

SMITHERS  
*Community  
Vitality*  
REPORT CARD 2016



Bulkeley Valley  
Social Planning  
Society





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Smithers is a small, vibrant mountain town located in Northwest British Columbia's Bulkley Valley, approximately 370 kilometres west of Prince George. With a population of roughly 5,000 people and a service area of 12,000, Smithers is home to a diverse economy based on forestry, mineral development, agriculture, tourism, government services and amenity migration. It is known for its character Main Street, its stunning alpine setting at the foot of Hudson Bay Mountain, and its local residents who are known as "Smithereens." Smithers lies within the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en people and today approximately 11 percent of Smithers' population is aboriginal.

# Introduction

## WE ALL WANT OUR COMMUNITY TO MOVE FORWARD. BUT WHAT DOES MOVING FORWARD MEAN?

In 2015, the Town of Smithers, Northern Health and the Bulkley Valley Social Planning Society undertook a project to answer precisely that question. It's called "Community Vitality: How Do We Measure Progress?" and this report card is one of its outcomes.

Historically, many have judged our community's success using only a few metrics: things like the number of building permits or population growth. But we know these simple measures don't paint a full picture of our community's vitality.

The goal of this report card is to pull together a broader set of indicators that together give a sense of how our community is doing in all of its dimensions. Much of this data is already collected by various agencies but has never been compiled in one place.

Why take this on? As a famous management consultant once said, "What gets measured gets managed." Measuring our community's vitality in a more comprehensive way gives us a common language for discussing progress. We hope it will also provide a framework for undertaking practical actions and projects to improve our community.

This report card is not meant to provide a comprehensive, authoritative view; it's meant to start a conversation. We recognize that many important facets of our community are tough to measure, or would require expensive and timeconsuming research. This said, we hope this document will spark your curiosity and inspire you to join in the ongoing effort to make our community healthier, happier and more full of vitality.

—Taylor Bachrach is the Mayor of Smithers

—Cormac Hikisch is the Bulkley Valley's Health Services Administrator with Northern Health

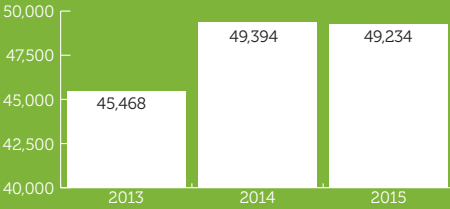
# DOMAIN 1

# arts & recreation

ARTS AND RECREATION AMENITIES ARE STRONG IN OUR COMMUNITY AND HELP FOSTER A CREATIVE, HEALTHY AND INSPIRED COMMUNITY. With minor year-to-year fluctuations, participation in arts and recreation programs and events remains fairly stable.

## » INDICATOR 1

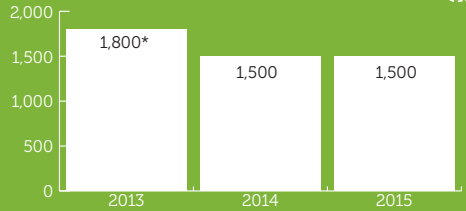
### Number of visits to the Bulkley Valley Regional Pool & Recreation Centre



