennis Vroom, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Katharine Zywert, SPWB, University of Waterloo

## Thank you to the “Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey Partners and Sponsors:

### Gold Sponsors:

Oil Sands Community Alliance | Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo | Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo



### In-Kind Donations:

Arts Council Wood Buffalo & Keyano Theatre Centre | ONE Regional Recreation Corporation Fort McMurray Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo | United Way of Fort McMurray



### Partners:

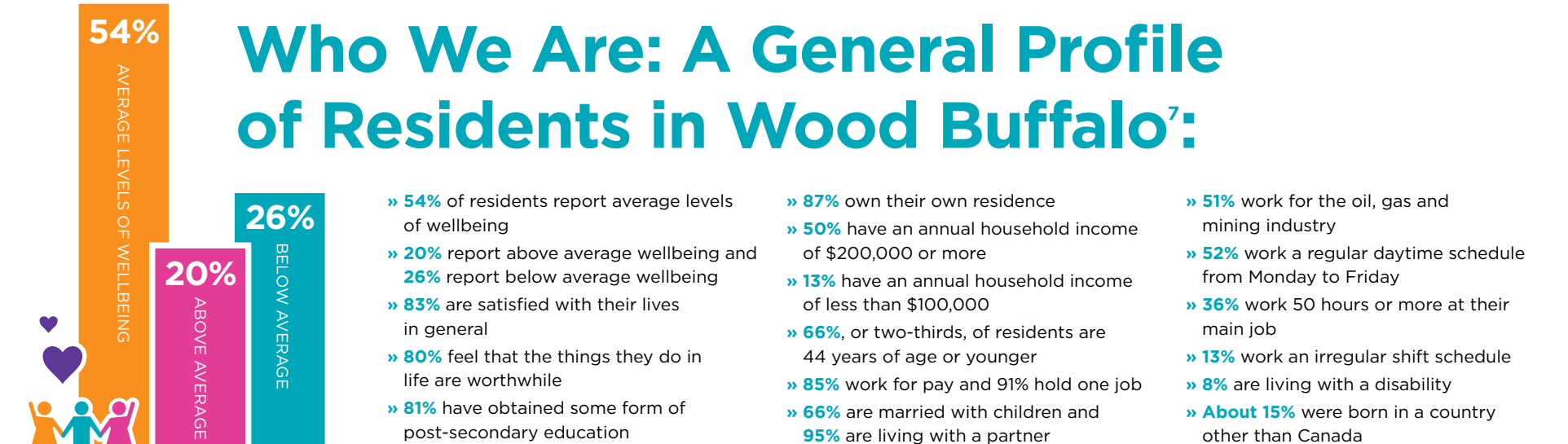
United Way of Fort McMurray | FuseSocial | Canadian Index of Wellbeing  
Keyano College | Real Estate Board of Fort McMurray



Thank you also to the Suncor Energy Foundation for its generous support of Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo.

