

Towards 250k  
**Envision**  
Wood Buffalo



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

# Fort Fitzgerald

*Where We Are Today*



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## 1. Introduction

This report provides an inventory and assessment of current community assets within Fort Fitzgerald. The community assets inventory and assessment has been organized by theme areas. The thirteen theme areas include:

1. Population and Demographic Trends
2. Economy, Employment and Tourism
3. Housing
4. Land Use Pattern, Design and Sustainable Energy
5. Municipal Infrastructure
6. Regional Transportation
7. Government and Partnerships
8. Health and Safety
9. Education
10. Communication and Technology
11. Natural Areas
12. Recreation, Parks and Culture
13. Finance

However, given the size of Fort Fitzgerald, information is limited for all theme areas. Those theme areas have been identified in the report.

## 2. Population and Demographic Trends

Fort Fitzgerald is a small community in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB). The population of Fort Fitzgerald has not been consistently recorded over the past several years. The most recent population figures identify seventeen residents in the community<sup>i</sup>; however, according to the neighbouring Town of Fort Smith in the North West Territories, eleven people reside in Fort Fitzgerald<sup>ii</sup>. Since 2002, the population of Fort Fitzgerald decreased considerably, as many residents started moving onto the nearby First Nation Reserve in Smith's Landing.

**Table 1: Historical Population for Fort Fitzgerald from 2002 - 2006**

Year	Population	Percentage Change
2008	17	325%
2006	4	-67%
2005	12	200%
2004	4	-87%
2002	30	

The population of Fort Fitzgerald is not expected to grow in the coming years.

## 3. Economy, Employment and Tourism

All of the residents in Fort Fitzgerald work in Fort Smith.

### Fort Fitzgerald is an attractive destination for regional tourists

The area boasts natural features that are appealing for tourists. The two areas of interest are the Trans Canada Trail water route to the Arctic and the Cassette Rapids. The Trans Canada Trail water route to the Arctic Ocean starts at Fort Fitzgerald and splits off into a land and water trail and continues north. The Cassette Rapids is located in Fort Fitzgerald on the Smith's Landing First Nations Reserve. Tour groups have organized hiking trips along these trails however, there are no statistics available.

## 4. Housing

The majority of the population lives in single family houses. At the time of writing this report, there was no information available on housing ownership, residential lots, housing costs, or residents per household. There are approximately ten houses within Fort Fitzgerald<sup>iii</sup>.



## 5. Land Use in Fort Fitzgerald

Land use and development in Fort Fitzgerald is guided by the Fort Smith-Fort Fitzgerald Planning Study, adopted by I.D. 18 North (1984), as well as The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's (RMWB) Municipal Development Plan (MDP). The MDP identifies no future development in the community. The Hamlet General Policy Area will allow residential, commercial, and industrial developments that are compatible and appropriate for the community. All development must comply with the provisions of the Land Use Bylaw (99/059) – LUB.

The physical growth pattern for Fort Fitzgerald has been limited by the Slave River which runs along the eastern border of the Hamlet. There are currently no commercial land uses within Fort Fitzgerald (refer to LUB, p. 9 in the Appendix). Residents travel to Fort Smith for their shopping. There are no industrial lands within Fort Fitzgerald. Institutional uses include one cemetery and the Band Office. Recreational uses include the Boat Launch (see Community Context Map p. 10 in the Appendix).

## 6. Municipal Infrastructure

The Town of Fort Smith provides municipal infrastructure services to Fort Fitzgerald. There is a formal agreement between the RMWB and the government of Northwest

Territories' Transportation Department; therefore, Fort Smith is officially responsible for supplying resources and services to residents in Fort Fitzgerald. The Hamlet is currently serviced by a truck fill facility. Water is trucked in from Fort Smith every Wednesday. Wastewater is diverted to septic tanks and Fort Smith service providers pick up the waste every Friday. Solid waste is also collected by Fort Smith service providers and brought back to their landfill site.

## 7. Regional Transportation

Fort Fitzgerald is connected year-round to Fort Smith via Highway 5. A winter-road is constructed across the Peace River and through the Peace-Slave-Athabasca Delta from mid-December through to the end of March, providing Fort Fitzgerald access to Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray. An airport is located within Fort Smith and is a thirty minute drive from Fort Fitzgerald. There is no public transit or handi-transit in Fort Fitzgerald. Taxicab services are the only other means of transportation other than personal vehicles.

## 8. Government and Partnerships

Fort Fitzgerald is located in Ward 2 within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Ward 2 also includes Fort Chipewyan and Fort MacKay. Currently, the Councilors for this ward are Sunny Flett and David Allen Blair and, the Town of Fort Smith provides the majority of services to Fort Fitzgerald. There is a formal Municipal agreement between the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the government of Northwest Territories' Transportation Department.