## » INDICATOR 2

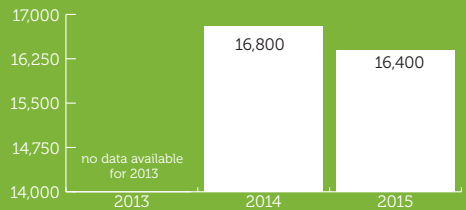
### Attendance

#### Midsummer Festival including performers & volunteers



\* 30th anniversary year

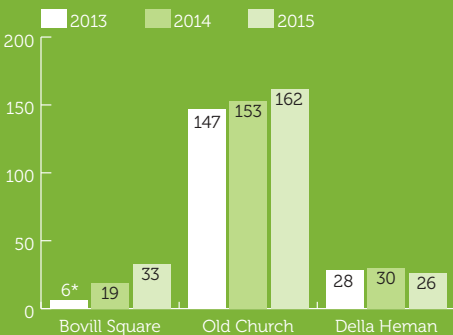
### BVX Fall Fair



# recreation

## » INDICATOR 3

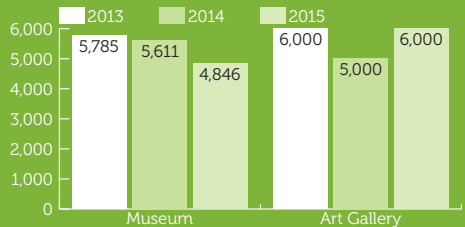
### Number of community event bookings at Bovill Square, Old Church and the Della Herman Theatre



\* partially unavailable due to fire

## » INDICATOR 4

### Number of visitors to the Bulkley Valley Museum and Smithers Art Gallery



## Did you know?

- There are over 70 community recreation and sports organizations in Smithers.
- Community organizations are instrumental in the continued development of local recreation amenities. Examples include the Smithers Mountain Bike Association Bike Park, Kinsmen's Kiddie Park and Smithers Rotary Club sponsorship of upgrades to the Perimeter Trail system and development of Gordon L. Williams Rotary Park (former Mohawk service station).
- The Town of Smithers opened a new second arena in 2015.

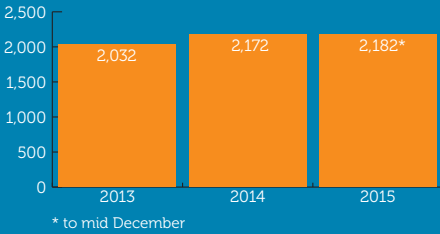
## DOMAIN 2

# housing

HOUSING THAT SERVES ALL MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY IS A CORE NEED FOR HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES. While new multi-family dwelling units have been built in the last few years, we are continually challenged to provide affordable, accessible and safe housing for all members of our community.

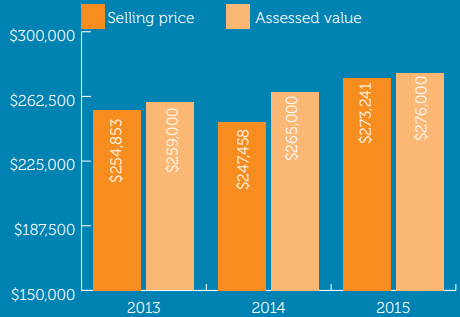
### » INDICATOR 1

#### Emergency shelter stays (Broadway Place)



### » INDICATOR 2

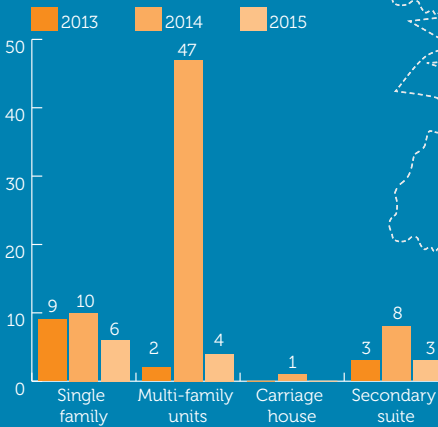
#### Average selling price and assessed value of a single family home



#### Did you know?

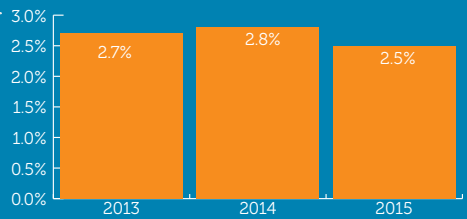
- In November 2014, the Smithers Action Group Association conducted a homeless count and found there were 22 people who were homeless in the community.
- The Broadway Place Emergency Shelter has been consistently used over the past three years, providing critical shelter to a vulnerable population.
- Local housing providers, such as High Road Services & Smithers Community Services Association, provide a diversity of housing options such as seniors housing, independent living and transitional housing.

» INDICATOR 3  
**Housing starts**



A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling within a home. A carriage house is a separate self-contained dwelling on a property in addition to the house. Both types of dwellings offer homeowners the option of a mortgage helper while adding to local rental options.