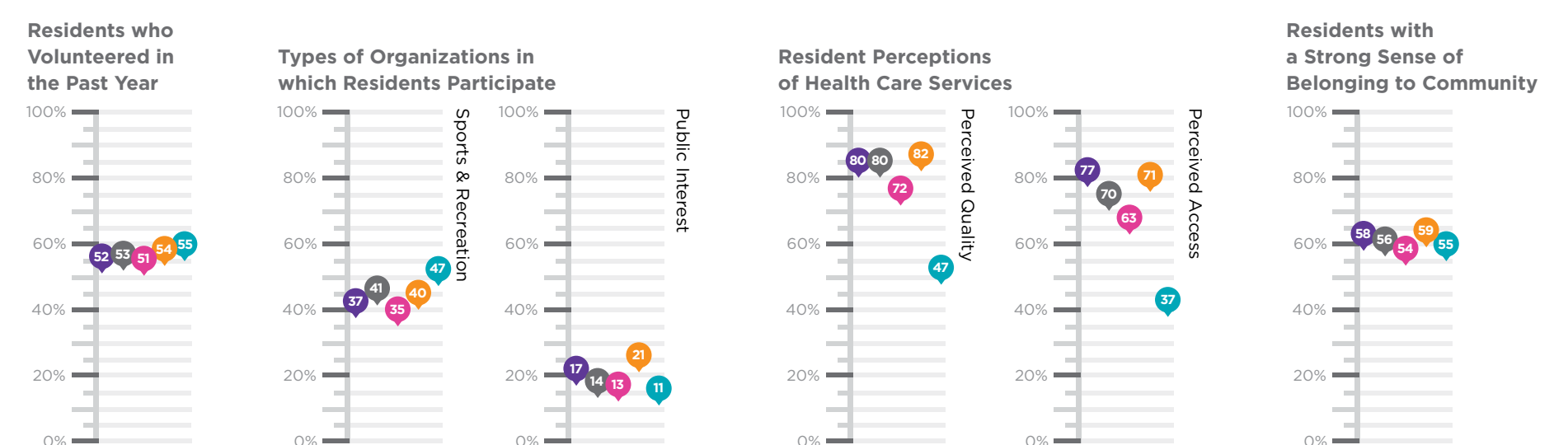


## Who We Are: A General Profile of Residents in Wood Buffalo<sup>7</sup>:



<sup>7</sup> Phillips, K., Hillebrecht, M., & Smale, B. (2014). A profile of the Wellbeing of Wood Buffalo Region Residents. A Preliminary Report for the Social Prosperity Wood Buffalo and its Partners. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and the University of Waterloo.

## How Wood Buffalo Compares To Other Communities<sup>8</sup>:



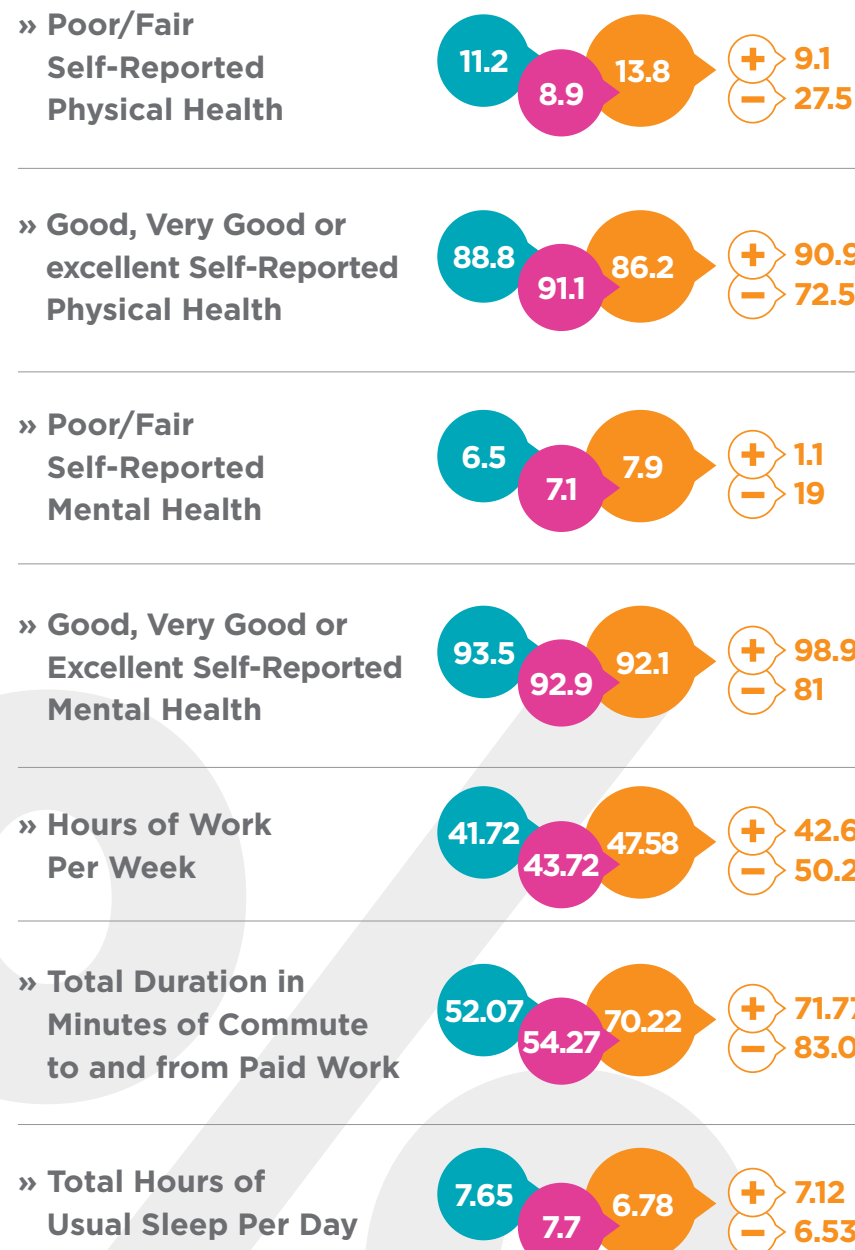
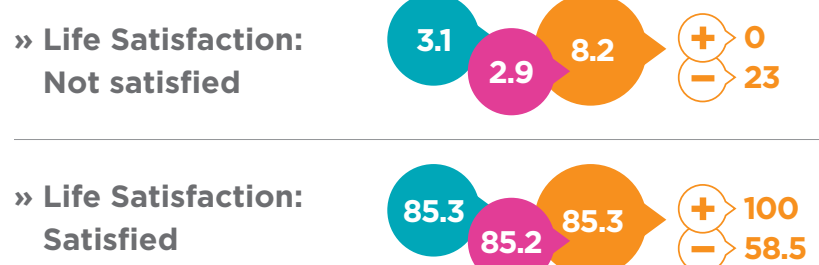
<sup>8</sup> “The Look into Wood Buffalo” Community Wellbeing Survey: Residents’ Perception of Their Wellbeing. Presentation by B. Smale, Director of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Resilient Communities Conference, October 2014, slide 27-34.