## Services

The majority of, if not all, services available to Fort Fitzgerald are provided by the Town of Fort Smith, North West Territories (see **Table 2** below).

**Table 2: Services and Service Providers in Fort Fitzgerald, through Fort Smith**

Provider	Services
South Slave Divisional Educational Council	Education (K to Grade 12)
Aurora College	Post Secondary Education
RCMP (Northwest Territories)	Police
Forth Smith	Fire
Fort Smith Health and Social Services Centre	Health Care
Fort Smith Health and Social Services Centre Trailcross Treatment Centre Polar Crescent Group Home Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre Tapwe House Sutherland House	Social Services
Northwest Territories Transportation	-Surface Blading -Spot Gravel -Chip Seal Grade - Repairs -Culvert & Ditching -Machine Mowing -Brush & Weed Control -Litter Clean up -Snow Removal -Sanding -Sign Maintenance -Calcium Chloride Stabilization

## 9. Health and Safety

All Health and Safety services are provided by Fort Smith in the North West Territories. Health care services are provided by the Fort Smith Health and Social Services Centre. The

centre also provides social services support, along with the Trailcross Treatment Centre, Polar Crescent Group Home, Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre, Tapwe House, and the Sutherland House. Ambulance services for the Hamlet are also dispatched from Fort Smith.

## 10. Education

All services for Fort Fitzgerald are provided by Fort Smith in the North West Territories. Education from kindergarten to grade 12 is provided by the South Slave Divisional Educational Council. Post secondary education is available at Aurora College.

In the fall of 2000, the Minister of Alberta Learning established the Athabasca Tribal Council Schools Review Committee. The Committee was formed in response to concerns over the small number of students from rural communities completing grade 12, the low educational attainment of graduates and their readiness for employment, and the small number of students obtaining the post-secondary education required for many jobs in the region. The Committee identified a need for stronger school-community relationships in order to create a welcoming, safe and healthy learning environment for both parents and students.

The community expressed the necessity for stronger educational programs and opportunities for students to gain meaningful employment. Successful programming for students can include education, professional development, and support for teachers, teaching assistants, and other service providers who work with students. Community awareness of cross-cultural issues is also important, and a strong foundation is required to ensure students develop basic skills and are appropriately prepared for post-secondary education and employment.

## **Libraries**

Residents from Fort Fitzgerald visit the Mary Kaeser Library in the Town of Fort Smith.

## **11. Communication and Technology**

Postal service is not available in Fort Fitzgerald. Residents must pick up mail at the Canada Post office in Fort Smith. Cable television is not available, residents use satellite services as an alternative.

All residents in Fort Fitzgerald have access to landline telephone service provided by North WesTel.

## **12. Natural Areas**

Fort Fitzgerald is located along the bank of Slave River. Care must be taken to protect the river and to ensure its long term health.

The current environmentally protected areas must be maintained and the recreational lands should provide for more outdoor activities (see map of Natural and Environmental Constraints p. 8 in the Appendix). While there are general policies for the region as a whole (e.g. Section 3.0 of the MDP), there is a need to expand the policies to the specific natural areas in Fort Fitzgerald.



Cassette Rapids is located in Fort Fitzgerald on the Smith Landing First Nations reserve. A trail exits along and around the rapids, allowing for people to view the natural beauty.

## **Historical, Archaeological, and Paleontological Resources Inventory**

For centuries, the Slave River system had been the travel route of choice for aboriginals venturing northward. Gathering the waters of the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, emptying into Great Slave Lake and continuing to the Arctic Ocean by way of the great Mackenzie River, the Slave was a well-established transportation corridor. Further upstream, at either end of the long portage required for York boats and barges<sup>iv</sup>, Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith became the commercial bookends of the famous Slave River Rapids.

In May 2000, the Smith's Landing First Nation signed a land claim settlement agreement after a 25 year struggle. The reserve is in close proximity to Fort Fitzgerald<sup>v</sup>.

## **13. Recreation, Parks and Culture**

The recreational activities available within Fort Fitzgerald are based outdoors, in the natural environment. There are two formal trails within the area. The Trans Canada Trail water route to the Arctic Ocean starts in Northern Alberta and, at Fort Fitzgerald, splits off into a land and water trail and continues. The second (Cassette Rapids trail) is located on the First Nation Reserve along the Cassette Rapids. A boat launch is located within Fort Fitzgerald along Slave River.

The majority of organized recreational activities, events, and ceremonies take place in the town of Fort Smith. Fort Smith offers all services to the residents of Fort Fitzgerald, including their community and recreational centre. As previously mentioned, there is no Municipal agreement between the RMWB and the Town of Fort Smith. Fort Smith is not required to provide these services.