» INDICATOR 4  
**Rental vacancy rates**



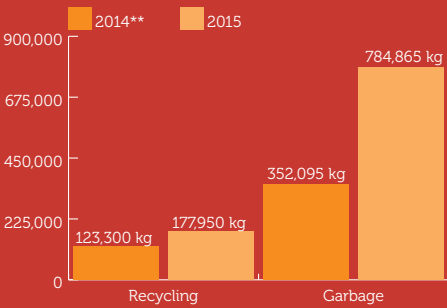
# DOMAIN 3

# environment

WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO LIVE IN AN ENVIRONMENT WITH STUNNING LANDSCAPES, RIVERS AND WILDLIFE. In 2014 residential recycling was implemented by the Town of Smithers and has resulted in garbage being diverted from the landfill. While air quality advisories remain stable, levels of fine particulate air pollution from both domestic (wood stoves) and industrial sources are of on-going concern.

## » INDICATOR 1

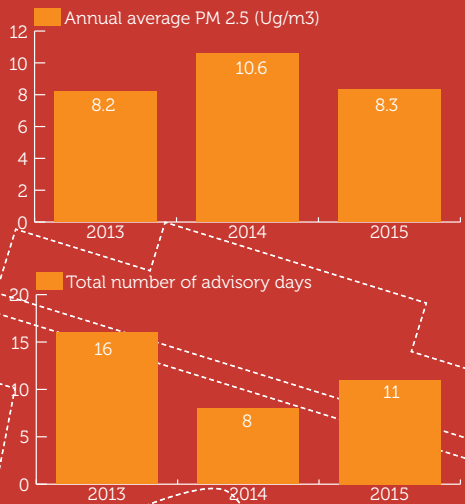
### Residential recycling and garbage pickup by weight



\* Town did not weigh garbage in 2013  
\*\* Curbside residential recycling introduced in May 2014, with weighing both recycling and garbage beginning during this time.

## » INDICATOR 2

### Air quality

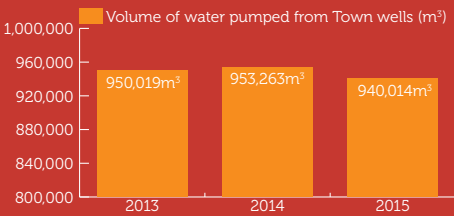




# ument

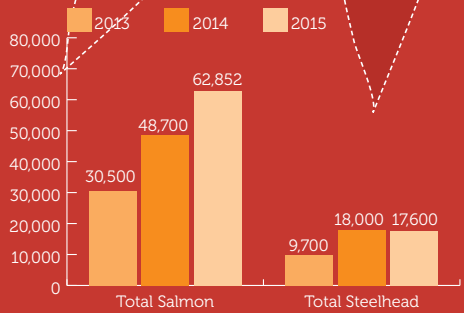
## » INDICATOR 3

### Water use



## » INDICATOR 4

### Salmon & steelhead returns



### Did you know?

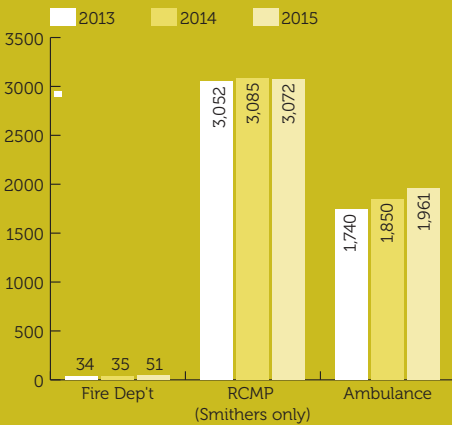
- Smithers is one of only three municipalities in northern BC that does not continuously treat its drinking water with chemicals such as chlorine. Town crews conduct an annual chlorine disinfection and flushing of the water pipes.
- Fine particulate matter (PM) pollution from smoke and road dust have the largest impacts on local air quality. Visit [www.cleanairplan.ca](http://www.cleanairplan.ca) for more information.