# Wood Buffalo and the Bigger Picture: Opportunities for Improvement

» In the chart below, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing provides select statistics on life satisfaction, self-reported physical and mental health, hours of work per week, commute times and hours of sleep at the community, provincial and national levels to show how Wood Buffalo compares to different scales. While statistics for Wood Buffalo residents with above average wellbeing reveal higher levels of wellbeing than both provincial and national figures, it is important to note that data for residents with below average wellbeing affects the overall Wood Buffalo averages.

All numbers in percentage.

- Canada
- Wood Buffalo Residents
- WB Res. with Above Average Wellbeing
- WB Res. with Below Average Wellbeing



## » The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has adopted a specific definition of wellbeing.

The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to:

- » Good Living Standards
- » Robust Health
- » A Sustainable Environment
- » Vital Communities
- » An Educated Populace
- » Balanced Time Use
- » High Levels of Democratic Participation
- » Access to and Participation in Leisure and Culture

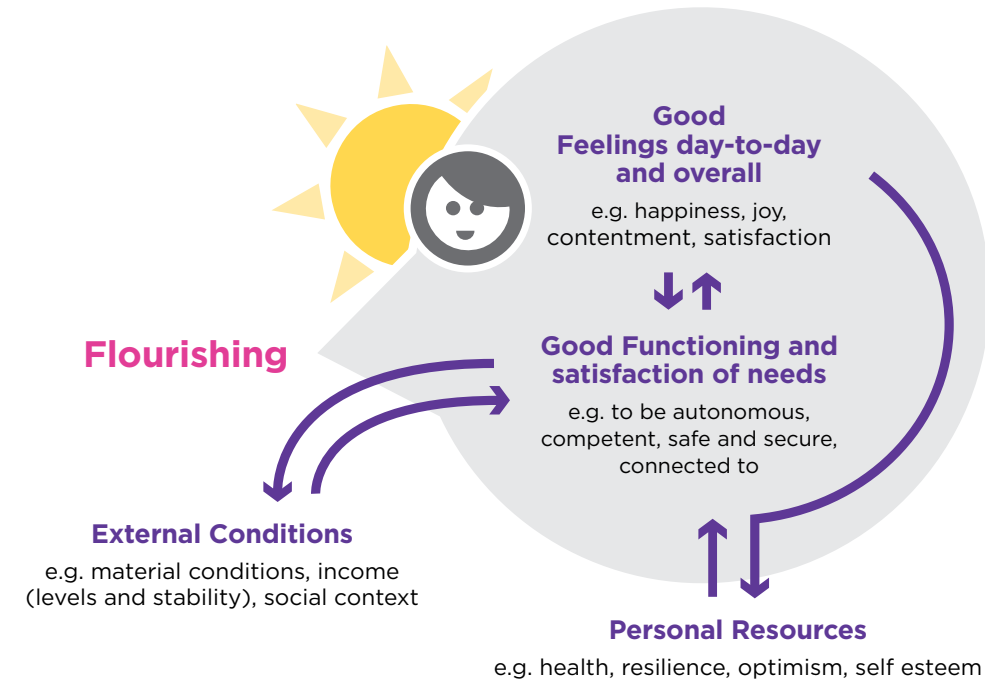
# » So, how does Wood Buffalo stack up to this definition? Select statistics from the CIW "Look into Wood Buffalo" Community Wellbeing Survey

- Education**
- » 65% agree that there are opportunities to take formal education courses
  - » 58% say they would take courses, but cost and inconvenient times are barriers to participation
- Living Standards**
- » 85% work for pay and 91% have only one job
  - » 41% perceive job security is poor
  - » 10% could not pay their bills on time in the past year
- Leisure and Culture**
- » 33% used recreation and/or cultural facilities during the past year
  - » 51% feel the cost of public recreation and culture programs are a barrier to participation
  - » 71% agree that leisure contributes to physical fitness and health
  - » 75% agree that leisure contributes to relaxation, stress relief and emotional wellbeing
- Democratic Engagement**
- » 42% of residents felt that the programs and services offered by the local government have made them somewhat or much better off
  - » 33% participate in charitable or community events
  - » less than 10% were actively engaged in local issues in the past 12 months