## **14. Finance**

At the time of writing this report, revenue and expenditure information was unavailable in Fort Fitzgerald.

## **15. Issues and Opportunities**

- Population growth is not expected in Fort Fitzgerald. Given the size of the community, further study is required to determine the future of this community.
- The potential for tourism is promising for Fort Fitzgerald. The area boasts natural features that are appealing for tourists.



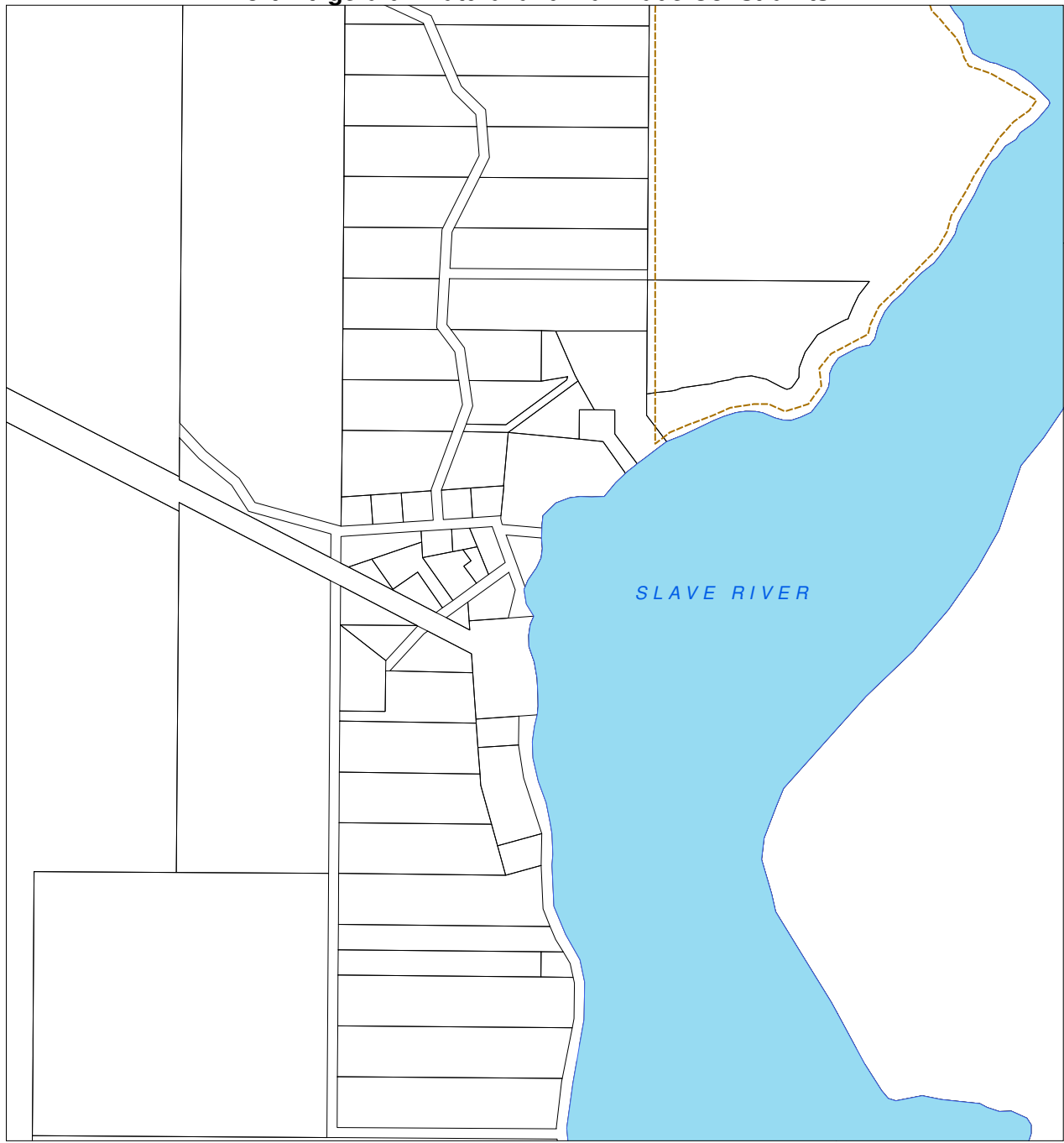
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# Appendix

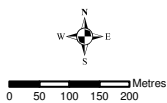
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# MAPS