# DOMAIN 4 *community safety*

FEELING SAFE IN OUR COMMUNITY IS A BASIC NEED FOR ALL OF US. Our community is fortunate to have a relatively low crime rate and a skilled workforce of emergency responders, both paid and volunteer. Total victim assistance client referrals have declined over the last three years, while emergency call-outs have increased slightly.

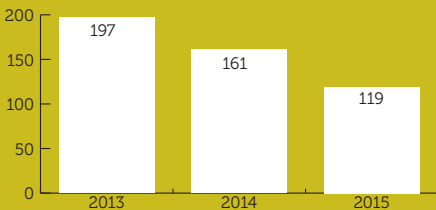
## » INDICATOR 1

### Total call-outs: Fire, RCMP, Ambulance



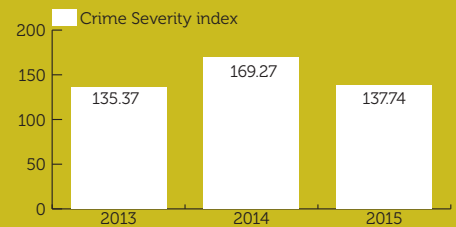
## » INDICATOR 2

### Total victim assistance client referrals (Northern Society for Domestic Peace)



## » INDICATOR 3

### Crime



The increased crime severity index in 2014 was likely due to a single severe crime, which in a small community can have a disproportionate effect on the index.

## » INDICATOR 4

### Flood alerts/advisories

No flood advisories or alerts were issued in the Town of Smithers for 2013, 2014 or 2015.

## Did you know?

- Community Policing in Smithers, a volunteer-based organization, offers a number of community safety programs, including Crimestoppers, DARE, Citizens on Patrol, SpeedWatch, BlockWatch, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, Lost and Stolen Bike Program, Bike Safety Rodeo, and more.

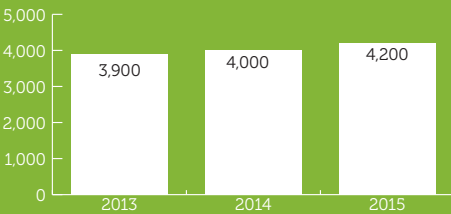
# DOMAIN 5

# transportation

LIKE OTHER SMALL, NORTHERN COMMUNITIES, OUR VEHICLES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR TRANSPORTATION REALITY, AS REFLECTED IN THE NUMBER OF PASSENGER VEHICLES. We also recognize that car alternatives, such as walking and biking, contribute to our health and reduce environmental impacts. We are fortunate to also have a regional airport that provides daily regional service.

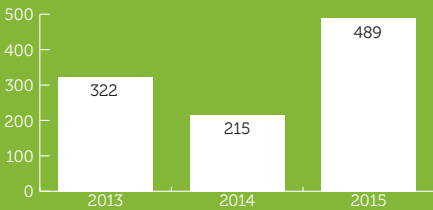
## » INDICATOR 1

### Number of registered passenger vehicles in Smithers



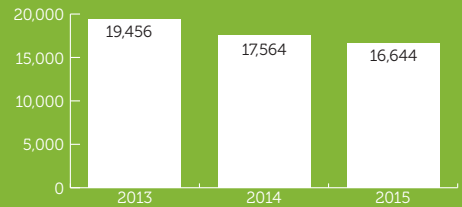
## » INDICATOR 2

### Bike to Work Week participation



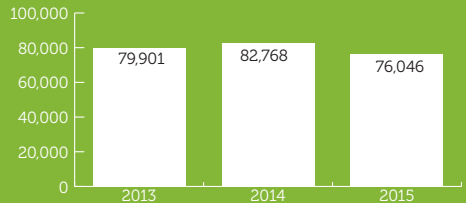
## » INDICATOR 3

### Smithers public transit service ridership



## » INDICATOR 4

### Total annual scheduled and chartered passengers through the Smithers Regional Airport (arriving and departing)



## Did you know?

- On Tuesdays and Fridays there is bus service between Hazelton and Smithers. <http://bctransit.com/smithers/home>. In addition, the BC government offers a non-refundable tax credit if you use a monthly transit pass! <https://bctransit.com/smithers/fares/transit-pass-credit>
- In 2016, the BC government committed to moving forward on a \$5 million Highway 16 Transportation

Action Plan, which includes up to \$2.4 million over 3 years for transit expansion.