- Healthy Populations**
- » 47% say their physical health is very good to excellent
  - » 62% say their mental health is very good to excellent
- Time Use**
- » 70% of residents feel rushed
  - » 59% feel they have adequate time to participate in or be active in the community
  - » 62% agree they have a good work/life balance
- Community Vitality**
- » 56% volunteered in the past 12 months
  - » 74% feel this community provides opportunities for them to do a lot of different things
  - » 75% of residents are proud of their community
  - » 68% would recommend Wood Buffalo as a great place to live
- Environment**
- » 77% feel they have a personal responsibility to help protect the natural environment
  - » Over 80% regularly recycle, reuse and reduce
  - » 62% feel the air quality is "very good"
  - » 56% feel the water quality is "very good"

## Dynamic Model of Wellbeing

» Your wellbeing is influenced by an interconnected set of external and internal factors that affect your ability to flourish and reach your full potential. This diagram from the New Economic Foundation shows how external conditions such as employment and material conditions interact with personal resources such as health and optimism to enable individuals to function in society. When these factors are working well and individuals are flourishing, life satisfaction is high. Alternatively, when factors are impeding an individual's ability to function well in society, life satisfaction is lower.



## Contrasting Wood Buffalo Resident Profiles

» The Canadian Index of Wellbeing completed a profile of Wood Buffalo residents based on their level of wellbeing<sup>9</sup>. This report reveals that 54% of the population has average wellbeing, 20% has above average wellbeing, and 26% has below average wellbeing. By leaving out the middle group and focusing on the other two, we can learn more about what factors are influencing and affecting those who are flourishing as well as those who are struggling with their wellbeing.

### Profile of Residents with Above Average Wellbeing

#### Personal Characteristics & Resources

- » Higher household income (\$200,000+)
- » Have a partner
- » Do not have a disability
- » Better physical and mental health
- » Stronger feelings of time adequacy
- » Strong sense of belonging to community
- » Work 43 hours per week on average
- » Work a regular, weekday routine
- » Positive attitude
- » Spend 61 to 120 minutes daily watching television (40%)
- » High level of interest in municipal politics
- » Highly engaged in civic and community activities
- » Getting just over 7 hours of sleep per day

#### External Conditions

- » Generous employee benefit packages include 5-6 weeks of vacation<sup>10</sup> (36–39%) per year
- » Daily commute to and from work is 72 minutes per day on average
- » Able to access community programs and services
- » Able to access childcare services in recreational facilities if needed
- » Able to take advantage of educational opportunities for both job training and personal interests
- » Able to take advantage of employment opportunities, job security
- » Able to access health care services
- » Able to enjoy nature in the community/city
- » Policies of local government perceived to be beneficial

### Profile of Residents with Below Average Wellbeing

#### Personal Characteristics & Resources

- » Household income \$100,000<sup>11</sup> or less
- » May have a disability
- » Could be living in an outlying community
- » Poorer physical and mental health
- » Lower feelings of time adequacy
- » Lower sense of belonging to community<sup>14</sup>
- » Work an irregular schedule<sup>15</sup>
- » Spending more than 120 minutes daily watching television (40%)
- » Work 50 hours per week on average
- » Not engaged/connected to community
- » Trouble connecting with others
- » Not getting the recommended 7 hours of sleep per night (6.5 hours)
- » Feeling rushed at least once a week
- » Don't have enough time for family and/or the things that matter

#### External Conditions

- » One in five residents (20%) took under 2 weeks of vacation in the past year<sup>16</sup>
- » Unable to access childcare services, so spending more time looking after their children
- » Not enough time to be active in the community (19%)
- » Daily commutes time to and from work is 83 minutes on average
- » Work interferes with personal life and personal life interferes with work, or lower levels of work-life enrichment
- » Inadequate child care services
- » Recreational facilities do not provide adequate childcare services
- » Community facilities are not perceived to be welcoming and accessible
- » Educational institutions offer courses at inconvenient times (50%) and course costs are a barrier to participation (59%)
- » Policies of local government are not perceived to be beneficial
- » Inaccessible health care system — 79% think the accessibility of health care services is poor or fair
- » Poor health care system — 81% think the quality of health care services is poor or fair

## Exploring Wellbeing In Wood Buffalo

» Especially important factors affecting overall wellbeing include residents' sense of belonging to their community and their perception of their physical and mental health. Other factors affecting wellbeing include job security, timing of the workday, the number of vacation days taken, geographic location, and having enough money. These factors — and others — cut across all the domains of wellbeing and influence one another, too. For example, sense of belonging to one's community is strongly related to volunteering and whether people help out their neighbours.