### Fort Fitzgerald - Natural and Manmade Constraints



MAP 1  
MAY, 2008

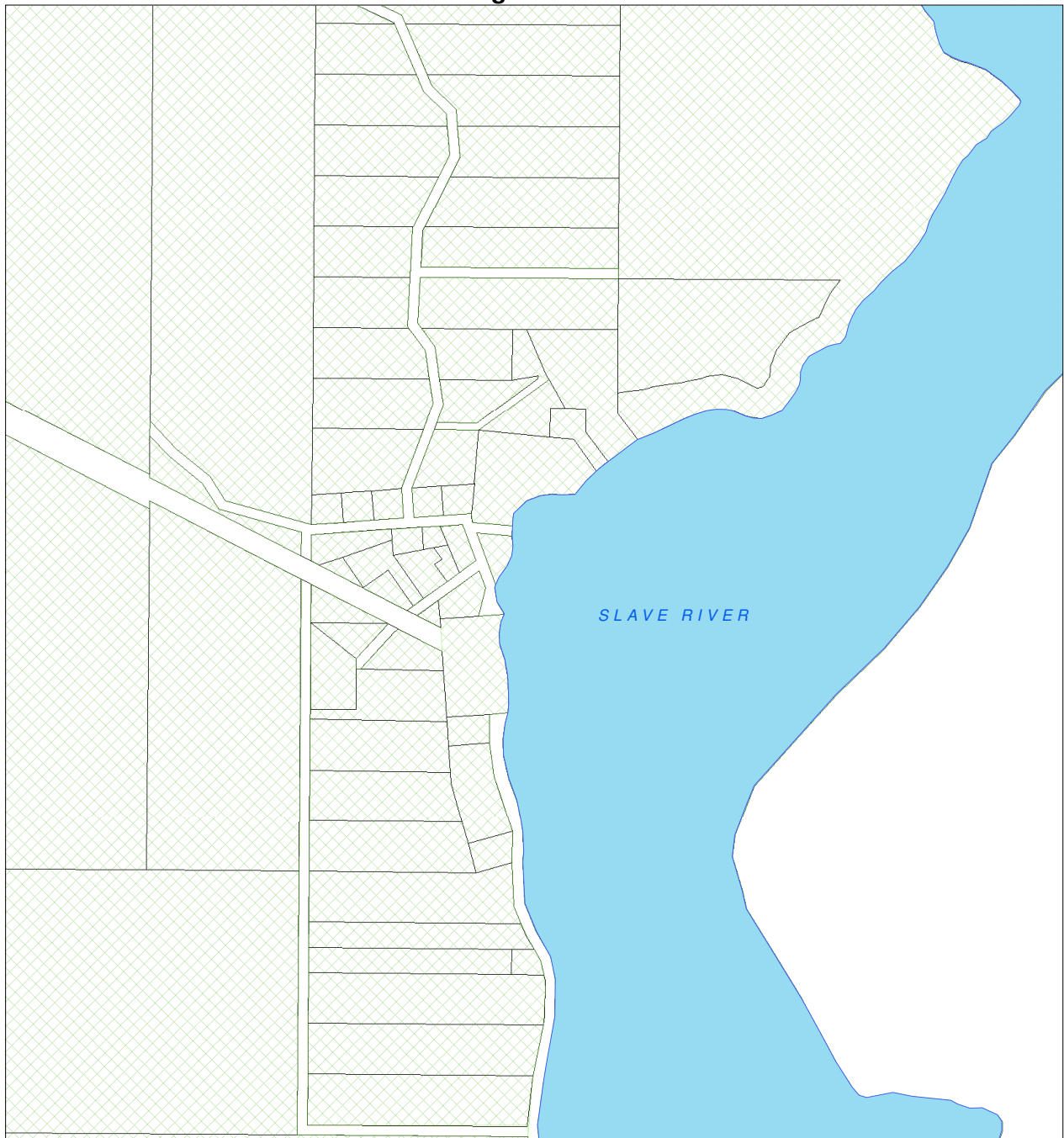


#### LEGEND

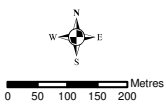
-  Water
- Constraints**
-  TransCanada Trail



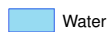
### Fort Fitzgerald - Land Use



MAP 2  
MAY, 2008




### LEGEND



Water

#### Land Use

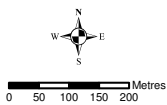
 Rural District







### Fort Fitzgerald - Community Context



MAP 3  
MAY, 2008



#### LEGEND

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
|  Water             | <b>Facilities</b> |
|  Band Office       |                   |
|  Docks             |                   |
|  TransCanada Trail |                   |



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<sup>i</sup> Visit by Municipal staff in February 2009

<sup>ii</sup> Ron Smith

<sup>iii</sup> Ron smith – Town Manager of Fort Smith, Dec. 05/07

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.greatcanadianrivers.com/rivers/slaveriver/history-home.html>

<sup>v</sup> Slave River Journal, Wednesday, May 4, 2005.