- A number of local initiatives have been implemented to better support local cycling. New bike racks, a designated shared bike route along Third Avenue & new multiuse pathways along Fulton Avenue and the perimeter trail are all ways to encourage us to bike!

# DOMAIN 6

# food security

WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY, COMMUNITY GARDENS AND SEVERAL FOOD PRODUCERS OFFERING A WIDE RANGE OF LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCTS. Our local food bank continues to see modest but steady use.

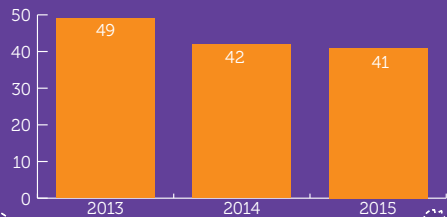
## » INDICATOR 1

### Salvation Army food bank



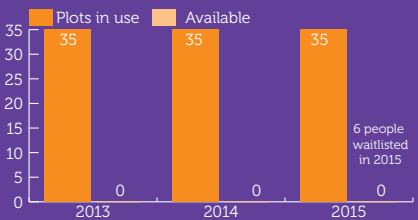
## » INDICATOR 2

### Average number of vendor stalls at the outdoor BV Farmers Market



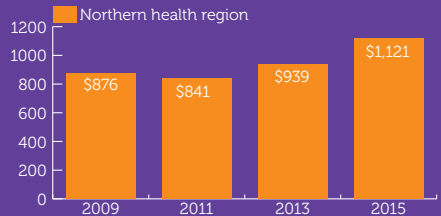
## » INDICATOR 3

### Plots at the Northern Root Community Garden



## » INDICATOR 4

### Average monthly food basket cost



Based on a reference family of 4.

### Did you know?

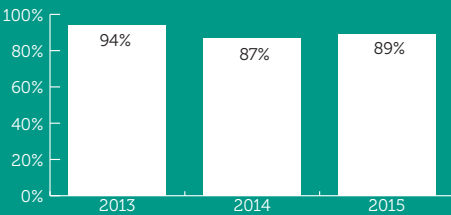
- The Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market has been operating for over 25 years with more than 40 vendors.
- The Provincial Health Services Authority works with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, the five regional health authorities, First Nations Health Authority, and Dietitians of Canada to monitor the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet in British Columbia. A copy of the full "Food Costing in BC 2015" report is available online.

# DOMAIN 7 *education & literacy*

HAVING AN EDUCATED, LITERATE COMMUNITY ENABLES US TO BETTER PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY LIFE AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY. Both formal and informal education contribute to this aspect of community vitality. Local indicators confirm a stable education base continues to exist within our community.

## » INDICATOR 1

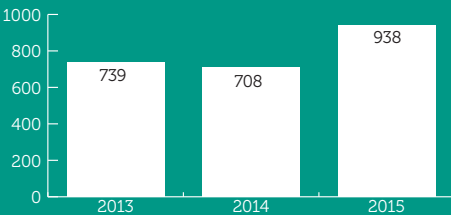
### Smithers Secondary School Grade 12 graduation rates (%)



The graduation rate is calculated on the percentage of student who complete grade 12 within six years from the time they enroll in grade 8. The rate is adjusted for migration in and out of BC.

## » INDICATOR 2

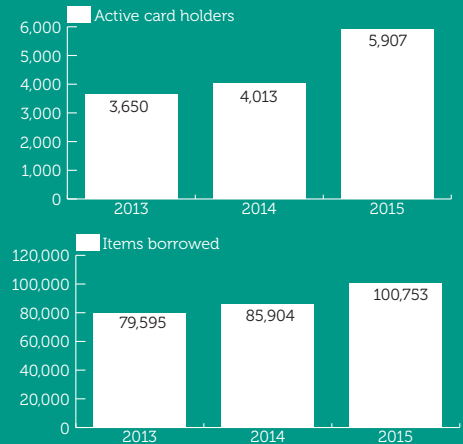
### NWCC enrolment at the Smithers campus



In 2015 there was an increase in development and continuing education programs offered.