### Sense of Belonging to Community:

- » 55% volunteered in the past year
- » 87% socialize with others online
- » Almost 1 in 5 residents have trouble connecting with others (18%)
- » Over 1 in 3 residents participated in a local charitable or community event (36%) in the past year
- » Less than 10% were actively engaged in local issues in the community in the past 12 months
- » Residents with below average wellbeing reported much lower percentages of having adequate time for important relationships, commitments, and activities than residents with above average wellbeing
- » 68% have a strong sense of belonging to their community (CV)
- » Sense of belonging to the community is much stronger among those residents with above average wellbeing (84%) than those with below average wellbeing (34%)

### Physical Health:

- » A majority of residents report having good to excellent physical health (86%). Residents with a stronger sense of belonging to the community report better physical health (90%) than residents with a weaker sense of belonging to the community (77%)
- » More than ¼ of residents regularly eat healthy meals
- » 54% of residents say they're getting good quality exercise

### Mental Health:

- » A majority of residents report having good to excellent mental health (92%). Residents with a stronger sense of belonging to the community, however, report better mental health (95%) than residents with a weaker sense of belonging to the community (85%)
- » Over 15% felt they could "not get going" during the past week



- » Volunteering is indicative of sense of belonging.
- » Wellbeing is higher among those with a strong sense of belonging to a community.
- » There is a link between wellbeing and getting enough sleep.
- » Married or partnered residents more often report above average wellbeing compared to singles.
- » The amount of vacation you take appears to be linked to higher wellbeing. Having two consecutive weeks of vacation is recommended. Fewer than two weeks of vacation is linked to lower levels of wellbeing.
- » Geographic location affects wellbeing. Among residents of outlying communities, a higher percentage (42%) report below avg. wellbeing and a lower percentage report above avg. wellbeing (15%).
- » Having enough money appears to be linked to wellbeing. A higher percentage of residents with lower household income (less than \$100K) report below avg. wellbeing.
- » There is a link between wellbeing and time adequacy.
- » Job security is an important variable in employee wellbeing.
- » The timing of the workday appears to be associated with wellbeing. More people who work irregular schedules have below average wellbeing (15%) compared to above avg. (4%).
- » Leisure contributes to relaxation, stress relief and emotional wellbeing. It also facilitates social connections and the development and/or maintenance of social bonds.

## The Iceberg Model

### Patterns of Behaviour, Systemic Structures and Mental Models of Residents with Below Average Wellbeing

#### What is generally unseen

Organizations (clubs, teams, businesses), Government, Rules, Norms, Laws, Policies

Why you do what you do relates to Values, Beliefs and Assumptions.

#### What are the Daily Activities?

- » Working irregular schedules<sup>17</sup> and long work days<sup>18</sup>
- » Cannot find quality childcare
- » Taking fewer than two weeks of vacation annually

#### What you see

Work, school, habits, routines

#### Patterns of Behaviour that Influence Wellbeing

- » Not getting enough physical exercise and/or sleep
- » Not accessing recreational and/or cultural facilities
- » Unable to access health care services
- » Never enough time to do the things I want to do
- » Unable to take advantage of educational opportunities

#### Systemic Structures that Influence Wellbeing

- » Residents don't know how to access community information
- » Inadequate childcare services
- » Health care services perceived to be inadequate, inaccessible
- » Inaccessible community facilities (e.g. cost, operating hours, insufficient childcare services)
- » Educational opportunities are valued, but course fees and scheduling conflicts are barriers
- » Wood Buffalo offers a lot of different things to do in the community, but barriers such as timing of events, inadequate free time and lack of childcare prevent participation
- » Time inadequacy is the norm
- » Social isolation, especially in remote locations, is the norm

#### Values, Beliefs and Assumptions About Wellbeing

- » "I'm only here for a short time. I don't need to share my gifts with others."
- » Self-interest takes precedence over the wellbeing of the whole
- » Economic prosperity trumps social prosperity
- » A strong work ethic is valued by the community
- » Wood Buffalo wants to improve community wellbeing and quality of life for all residents

<sup>17</sup> The highest proportion of people with lower levels of wellbeing is found in the nonstandard schedule group.  
<sup>18</sup> The highest percentage of those with below average wellbeing work 60 or more hours per week.