## » INDICATOR 3

### Smithers Public Library usage



## Did you know?

- Each winter the Bulkley Valley Research Centre hosts a free public seminar series.
- The Health Hub and Smithers Health Committee provides lunch hour health talks once a month on a variety of topics.
- In 2015, the provincial average graduation rate was 84% (Smithers was 89%).

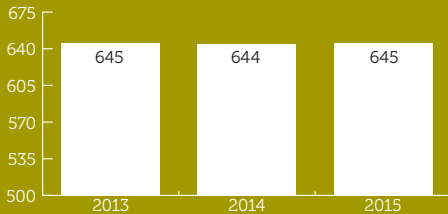
## DOMAIN 8

# employment & economic health

OUR LOCAL ECONOMY SUPPORTS A WIDE RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES. While the natural resource sectors remain important, other sectors such as tourism, government services and amenity migration provide stability and diversity. Local business licenses continue to remain stable.

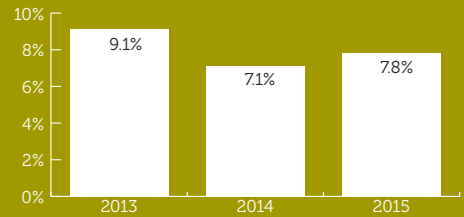
### » INDICATOR 1

#### Number of individual business licenses



### » INDICATOR 2

#### Unemployment rates



### » INDICATOR 3

#### Household median income



### Did you know?

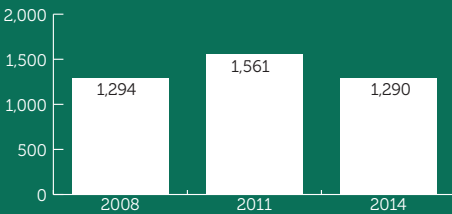
- In 2015 there were 299 individuals & families in Smithers receiving income assistance.
- Creel Net, a fishing licensing and regulatory applications app for smart phones, was started by two Smithers entrepreneurs. In 2015 they were one of 11 businesses chosen as a recipient of the highly competitive nationwide Spin Master Innovation Fund.

# DOMAIN 9 *civic engagement & belonging*

WE STRIVE TO BE A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE FEELS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL DECISION MAKING. Over the past several years, the Town of Smithers and various community organizations have initiated projects to reduce racism and discrimination and engage citizens in local politics. Indicators in this category are a work in progress and more general in nature.

## » INDICATOR 1

### **Town of Smithers municipal voter turn-out**



## » INDICATOR 2

### **General Indicators**

- Smithers Community Services Association's English Language & Multicultural Services program has over 60 participants from over 25 countries. In the last few years the number of participants has doubled.
- We celebrate our different cultures through events that bring all community members together. Examples include Aboriginal Day Celebrations, Taste of Culture, Canada Day and the Festival of Nations.
- Formed in 2002, the Smithers Bridging Committee takes an active role in furthering multicultural relations throughout the Bulkley Valley by hosting events, encouraging dialogue, building relationships and educating the community about racism and discrimination.
- Smithers Secondary School's Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) is an advocacy and support group for high-school students.



To learn about this project, contribute your ideas or get involved, visit  
[www.smithers.ca/vitality](http://www.smithers.ca/vitality)



250.847.1600 | [www.smithers.ca](http://www.smithers.ca)

*This project has received funding from the Healthy Communities Capacity Building Fund (HCCBF). The HCCBF is part of PlanH, a partnership between BC Healthy Communities Society and Healthy Families BC and is informed by health authorities and other stakeholders. The PlanH program facilitates local government learning, partnership development and planning for healthier communities where we live, learn, work and play.*